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Family Feasibility: Equitable Access to Education for Parent-Students

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to Adam Linetty- without whom I would not have had the experiences, motivation, encouragement, or confidence to pursue this journey. Thank you for teaching me -*a couple things*-.

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Abstract

Institutions of higher education face the ongoing challenge of an ever-changing student demographic. As the student population changes, so too do their needs for support. Student affairs practitioners have an obligation to serve the entirety of the institution's student population by providing resources that equitably meet students' needs. Parent-students face significantly different challenges and obstacles compared to their counterparts. Offering services that cater to these needs will vastly improve their student experience, motivate their development as individuals, and encourage successful completion of degree programs. Utilizing educational and psychology theories of development, the argument is made that targeted and individualized services provided to parent-students will benefit not only the students, but the campus community as a whole. By creating a resource and advocacy center on campus to serve the parent-student population, student affairs and higher education professionals may work to support this marginalized student population. Through collaboration with campus and community resources, the center will provide opportunities and experiences to parent-students that will motivate their personal, professional, and academic pursuits. An individualized approach to advising and supporting will enable center staff to provide ongoing resources and community to parent-students. These efforts will provide valuable, life-changing resources to parent-students and will revolutionize the higher education landscape for students, faculty, and professionals within the institution.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Positionality

Positionality

I am the daughter of parents that never completed college. As a child, this did not have much of an effect on me. However, as I grew older and began to understand to realistic repercussions of not receiving formal education after high school, I began to understand how much of a sacrifice my father had made in order to be a parent to me. I started to comprehend what it meant to be "passed over" for promotions and salary increases, and noticed that we did not have the same level of excess in our lives that my friends did. I started to feel extreme levels of guilt as I saw all that my father had given up to become a parent. He did not spend as much time with his friends; when he finally did, they had grown apart. He had forgone the freedom of adolescence and chose instead the commitment of parenthood. Most noticeably, he had given up on his aspiration to graduate from college.

For years, I watched as my father engaged in a cyclical battle with higher education; his need for a degree would arise, he would enroll in courses and attack his learning with gusto, and would inevitably become overwhelmed and overworked, eventually withdrawing from school indefinitely. This pattern continued from as early as I can remember, all the way until my own college graduation. Reflecting on my experience as a child, I now see the tremendous toll that attempting to complete a college degree program had on my father. Not only was it a financial burden, it significantly impacted the time that we were able to spend together as a family. However, often overlooked in my family's conversations is the impact that these times had on my father's mental health. The extreme pressure of providing for a child, meeting career

expectations, and working to attain a degree led to significant levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and self-doubt. As the cycle continued, these factors only continued to grow more powerful and more influential in his daily life. My father never did graduate, and his pursuit of a degree had ceased entirely.

Through my own experiences, I have come to comprehend how deeply a collegiate degree can impact the lives of individuals and families. Watching the tremendous struggle that my father underwent time and time again had a large influence on my decision to attend college immediately after my high-school graduation. I saw how difficult completing a degree can be when other life factors begin to interfere; I knew that I had to complete the degree as soon as possible, or I may never have the chance to again. After attending college and completing my degree, I now understand that my father's experience was not the only way. I have observed resources, offices and policies that are put into place to support students with varying abilities, needs, and extenuating circumstances that may require additional or different supports to meet their degree requirements. After engaging with these offices in a variety of capacities, I know that it is possible to provide the necessary supports and services to enable parents to be successful in their academic pursuits, and eliminate the despair, stress, and sense of failure that my father felt as he worked to complete his degree requirements.

Based on my experiences as the child of someone that did not complete collegiate studies, and my experiences attending and serving the college, I believe that major change is needed in processes and procedures to enhance the accessibility of education to the marginalized group of learners with children. The basis of my argument lies primarily in the congruence between institution mission statements, and their actual policies, procedures, and practices. My principle assumption is that education should be for all, not just those that 'check the right boxes'. I

believe that colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide academic and co-curricular education to all learners that seek it. Accommodations must be made to adapt to the needs of students that rely on the institution to provide them with a cohesive education. Institutions must provide access to appropriate resources and supports to promote success in all ways possible. Thorough and continuous examinations of policies and procedures are necessary to identify and correct any policies and procedures that negate the potential for any student to learn and develop.

In order to identify exclusionary practices and truly understand the impact of these practices on the lives of students with children, I believe that Action Research is a necessary means of knowledge acquisition. Primarily through the use of Critical Action Research and Feminist Participatory Action Research, I intend to engage in knowledge acquisition directly through the experiences of individuals that have lived and experienced marginality based on their status as parents throughout their time as students. Action Research is not only an appropriate means of knowledge acquisition, it is a necessary component to understanding the underlying issues that marginalized students face daily. Critical Action Research and Participatory Action Research both allow the researcher to gain insight into lived experiences of the populations with which they work, and allow the researcher to develop "practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes" (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Rather than working to gather a theoretical understanding of the issues at hand, Action Research is concerned with generating knowledge from the practical implementation of current policies and procedures, and the daily lives of those that experience oppression. Critical Action Research is done in the "pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people," and works to support the "flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). This method of

research and knowledge gathering is not done simply for the act of knowing, but is undergone with the intention of supporting social justice and creating social change.

Using Critical Action Research to generate knowledge enables researchers to formulate a thorough understanding of issues and systems that cause oppression. Participatory Action Research takes this system further, and engages the researcher in the community with which they are concerned. This enables members of the community to interact directly not only with the researcher, but with the research that is being done. Utilizing Schlossberg's (1989) theory of Mattering and Marginality as a lens through which Participatory Action Research is viewed, it is clear that participation in the knowledge acquisition that is taking place not only enables individuals and gives them a sense of self-efficacy; it enables a transition of focus away from marginalization, and begins to emphasize the reality of the lived experience of the community. In recognizing the experiences of individuals in marginalized communities, researchers give participants a sense of importance – an acknowledgement that their experience is real and true (Schlossberg, 1989). Feminist Participatory Action Research utilizes all of these facets to identify and overcome intersectionality and power dynamics, and work to create social change through the research.

Utilizing Feminist Participatory Action Research, I intend first to focus on the concept of reflexivity in relation to resource provision on campus for students with children. Reflexivity is the concept that power dynamics are constantly at play in any given situation, and must first be acknowledge before they can be dismantled or addressed. According to Reid and Frisby's (2008) considerations of Feminist Participatory Action Research, reflexivity is "attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process" (p. 100). Generally speaking, reflexivity addresses power dynamics in relation to ongoing issues by

identifying and examining these systems as they specifically relate to the issue. Reflexivitiy, according to Reid and Frisby (2008) identifies "power relations and their effects on the research process" (p. 100). Power dynamics are not only in existence with regard to the issue being examined, but exist within the research process as well. These dynamics must be thoroughly identified, considered, and analyzed prior to engaging in any level of research. One of the primary power dynamics that is identifiable through Feminist Participatory Action Research is that of the relationship between the researcher and the community members. Reid and Frisby (2008) indicate that a large concern when conducting Participatory Action Research, from the feminist perspective, is accountability for any knowledge that is produced. In order to address this concern, researchers and participants must first address the existing power dynamics that would interfere with or inform this decision making process. When considering Participatory Action Research, Reid and Frisby (2008) share that generating a working understanding of the "ethical judgements that frame the research and mark the limits of shared values and political interests" between participant and researcher plays a key role in ensuring that participant voices feel truly valued, that the research methods are agreed upon and acceptable, and that participants genuinely feel appreciated (p. 100). Only after generating a true understanding of the researcher and the participant's role in knowledge acquisition can a decision be made regarding ownership of the knowledge created.

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) places significant emphasis on identifying intersectionality and working to uncover women's experiences. A critical guiding concern, according to Reid and Frisby (2008), for this sector of research includes questioning "how will intersectionality be taken into account when deciding on research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and deciding upon action plans" (p. 98). This line of questioning allows

researchers and participants to first identify areas of intersectionality that may be impacting their experiences in relation to the issue at hand. Additionally, this analysis provides a space to begin examining areas of shared experience across the population, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, and many other identifying aspects of marginality. Reid and Frisby (2008) argue that the Feminist approach relies on the understanding that "conceptualizations of oppression have inadequately captured women's experiences and that intersectional analyses can be productively advanced by adopting a FPAR framework," which serves as the catalyst for identifying areas of intersection and working to uncover the impact that this has on experience (p. 97). By acknowledging these overlapping identities and the role that they play in overall experience, participants have the opportunity to understand and deeply criticize the structures that marginalize and assume power in their lives. This recognition leads to a more comprehensive analysis of concerns, and provides a platform to begin working toward social justice. Reid and Frisby (2008) articulate the intention of Participatory Action Research as not for the researcher to understand and 'solve' the problem' but rather to "co-generate" the research questions, and the outcomes of these research efforts. However, Reid and Frisby's (2008) feminist research perspective says that these attempts at collaboration in typical Action Research "often fall short of creating genuinely inclusive, safe, and unbiased spaces of relevance for people who live in the 'margins' of society" (p. 99). With that being said, a substantial effort and emphasis should be placed in ensuring that all participants are included in decision making processes, have access to their own stories, and play a significant role in the understanding of their own knowledge generation.

Given the influence and perspective provided by the feminist lens, I intend to approach my concerns regarding service for students with children through Critical Action Research and

Participatory Action Research. Feminist research methods will enable me to engage directly with the community of students that I believe are currently underserved, and will involve the population in all research methods. Reid and Frisby (2008) state that Participatory Action Research is "research toward social justice" – a step that I believe is warranted and necessary given the exclusionary and oppressive policies currently in place (p. 94). When choosing Feminist Participatory Action Research, essential consideration should be given to whether "individual and local actions eventually link up to a larger social change agenda" (Reid & Frisby, 2008, p. 102). Though I will not know until after this project is implemented whether this is true for students that are parents, I believe I will find that many of the procedures, policies, and exclusionary practices that target this population are rooted in considerations of other critical social justice movements. In the future, as more knowledge and information is created and gathered, an analysis of these intersections will be necessary and influential when considering further steps toward social justice.

In order to produce the knowledge that I at this point deem necessary, I intend to rely heavily on testimony of students with children. By engaging with and including past students that had children at the time of their studies, we can collaborate to reflect on their experiences as parent-students. This reflection will enable us to collaboratively identify and areas of marginalization that they recognized throughout their experience, or that they were able to identify after their engagement with the university. According to Acevedo (2007), using testimony as a means of information gathering is a "crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to erasure" (p. 2). The feminist perspective indicate that there is a need for alternative and inclusive research methods that will engage all participants by recognizing diversity and difference in women's (participants)

perspectives. However, Reid and Frisby (2008) share that this perspective also outlines that identifying areas of similarity is crucial to the success of knowledge generation and community development throughout the research process. Reid and Frisby (2008) maintain that "exploring different methods of representation can help cut across difference to understand the contextualities of women's experiences of discrimination, prejudice and disadvantage and how they are located in their particular social, economic, and political contexts," which supports the notion that in addition to understanding intersectionality, is it equally necessary to develop means of recognizing and understanding similarities of experience to successfully engage in critical research (p. 96). Testimony allows researchers and participants to monitor trends in experiences, and identify common areas for necessary support.

Historically, according to Acevedo (2007), testimony has been "critical in movements...to create politicized understandings of identity and community," particularly in global women's movements (p. 3). Upon reflection of those involved in these movements, Acevedo (2007) maintains that testimonies have been critical because they expose "common themes and parallel experiences despite difference of national, ethnic, or regional background" (p. 13). Through this method, I am able to negate the influence of overwhelming intersectionality, and assist in community recognition of ostracizing systemic policies that prohibit the successes of students with children. Without engaging in Action Research, it is difficult to forecast what areas of oppression these testimonies and conversations will uncover. However, I intend to use the knowledge generated to develop and justify the implementation of support strategies, resources, and programs to aid in the success of students with children in institutions of higher learning.

In order to generate these necessary supports, I propose creating programs that enable congruence between institution missions and their practices. This involves a focus on diversity,

and reciprocal learning from others in the community. Institutions should encourage the success of all students, unconditionally. Students must feel that they are joining a supportive community, which requires investment of the entire university in promoting an exceptional student experience. Effectiveness of this methodology requires "being in sustained dialogue" with the affected population, which will lead to continued development of programs and policies, and will ensure that needs of the students will continuously be met (Acevedo, 2007, p. 9). While I recognize that my experience of this issue has been second-hand, and through the reflective testimony of my father, I truly believe that the most effective and influential method of knowledge acquisition and motivation for change is through the lived experiences of the parent-student population that the university intends to serve, but for which university supports have often fallen short. Through an analysis of the successes, struggles, failures and triumphs of this student population, we will gain an in depth understand of the necessary supports and policy modifications that are needed to support the educational success of parent-students.

Chapter 2

Thematic Concern, Conceptual Framework, and Definitions

THEMATIC CONCERN:

Institutions of higher learning have an obligation to provide targeted resources to students who are seeking a degree while simultaneously caring for dependents. Universities must encourage and enable academic and student affairs departments to make these resources – new and previously existing- more accessible to parent-students. It is both necessary and possible to create a Resource Advocacy Office for this student population that values and accommodates students with differing needs and experiences. This will promote a healthy, engaging learning environment that encourages the inclusion, equitable treatment, and holistic development of all.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

1) In what capacity does the university have an obligation to serve the parent-student population?
2) How have parent-students been historically marginalized?
3) How will supports for parent-students improve their educational experience?
4) How will the outcomes of these services improve society?

DEFINITIONS:

Constitutive:

Critical action research	As outlined by Brydon-Miller et al. (2003), critical action research is the process through which knowledge is acquired, focusing not on the theoretic perspective, but rather on creating understanding through the lived experiences of individuals. This knowledge is pursued in an attempt to formulate realistic solutions to actual issues as identified by the individuals that make up the population which would be affected by the solution.
Feminist participatory action research	As identified by Reid and Frisby (2008), feminist participatory action research is the process through which researchers collaborate with marginalized populations throughout the entirety of the research process to pose questions and generate possible solutions. The feminist perspective, according to Reid and Frisby (2008), emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and understanding intersectionality.
Intersectionality	A form of identity theory. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) explains that this is the various ways in which different marginalized identities interact to contribute to the individual's experience.

***Operative*:**
For the purpose of this paper,
the following definitions will apply

Parent-students	Individuals within the institution that serve as primary caretakers for children, while simultaneously attending courses with the intent of completing a degree or certificate program.
Success	A state of achievement based on individualized goals, self-reflection, growth, and personalized assessment.
Campus Community	The physical spaces, personnel, and relationships that constitute the institution and the surrounding town/city.

ACPA/NASPA Competencies:

While seeking implementation of the proposed intervention, reflection on the ACPA/NASPA Competencies (2016) will aid in guiding the actions of the Family Resource and Advocacy Center (F.R.A.C.). These competencies serve as self-reflective measures against which student affairs may compare their experiences and perceived levels of ability. In consideration of the F.R.A.C., center staff should seek to emphasize and hone experiences that allow them to exercise skills in the areas of "Values, Philosophy, and History," "Assessment, Evaluation, and Research," "Leadership," "Social Justice and Inclusion," "Technology," and "Advising and Supporting" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). It is in these areas of competence that center staff and advocates will gain experience, and upon these foundations which the justification for implementation will lie.

Engaging in conversation and advocacy for student resources requires confidence, competence, and detailed support. To begin the process of implementing a F.R.A.C., student affairs practitioners must be able to effectively communicate the need for such services. According to the ACPA and NASPA (2015) "Values, Philosophy, and History" competencies, it is essential that student affairs professionals be able to "articulate the history of the inclusion and exclusion of people with a variety of identities in higher education" (p. 18). Experience articulating these arguments will give the center staff confidence in communicating and explaining the need for support services for parent-students. Additionally, this information will be imperative to providing ongoing training and preparation to the campus community. Without prior experience in this area, center staff must be dedicated to growth in this area. This level of advocacy will provide staff with the opportunity for continued, or new, professional development in this competency area.

Through implementation and beyond, skills in the "Leadership" competency will prove crucial (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). In this area, student affairs professionals should have the ability to "articulate the vision and mission of the primary work unit" (ACPA& NASPA, 2015, p. 27). While submitting and discussing proposals for a F.R.A.C., it will be of utmost importance that the individual representing the task force be able to describe the overall vision for the center, as well as the mission, objectives, and goals of the center. It is through this explanation that stakeholders will formulate an understanding of the importance of these resources. Similarly, as the center seeks funding (both prior to implementation and as it maintains its status on campus),

articulating the ways in which the center impacts students will be essential in gaining community support. Given the flexible and adaptable nature of this center, staff must remember to consistently update and transform the concepts and presentation materials to accurately reflect the service of the center.

As the center gains traction and supports are offered to students, maintaining technology-based resources will be essential. The ACPA & NASPA (2016) "Technology" competency identifies the need to "ensure compliance with accessible technology laws and policies" as a necessary skill to develop (p. 33). Given that the F.R.A.C. places emphasis on electronic access to resources to sustain the accessibility of offered supports, this outcome must remain at the forefront of priorities. Regardless of previous experience, center staff shall generate and maintain a strong understanding of laws pertaining to electronic resources and technology-based provision of services. In this way, staff may ensure that they are upholding all standards of student service.

Once active, the primary role of center staff will be to provide individualized supports to parent-students. The ACPA and NASPA (2016) guidelines for "Advising and Supporting" indicate that practitioners should "establish rapport with students" and "know and use referral resources" (p. 36). The success not only of the center, but of parent-students rests in the staff's ability to both utilize and build upon these skills with each interaction. Building relationships with students through conversation will enable staff to best meet student needs. However, this is only made possible by the staff's ongoing and thorough knowledge of the resources and opportunities available to students on campus and in the community. Here, the staff's relationship building with students, campus partners, and community members will be essential.

As a Resource and *Advocacy* Center, it will be imperative that all staff members and Advocacy Board members maintain a focus on social justice. According to the "Social Justice and Inclusion" competency of the ACPA and NASPA (2016) guidelines, professionals should "advocate on issues of social justice, oppression, privilege, and power that impact people" (p. 30). All members of the resource center community shall act responsibly on behalf of parent-students, making conscious decisions and implementing policies/procedures with an understanding of power and privilege. The F.R.A.C. itself is rooted in providing equitable access to education, which seeks to negate the oppressive systems currently in place. Through action research, primarily direct conversation and assessment evaluation, staff should consistently modify the services and supports offered by the F.R.A.C. to best serve the parent-student population.

In order to make these necessary updates, consistent formative and summative assessment must occur. The ACPA and NASPA (2016) identified competency "Assessment, Evaluation, and Research" will play a large role in maintaining ongoing funding and support of the F.R.A.C. This support will allow the center to expand services offer, enabling greater quantities and quality of resources provided to parent-students to better support their needs. To achieve this, implementing appropriate assessment techniques, interpreting data, and presenting findings to stakeholders must occur on a continuous basis. Assessment of the current student population, parent-student population served by the center, faculty understanding and needs, and of center staff will allow the staff to generate greater research on services that need to be provided and skills that must be developed to meet student needs. While each of the competencies identified by ACPA and NASPA (2016) are necessary for the functionality of student affairs departments and professionals, the competencies and outcomes identified herein are not only interconnected, but must be specifically and intentionally developed by staff members and partners in order to create, maintain and sustain the Family Resource and Advocacy Center.

Chapter 3

The Narrative

The University's Obligation to Serve Students

I believe that students bring their own truth to every situation. Every student that we teach is a person, but every person that we interact with is also a student. In order to teach, we must first be willing to learn; in doing so, we recognize that not all practices are perfect. Acknowledging areas of failure, moments of confusion, and accepting the authority of others aids in creating more welcoming and encouraging environments for students. Though each of these aspects of learning are influential in shaping my philosophy of education, my motivating moral is simple: every student is a unique individual, and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

When considering how to best serve college students, we must first address the population of students on campus. College applications, standardized tests, and other official documentation collect data about student demographics. However, this information is far from comprehensive. While it helps administration analyze and address perceived societal barriers to success, this information does not account for the individual that arrives on campus. It does not calculate the life that has happened outside of formal education, and assesses individuals from a quantitative rather than a qualitative measure. I believe that while this information can be useful in a wide variety of contexts, the university neglects to comprehend the full impact of student demographic on the ability to be successful. Test scores, grade point average, and written statements may all be good indicators of academic success, but do not account for what is needed to be successful outside of the classroom.

Currently, an overwhelming number of resources provided to students are equal, but not equitable. More supports are needed to aid in the co-curricular development of non-traditional, i.e. "not the norm," students. Though test scores can be indicators of academic success, they do not account for students whose last experience in a classroom was ten years ago. The grades on a transcript do not reflect that student's ability to integrate into a classroom with teenagers and twenty-somethings after an extended academic hiatus. How will this impact that student's ability to interact with the required technology? Will this student be accepted as part of the class and invited into discussions and group projects, or will they struggle to meet participation and assignment requirements based on unanticipated bias? While these questions are often addressed in regard to "big ticket" diversity (race, gender, etc.), these needs are not anticipated consistently across all demographics of student. Though this is just one example of a student that may be interacting with obstacles to success in the classroom based on their life experience, there are a myriad of underserved populations on college campuses.

I believe that institutions have a responsibility to provide adequate supports that enable all enrolled students to succeed. To do this, universities must provide services that reach the entirety of the student population, rather than the most common populations. Additionally, these supports must be readily accessible to the population of students that they are designed to serve. If services are unavailable or unable to be provided on campus, acknowledgement of what may be needed is not only beneficial, but ethically necessary. While I recognize that it is not reasonable to expect that the university provide specific supports to each individual, being upfront about what is and is not provided or available at a university is a responsibility of the institution. This will ensure that all students have the ability to make an informed decision in choosing their institution, and will aid student affairs professionals in providing an appropriate

education to students as they arrive at the university. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide and acknowledge supports that cater to all demographics of students accepted. 'Non-traditional' students are accepted to traditional four-year colleges, but are not provided the supports needed to thrive and succeed. They are expected to learn and succeed in the same fashion as 'traditional' students, but additional external factors that hinder success are not considered. I would argue that easily accessible offices of support and education that address the needs of non-traditional students are vital to the success of adult learners, unaccompanied homeless youth, students with children, and other underserved but oft monopolized student populations.

First, it is necessary to understand that 'non-traditional' students are equally as deserving of an education as the traditional population that colleges and universities serve. Though a different argument could be made for the terminology used to describe these students, the reality is that students that do not enroll in degree-seeking programs immediately after high school graduation are considered 'other' on college campuses. They are considered different; not less, but also not equal. While this is inherently correct, students with different life experiences do interact with the university in a way that is different from traditional students, the response should be the same as it would be for traditional students that require additional support. Paulo Freire (2005) addresses this issue while discussing marginality of members of society; he describes the societal belief that "these marginal need to be 'integrated,' 'incorporated'" (p. 74). In this case, integration for non-traditional students is a sacrifice; it is a commitment to success in a system that is not designed for them to succeed. To be 'incorporated,' or to attend classes with other students on campus, this student population is forced to pretend that they are not different. They must interact with the same assignments, are expected to participate in the same

manner, and are indeed ushered into a system where they are forced to become a traditional student in order to succeed. Freire (2005) continues on to explain that "the truth is, however, that the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people living 'outside' the society. They have always been 'inside'" (p. 74). This statement indicates that non-traditional students are not "non-traditional" at all. It is not the students that have infiltrated the university, but the concept of the university that has constricted to exclude some of its members.

When the definition of the university is expanded, "non-traditional students" become just students – students that are deserving of the differing supports that they needed to thrive in their pursuit of an education. This inclusion indicates a necessity to provide what is needed in the form of support, co-curricular education, and inclusive policy that not only acknowledges student needs, but provides what is necessary. These provisions allow for greater academic success, and provide opportunities for deeper student development. Access to these supports will enable students from diverse populations to engage with their learning not in a way that is not equal to their peers, but in a manner that allows them to use their own experience to generate understanding. By calling attention to the university's definition of the ideal student, we allow the institution to recognize that the commitment to student service is missing a critical element; an understanding of what it means to be a student at the institution.

Sara Ahmed also discusses what it means to be an 'other' at an institution in their work *On Being Included*. Ahmed (2012) indicates, "diversity work can be what is required, or what we do, when we do not 'quite' inhabit the norms of an institution" (p. 175). While Ahmed indicates that there is something to be done, some action to be taken when one is considered the 'other', this observation of diversity also calls forward the history of the institution. The institution is only designed to support those students that it has previously supported. When the demographics

of an institution, or indeed a society, are altered, the institution must too change to meet the changing demand. While America continues to rapidly change, institutions have made progress in meeting the needs of new students. However, Ahmed (2012) also notes, "we don't tend to notice the assistance given to those whose residence is assumed" (p. 177). This reflection seems to address the question of intentionality behind student services. Though the university may aim to support each student, it can be difficult to understand the diverse needs of an ever-changing population. In this instance, it is vital that the student population is critically analyzed to determine where preconceived knowledge is acquired to determine the most prevalent gaps in support. Additionally, gaining student perspectives and compiling the experiences of student affairs professionals will better assist in understanding where the barriers to student success lie.

Ahmed outlines in her work that access to equality in regard to diversity is not only a barrier that must be overcome, but one that is deeply correlated to the institution's ability to make progress. In speaking of barriers to diverse student success, Ahmed (2012) says "the wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change" (p. 175). Ahmed (2012) indicates, "when we are stopped or held up by how we inhabit what we inhabit, then the terms of habitation are revealed to us" (p. 176). In order to fully examine the barriers to success, we must first be aware that a barrier exists. Ahmed argues here that the only way to determine what obstacles exist is to encounter them; to have success interrupted, and progress halted. Only after acknowledging an obstacle are we able to recognize that the impediment exists. Once this recognition has taken place, we can begin to understand why not everyone has encountered this blockage. This analysis not only leads to an understanding of what is prohibiting progress, but lends to a thorough analysis of what the 'other' has not received that those who have not interacted with the obstacle have already been provided.

After we understand what traits must be possessed to circumvent the obstacle, we begin to comprehend how to support students in a way that enables students to avoid or hurdle the obstacle. This assessment determines not only what the obstacle to success is, but also outlines how to navigate negating the obstacle. This negation is, by definition, the necessary support to promote equitable experiences and facilitate appropriate learning for students that do not 'fit the norm' on campus.

Jacques Derrida would support the idea that all students should be educated, but would not necessarily support the idea of a normative experience. Instead, Derrida would argue that there should be no 'normal' within the university. His concept of the university without condition describes an atmosphere of education where classroom limitations should be void. Derrida (2002) maintains that "the university without conditions is not situated necessarily or exclusively within the walls of what is today called the university" (p. 236). Here, he argues that learning occurs both inside the formal classroom, and in all spaces that surround academia. Because education occurs in each of these spaces, supports must also be provided to encourage success in these areas. While it is necessary to provide academic supports to all students, it is insufficient to only provide support for the classrooms when learning is taking place in all areas. Recognizing that non-traditional students may require diverse supports for a wide variety of co-curricular learning experiences is a vital element of encouraging student success. Provided that Derrida is correct, that learning occurs in all spaces, so too must student supports encourage and motivate success in every area. Though not all students will have the same needs when it comes to informal learning, all students will be engaging in some form of development outside of academia.

Combined, Derrida and Ahmed would agree that the university as it exists in its current state is not conducive to the success of all students. While Derrida would argue that this university is confining and diminishes the effects of co-curricular education, he would also argue that a remedy is possible. Derrida (2002) ends his lecture by saying to the audience stating "If the impossible that I'm talking about were perhaps to arrive one day, I leave you to imagine the consequences" (p. 237). Derrida's argument is that once you imagine the impossible, the very presence of the idea means that it is possible under certain circumstances. If we are to believe that it is impossible to meet the individual needs of every student, we must also believe that it will eventually be possible, if only we create the appropriate circumstances. In relation to Ahmed, Derrida would argue that each obstacle overcome begins to negate the impossibility of creating an environment that is inclusive to all. While Ahmed argues that the 'other' must be given the necessary and appropriate supports to be equal to the norm, Derrida might argue that the very existence of a 'norm' versus an 'other' maintains the very conditions necessary to hinder the success of all. In order to meet the needs of those with obstacles, these students must first be recognized as true members of the group.

Here, Freire would argue that the marginalized group, the 'non-traditional students' must lose their status as 'non'. This argument can best be explained through Ahmed's (2012) words; the university uses this classification to maintain its history, to uphold "the sedimentation of history" that alienates one group as 'other' and another as the norm (p. 175). To begin negating this classification, the definition of the university, description of students, and promise of support must be revisited. If the university does indeed wish to be inclusive, and is in fact dedicated to the success of all students, the university must first expand its definition of itself to reflect these

desires. Only after redefining may the university begin to translate the impossible into a program of change.

As a graduate student in the field of Student Affairs, I have had ample opportunity to consider how the applications of theory to practice. However, I have also had the privilege of reflecting on the past and the services that I have provided to students through my various roles in higher education. One experience that greatly exemplifies the need to provide services that do not 'other' students is the first year that I spent as a Resident Assistant and supported a student that I shall refer to as 'Alison'. Alison was the only person of color on my floor, lived in a single room, and rarely had visitors. Though I saw her in the hall often, she rarely stopped to speak to me, and always seemed in a hurry to get back to her room. One evening, as I was finishing a bulletin board in the hallway, Alison walked up behind me and quietly asked if she could help. I happily accepted the assistance, and told Alison that while I had all of the information on the board already, she could decorate however she wanted. As Alison worked, I sat in the hallway and watched her work.

Eventually, Alison began sharing her experience as a resident on our campus. Though our building was primarily first-year students, this was Alison's third year in the building. She shared with me that she preferred the building because it was one of the only spaces on campus where she did not always feel different from everyone else. Alison had a single room and rarely had friends over to visit. As a nursing student, Alison told me that she spent most of her time studying; she had not made many friends in her program and related to the new students that came each year as they learned about campus and met new people. She shared with me that while it was sometimes lonely to not have many friends, she knew that she needed to spend her time studying to make the grades needed to remain in the program. A first generation student and

the only one of her siblings to attend college, Alison was working to make her family proud. However, Alison was also working to prove something to her high school guidance counselor- that he was wrong about her. Her counselor had told her that she would never be accepted to a private school, and that she would not make it until graduation, particularly not in nursing school. At this point, Alison had not only been accepted to college, but had been accepted to the School of Nursing and was on track to graduate with her degree. However, Alison was working against more than her past. While she was enrolled in school, there were many family health concerns at home that Alison felt responsible for managing. In addition, Alison had recently broken off an engagement to an abusive man – one that was still bothering her family at home.

While Alison worked, I did the only thing I knew how to do: I listened. When she finished working, and had finished sharing all that she wanted to share, I offered the supports that I knew existed for her on campus. I reminded Alison of daily tutoring, recommended the counseling center, and offered to always be available if she wanted someone to talk to. That was the only time that I ever had a full conversation with Alison. While I know that she finished her Fall and Spring semesters that year, I will never know if she graduated with a Nursing degree as planned, decided to change her major and career track, or if the pressures of life outside of college proved too much to balance with school work and became more important than her dream of earning a degree. What I do know is that while my offers of assistance were well intentioned, they were likely not followed through on. Alison was one of four women of color on my floor that year; she had moved from a primarily black neighborhood to a primarily white institution, in a program that had zero full-time faculty of color. All of the counseling staff were white, the tutoring volunteers were not diverse, and I was not equipped to give her the supports she needed to be successful. Looking back, I wish that I had known how little help I had actually

given. Alison deserved nothing but the best, and I hope that she was able to find sufficient support to succeed through graduation.

Reflecting on my experience with Alison, I was overcome with sadness that I was not able to recognize her need for support in the time that I shared with her. I wish that I had possessed the emotional maturity, content knowledge, and student affairs experience needed to see the toll that a lack of resources had on her as a student at the university. Had I been more aware of theories of identity development, I would have been able to recognize that she may benefit from engaging resources surrounding sexual relationships. I would have seen that Alison needed support in balancing an out of state family that depended on her with her own need for academic success. As a first generation student, she could have used extra support learning how to navigate college, and may have considered learning more about what life after graduation may look like. Though I was able to recognize that she may benefit from speaking to a counselor or therapist, I did not have the community awareness to recognize that none of our institution's support staff were people of color. Had Alison been provided these resources, she may have had a stronger opportunity to be successful not only in the classroom, but in her life as an undergraduate student. It should not have been Alison's responsibility to know what supports would best assist her as she was interacting with a wide range of personal crises. The institution, on the other hand, should have been better prepared to provide her with a university without conditions, to help her overcome the historical and systemic barriers in place, and to aid in her battle against marginality in a community that drastically different from herself. It is our duty not only as student affairs practitioners, not as institutions, but as human beings to provide the best possible supports to our students. May no student be the exception to this promise.

I believe in having conversations with students, rather than teaching students lessons. Within my meetings with students, the most important aspect of our interaction is active listening. I believe that it is vital to ensure each student feels heard; by listening to the student and allowing them to describe their own experiences, I am best able to understand the student's needs and goals. I use my meetings with students as an opportunity to show the student that their experiences are valued by taking notes, asking questions to ensure thorough understanding, and referencing the student's narrative throughout the conversation. I provide spaces for students to begin practicing self-advocacy by allowing opportunities for the student to express their perspective and experiences within the situations that we are discussing, offer opportunities to disagree with my reflection and analysis, and engage students in decision making that will directly impact the student. Above all, I value the student as an individual worthy of the respect and dignity that I would show another professional. Through these practices, I support students' growth toward self-efficacy and feelings of value within the college community. Through my interactions, I not only support the student, but challenge them to discover new skills, create a deeper understanding of themselves, and assist the student in meeting their full potential. I believe that my role is to not only help the individual with immediate concerns, but aid in generating the best course of action to meet future needs and goals after leaving my office.

Of course, every student is different. It is widely accepted that every student, every person, brings their own experiences to the table when interacting with the community. However, what is not established is what to do with that knowledge. Too often I have seen the clashing of identities be "resolved" by asking each party to 'meet in the middle'. Yet that 'middle ground' appears to be less about working together and more about compromising the integrity of the individuals involved – asking them to meet in the middle only solves the problem if the issue at

hand is non-conformity. The 'middle ground' or 'compromise' is really only achieved by forcing them to adhere to or become the societal norm. Instead, we must place heavier emphasis on intercultural competence. Greater education of the higher education professional community leads to less opportunity for inadvertent oppression. Recognizing difference as more than just deviance from the norm allows student affairs practitioners to embrace the magnitude of what true codependence is or could be. In order to truly embrace the individual as central to the resolution of conflict, we must first recognize that each student contributes to their community. Through conversation with the student, we can better understand to which communities the student subscribes, and on which communities the student places emphasis. From there, we can aid the student in understanding that whether intentional or inadvertent, direct or indirect, every student and professional on campus contributes to the environment and experience of every other student on campus. When communities accept that they can only exist because of differences, then true growth begins to happen. By understanding this perspective, student affairs practitioners may stop recognizing people for only what makes them different, and begin to value to role that they play in maintaining the life of the community. One major goal of the student affairs practitioner should be to help students recognize that not only do they belong to the campus community, they will have the opportunity to play an integral role in every community to which they will belong after college. In this way, student affairs professionals can successfully support students in their understanding of how their actions impact the world now *and* in the future.

As an undergraduate student, I met with an advisor each semester to discuss my career goals, course trajectory, and have an opportunity to discuss any other needs that I may be having on campus. This was a required step prior to enrolling in courses for the following semester, but

not one that my advisors too seriously. I entered my 'advising' meetings with my desired classes already selected; they were always approved without question. There was very little discussion of my plans for the future, how I felt that the courses I was taking were impacting my development, of what I planned to do in the future. Instead, I was most greatly influenced by the informal advising that I received from my supervisors in my leadership roles. It was in these meetings that I came to understand who I was as a leader, how to best serve my own staff, and how I was actively and passively impacting my community. I also had the good fortune of working with a leader who was personally invested in my future and cared deeply about my post-graduate life. These sessions were focused more on asking difficult questions than on provide me with answers- I always left with more questions than I walked in with. However, often built in to these questions were the skills that I needed to answer the questions at hand. From my meetings, I was better able to understand what the true issues and questions were, and began to work independently to develop my goals rather than waiting for guidance.

When I graduated and left not only campus, but the company of my advisor, I was able to continue using the skills that I had learned to work through issues and decisions that I encountered in my personal life and I in the professional world. I have found that this is becoming a large aspect of my advising style – when individuals come to me with questions or concerns, I believe that the best way to provide assistance is to first understand what is important to the student. By teaching students this self-reflective skill, I equip them with tools necessary to continue self-development long after they leave my office. Not every advising session is planned, and only occasionally will these influential opportunities occur in a formal setting. While the opportunity to provide successful advising and supporting will exist during scheduled meetings, it is important to be prepared to provide support to students in any environment, at any time. To

provide truly lasting support to students, we must not only engage in mutual sharing of experiences, but lead by example with any advice that we may offer.

To me, effective advising and supporting in student affairs allows for significant learning and growth outside of the classroom. When done correctly, it will supplement academic learning, and provide opportunities to learn and practice soft skills, which translate into life after college. Advising and supporting aids in the development of the complete individual; not only are they learning information at the institution, but they are being supported in their moral and emotional development as well. The relationships built through advising and supporting help provide evidence to the students that they are valued and important to the future, and supports their development of self-worth. Additionally, when advising and supporting takes place in collaboration with academic studies, students are challenged to become aware of their global citizenship, and feel empowered to make choices that will positively impact the future of our world.

As a student affairs professional, I recognize the importance of resolving issues efficiently. I understand that there are times when, for the sake of the university and the health and safety of other students, there will be mandated outcomes and required pathways that the student must take. Yet I know that even in these moments, it is still possible to empower the student. In every interaction I have with students, I will take care to recognize their needs and appreciate their perspective. I will ask as many questions, and listen for as long as it takes to truly understand what the student needs to express. Though I may not agree with every assertation of the student, I will recognize that my life experience is not the same as theirs, and work to set aside my own barriers in order to better serve the student. I will continue to work to ensure that all students feel heard, recognized, and supported on campus an in the campus

community. Most of all, I will encourage every student to make decisions, engage in behaviors, and reflect on the experiences that will drive them closer to achieving their most valuable goals.

On university, college, and institution campuses, student affairs practitioners have an ethical duty to serve all students in their academic and personal growth. In order to implement appropriate and effective interventions to aid students in their development, practitioners must understand the ways in which the students need to be served. To do so, student affairs professionals must be able to identify the systems of power that influence the student population and interfere with their success. Practitioners should have a thorough understanding of what it means to recognize a student population, and how recognition intertwines with the redistribution of power that would better serve the student population. While considering interventions or changes to practices, procedures and policies at institutions, student affairs professionals and individuals that seek to serve students must place an emphasis on identifying and redistributing power within the institution. To begin this process, practitioners will need to gain an understanding of what it means to 'recognize' a student population, and what exactly must be recognized to support success.

The first step in serving underrepresented student populations is to understand what it truly means to recognize the students. When speaking of recognition, Fraser (2000) argues that at its core, recognition serves to "promote both universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness" (p. 107). In many cases, recognition manifests as an acknowledgement of the presence of these students on campus. However, this level of recognition is necessary, but insufficient. Instead, recognition must involve a discussion of the likeness of the underserved community to that of the majority, and a celebration of the differences that these students bring to the university. Recognition should be a call to clearly see

the ways in which the mission of varying student populations are the same, while cherishing the ways in which their paths to accomplishment may differ.

Recognition as a framework for systemic change relies on the idea that recognition of students plays a role in the redistribution of power. Within the context of services for students who are parents, one of the primary aspects of recognition that must take place for these students is the overwhelming intersectionality of the population. These intersectional identities – rooted in gender, race, class, and obligations outside of the university- must be acknowledged and understood prior to recognition of the student population to avoid misrecognition (Fraser, 2000). According to Fraser's (2000) 'identity model', based on the ideas of Hegel, "recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects, in which each sees the other both as its equal and also as separate from it" (p. 109). To become aware of another's identity thus means that one must become more aware of their own. In this way, recognition plays a key role in the development of self-identity and actualization (Frazer, 2000). Similarly, and particularly within the framework of parenting students, feminist perspectives ascertain that scholars and advocates have a responsibility to consider the "implications of race and class as well as sex" when analyzing the experiences of women in society (Combahee River Collective, 1986). By examining the interplay of each of the elements that contribute to student identity, an understanding of the power structures that are at work within the lives of parent-students becomes visible.

Prior to engaging in conversations of power structures and redistribution, student affairs advocates must also identify and articulate the validity of the students' inclusion within the university. The Combahee River Collective (1986) propose the concept of 'value of life' when examining the importance of advocacy, protest, and inclusion. The value of an individual is

determined by those in power, and is calculated by considering the ways in which the individuals conform to the expectations of those in power and existing power structures. When groups or individuals are assessed for the value that they bring to society, the calculations are drawn primarily from the ways in which an individual does not meet the expectations or ideals of those in power. Authorities of power use this interpretation to create an image that diminishes the perceived humanity of a group of people. However, Fraser's (2000) statement that recognition should seek to "supplement, complicate, and enrich redistributive struggles," it is crucial to understand where the power lies in order to critically determine how the power could and might be redistributed (p. 108).

Within the university, and when considering interventions that would impact parenting students, the primary source of power lies with university administrators. At institutions, administrators and faculty members are considered to be 'authorities of knowledge;' they are the individuals that hold, study and profess what is right and true for all. However, this ideology and mindset assumes that the knowledge held by university officials is Truth, rather than one perspective of life and the universe, or a perspective that may be debated or have an opposite. In order to provide service to students with children, faculty must begin by recognizing that the counter-knowledge to what they believe to be true for all students must also be true. That is to say, for instance, that if faulty believe that classwork should be the students' first priority, they must also recognize that this is not the reality for all students. In this way, faculty and educators can begin to recognize the true identities of the students in their classrooms, and redistribute power in a way that serves the students rather than serves as an obstacle to student success. Additionally, administrators have power over the student body at large – a power maintained by the opportunity to create, modify, and enforce policies that either support or negate student

success within the university. Similarly to faculty members, these administrators in power have the opportunity to make decisions that will influence student successes at the university and that may dictate how students proceed through their collegiate careers.

When considering the redistribution of power, it is crucial to recognize that though administrators and faculty members currently hold these roles, they are the only ones that can place the power into the hands of those that should actually wield it – the students. Parent-students should have the power to make and influence the decisions within the university that impact academic and social success. While, according to Ahmed (2012), the institution operates on the systemic "agreement on what should be accomplished, or what it means to be accomplished" within the university, students should have the power to be involved in defining their own success (p. 24). For many of the departments, functional areas, and offices to function, there must be a clear definition of success, and an outline of how students may achieve that ideal. In order to create an appropriate understanding of what this actually means for the parent-student population, implementation of Feminist Participatory Action Research would play a pivotal role in redistributing the power away from administrators and toward the students at individual institutions. Through these intentional actions and decisions, the institution moves toward better serving their students by recognizing the intersectional responsibilities, needs, and goals of each student. Only after deeply understanding the needs of these students can the university assist and empower the student population to meet their needs and accomplish their goals.

The Marginalization of Parent-student

When considering the historical trends and milestones that have led to the rights that are afforded to students who are parents, there are, of course, a myriad of intersecting and overlapping ideologies that have contributed to the historical foundations of this issue. However,

at the root of each of these considerations lies one common issue; sex and gender discrimination. While gender has contributed significantly to power structures throughout recognizable history, namely in the form of patriarchy and other structures that prescribe to the 'elderly white male leadership' dynamics, so too have counter movements been constantly at play. In order to fully understand the power dynamics at work in regard to parent-students within the university, it is critical to examine Feminist Movements of the 1970's, and legislature that was created in response to these demands.

To best situate the complex beginnings of rights for students who are parents within the university, it is imperative to understand the legislature that is commonly referred to as 'Title IX'. This section of the Education Amendments of 1972 was written with the intention of ensuring equal and equitable access to education for students. Title IX was created in regard to sex and gender based discrimination, and serves as formal documentation that no person shall have a different experience, particularly in education, based on their sex. However, even today, these biases still impact the student experience. Ducker (2007) articulates that violation of this amendment is not only discriminatory, but greatly impacts the ability of pregnant and parenting students to access education in the same ways that their non-pregnant peers engage with learning. According to Ducker (2007), statistically, a majority of students that identify as parents primarily responsible for their children also identify as female. This indicates that access to education for parent-students is, at large, an issue that should be protected by Title IX. While it is important to acknowledge that not all students who may be eligible for services or support based on their identity are female, it is critical to understand the basis of the right to education for this population. That right is inherently rooted in the fight to provide equal access to education for women, and this movement is a step toward equal access for all.

The implementation of Title IX is nestled within the Feminist Movements of the 1960's and '70's. Though the event that served as a catalyst for women's rights took place in 1923 with the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, feminist movements continue to fight for rights as interventions provided are necessary, but insufficient to meet the needs of the population. This is made clear by the implementation of Title IX nearly fifty years after the original legislature providing 'equal' rights to both men and women was passed. Similarly, Imbornoni (2006) shares that there were further amendments to legislature in 1964 that prohibited discrimination based on gender in employment. The passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act demonstrates the true historical inequality between men and women; though there was already standing legislature prohibiting discrimination and granting equal rights, further documentation was deemed necessary to fully articulate what 'equal' shall look like in different contexts. After the passage of Title IX in 1972, now updating legislature to not only state that men and women shall be equal, but prohibiting discrimination based on gender in both the workplace and the education system, further legislature was put in place to continue dismantling the hierarchy of men and women in society. Imbornoni (2006) also shares that in 1974, legislature was passed that prohibited discriminatory housing practices based on gender, closely followed by The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 that denied employers the ability to make employment decisions based solely on pregnancy. Throughout history, legislative acts have been written, implemented, passed and updated in order to narrow the gap between opportunities afforded to men, and those available to their female counterparts. Yet despite federal regulations that prohibit gender discrimination, there remain situations, contexts and occurrences, like the inaccessibility of education for parents, which illuminates the prevalence of gender-based discrimination in America.

At its core, Title IX represents an effort to 'level the playing field' for women in the context of education. Though this educational amendment did much to acknowledge the incongruences in student experiences based on sex, it does not acknowledge the intersectionality of women's identities that significantly impact their experience within the education system and the country at large. The Combahee River Collective (1986) addresses this intersection well, and articulates the need for continued feminist movements within society. The Combahee River Collective (1986) offers a critique of separatism within women's movements, and maintains that 'all must be included' in order for the movement to be successful. While the emphasis of this notion within the context of this group is reliant primarily on the intersectionality of gender and race, it is also imperative to understand that all intersectional identities must be included in order for feminist movements to progress and effectively acknowledge the complete women's experience. Understanding that the university and society exist as reflections of each other and are changed only when the other also seeks to change demonstrates the necessity of radically changing the perspective of women and their intersectional identities not only in society, but within the educational context as well.

Examining the intersectional identities of students allows us to better understand the needs of each student population and the student community as a whole. The Combahee River Collective (1986) outlines that we must look at the implications of race, class, and sex, rather than choosing to examine one element at a time. By examining the interplay of each of the elements that contribute to0 student identity, an understanding of the power structures that are at work within the lives of parent-students becomes visible. First, to understand the role that these students play within the context of the university, we must understand Ahmed's (2012) statement that the institution relies on the "agreement on what should be accomplished, or what it means to

be accomplished" (p. 24). In order for the university structure to function, there must be a clear definition of success, and an outline of how students may achieve that ideal. The university has invested in an array of ideologies that define 'success' and contribute to the concept of the 'ideal' student. Whether individuals subscribe to these ideologies or not, in order to attend and exist within the university without issue, compliance is mandatory.

In this instance. Althusser's (2014) concept of ideologies reproducing the dominant power structure occurs in the form of the single, traditional aged student as the norm. Students in pursuit of an education as their number one priority leaves them not only reliant on the university for a sense of purpose, but beholden to the institution as the driving factor of their future. However, parent students do not fit within this mold. Often they do not, and cannot, conform to the typical regulations in place at the university – to do so would mean to disregard their responsibilities as parents and caretakers for other human beings. This lack of 'requirement' or 'necessity' to exist within the university challenges the very structure itself, and renders this student population a perceived threat to the institution. In order for the university to function, students must feel obligated or somehow otherwise compelled to conform to the vision of the ideal student. The population of parent-students does not fit within this mold, and thereby challenges the structures at work within the university.

Perhaps the most visible of the power structures within the university are reflected by the hierarchical structure of university administration. Professors, administrators and stakeholders are considered 'authorities of knowledge'. However, the education provided by these 'authorities' is in and of itself based on an ideology. This assumes that the knowledge held by university officials is Truth, rather than one perspective of life and the universe. The phrase 'authority of knowledge' indicates that a person or ideology controls what information is true. What this

ideology does not acknowledge is parent-students' "need as human persons for autonomy" (Combahee River Collective, 1986). All individuals, including female students and students with children, require an environment that fosters independence, acknowledgement of individuality, and promotes self-efficacy. Yet regardless of the students' desire for autonomy and independence, the objectives of the university do not always align with the intentions of the students. Instead, institutions use their understanding of Title IX and anti-discrimination laws to meet the university's needs rather than acknowledging the importance of the student experience. As Ducker (2007) observed, this is evidenced by a focus on implementing ways to "instruct educators regarding applicable laws and techniques for avoiding potential liability for discrimination" rather than reflecting on ways to appropriately and effectively respond to student needs (p. 446). In 2007, nearly 35 years after implementation, the application of Title IX is marketed as a way to avoid legal responsibility rather than as a reflection of genuine interest or obligation to provide access to education to students of all genders and backgrounds.

Another consideration proposed by the Combahee River Collective (1986) is the concept of "value of life". The 'value of life' of an individual is defined or acknowledged by those in power, and is generated in relation to the ways in which the person fits or 'conforms' to power structures' ideologies. Typically, and particularly in cases of minorities and those who are historically marginalized groups, the 'value of life' is created from a deficit approach; it acknowledges primarily the ways in which an individual does not meet the expectations or ideals of the driving ideologies, and uses this interpretation to diminish the perceived humanity of a group of people. For instance, Ducker (2007) shares that "Title IX prohibits restrictions on extracurricular activities for pregnant and parenting teens" (p. 449). Yet by presenting this population from a deficit perspective, those in power gain the ability to control and devalue the

student experience. In order to appropriately comply with Title IX legislature, parents and pregnant women should be permitted access to the same opportunities as their peers. This includes appropriate timing of clubs and meetings, ability to be physically present for these meetings (with or without their children), and an ability to be involved outside of inflexible 'typical' university hours. Within the current university structure, given the expectations and obligations of university administrators, and current historical contexts of feminist movements within the university, this equitable access is not universally available to students who are parents.

While personal experiences and daily news indicate that equitable access to education is not universal, further historical situation will examine case studies and other reputable news sources to gain a deeper understanding of the current issues that women face within higher education. Similarly, it will be imperative to examine the intersectionality of male parent-students, Title IX, and feminist movements. Defining 'success' as expected by institutions, and how this definition has developed over time will contribute to the argument regarding power structures within the university. Additional research may be necessary to explore the validity of institutions labeling parent-students as 'other' within the context of the work of Sara Ahmed. Looking toward the future, institutional goals should focus on Ahmed's (2012) ideal of "embedding diversity in into the ordinary work or daily routines of an organization" (p. 23). According to Ducker (2007), in current society, "approximately 850,000 teenage girls become pregnant each year" (p.445). Through an examination of Title IX legislature, application of this amendment, and lived experiences of parent students, we will see that institutions have "systematically denied [parent students] equal access to school activities and extracurriculars" (Ducker, 2007, p. 445). Given the history of legislature surrounding women's rights, the

implementation of Title IX and continued legislature regarding equal access for women, it is imperative that we continue to examine current procedures and application of these guidelines both within higher education and in society.

Matt Reed, Dean at Brookdale Community College in New Jersey, has spent a significant portion of his career within higher education working to meet the needs of underserved student populations. In his own experiences, and through research of work being done at other institutions, Reed believes that basic needs must be met in order to enable students' academic success – at that it is the responsibility of academic institutions to provide resources that support students as they attain these needs. In reporting on the happenings at other institutions, Reed (2019) learned that the Academic Master Plan at Monmouth Community College lists "student basic needs" as a core value for the college – a decision that faced much criticism by college administrators and the community. As a community college in an affluent area, many assume that students attending this college are already set for success. However, the financial capital of the area is not evenly distributed. In 2019, the Helping Hands lounge opened its doors for an inaugural year (Reed, 2019). The lounge serves as both a food pantry and a supportive environment for students that may have difficulty meeting their own basic needs, and the needs of their children. The lounge is run by staff qualified to provide counseling and support students through their academic career, so students have access to more than just food when they enter this space.

On campus, a previously offered mobile food bank saved students over one million dollars over the course of a year (Reed, 2019). Reed anticipates that this number will continue to grow with the continued offering of resources in the Helping Hands Lounge. After meeting with students, the lounge helps relieve students of other stressors, particularly those surrounding food

insecurity, so the students are able to focus on their academic careers. When we help students meet their basic needs, we enable them to be more successful in the classroom. Ignoring these needs not only puts our students at a disadvantage, but does nothing to negate student suffering or address economic inequality within our communities.

Though institutions are beginning to understand the necessity of programs designed to meet the basic needs of students, Reed (2019) shares that funding for these programs can be hard to come by and difficult to maintain. Justification for funding of these programs can also be difficult depending on the administration of the institution (Reed, 2019). As this article points out, academic success should not be our only concern. As student affairs practitioners, we must also be concerned with the general welfare of our students. Reed (2019) identifies that many student populations are not receiving the basic necessities that they need to survive, which in turn prohibits their academic success. Regardless of our chosen functional areas, we should all remain aware of these needs, and be equipped to provide or recommend the necessary resources to the students with which we work. The intersectionality of class, socio-economic status, and parental identity inevitably plays a key role in programmatic development and the feasibility of interventions that seek to serve these students regardless of institution type.

Reed also reflected on his experiences at over five institutions that shut down their childcare centers either during his tenure at the institution, or just prior to his instatement at the colleges. He calls to question the decisions that institutions make regarding childcare, how these decisions are made, and the impact that this has on students. Reed mentions studies that show the positive impact that childcare on campus has on college completion for parents, and questions why these resources are being increasingly cut. He reflects on one interview where he asked this question of the interviewer and was essentially told that universities need to choose where they

lose money and cut out the fund-sucking offices. Childcare is not a self-funding space when offered in a way that assists students, and thus represents an option for institutions that need to cut spending. However, Reed also questions the society that has created a system where children are seen as a burden for individuals to manage on their own rather than as integral members of society. Reed shares that rather than offering child-care, institutions are migrating to more online courses that accommodate these students.

Reed's experiences with institutions that have shut the doors on child-care, in conjunction with studies that indicate the influence that child-care has on student success; demonstrate the necessity of providing services for students who are parents. While the proposed idea of offering online classes as a consolation for not offering childcare only offers a surface level solution. Though online courses may increase accessibility for more student populations that parents, it does not take into account the difference financial needs of diverse socioeconomic status. These courses disproportionately impact low-income students by requiring that they not only rely solely on a computer to complete their course work, but that they invest in ongoing internet services in order to complete school work on top of enrollment cost and fees. Additionally, this does not address the need that students continue to have – that someone be available to watch their children while they do school work and participate in their learning. This solution simply displaces the responsibility into the students' home and leaves parents even more alone in their pursuit of solutions that would enable them to succeed.

When considering options that would better serve our students, it is important to consider the depth of the concerns that the intervention seeks to address. Rather than the immediate response and impact of services, it is critical to understand the multitude of moving parts that must come together in order to fully address the inequity and provide appropriate support to

students. In this instance, the service offered does not scratch the surface of providing a 'similar' experience to all students. Instead, online courses make education less accessible than childcare would for parent students. When considered in conjunction with reflection and evidence from Doug Lederman (2019) that professors are not comfortable offering online courses (and that many are inexperienced in doing so), it becomes clear that this alternative support does not actually serve the student population that it is intended to aid. When considering interventions that will serve parent-students, it is crucial to address the extended impact that 'recommended' services will have on not only parent-students, but on the entirety of the student population.

The Impact of Support Systems on Education of Parent-students

First, it is necessary to understand that 'non-traditional' students are equally as deserving of an education as the traditional population that colleges and universities serve. Though a different argument could be made for the terminology used to describe these students, the reality is that students that do not enroll in degree-seeking programs immediately after high school graduation are considered 'other' on college campuses. They are considered different; not less, but also not equal. While this is inherently correct, students with different life experiences do interact with the university in a way that is different from traditional students, the response should be the same as it would be for traditional students that require additional support. Paulo Freire (2005) addresses this issue while discussing marginality of members of society. He describes the societal belief that "these marginal need to be 'integrated' [and] 'incorporated'" (p. 74). In this case, integration for non-traditional students is a sacrifice; it is a commitment to success in a system that is not designed for them to succeed. To be 'incorporated,' or to attend classes with other students on campus, this student population is forced to pretend that they are not different. They must interact with the same assignments, are expected to participate in the

same manner, and are indeed ushered into a system where they are forced to become a traditional student in order to succeed. Freire (2005) continues on to explain that "the truth is, however, that the oppressed are not 'marginals,' are not people living 'outside' the society. They have always been 'inside'" (p. 74). This statement indicates that non-traditional students are not "non-traditional" at all. It is not the students that have infiltrated the university, but the concept of the university that has constricted to exclude some of its members.

When the definition of the university is expanded, "non-traditional students" become just students – students that are deserving of the differing supports that they needed to thrive in their pursuit of an education. This inclusion indicates a necessity to provide what is needed in the form of support, co-curricular education, and inclusive policy that not only acknowledges student needs, but provides what is necessary. These provisions allow for greater academic success, and provide opportunities for deeper student development. Access to these supports will enable students from diverse populations to engage with their learning not in a way that is not equal to their peers, but in a manner that allows them to use their own experience to generate understanding. By calling attention to the university's definition of the ideal student, we allow the institution to recognize that the commitment to student service is missing a critical element; an understanding of what it means to be a student at the institution.

Sara Ahmed also discusses what it means to be an 'other' at an institution in their work On Being Included. Ahmed (2012) indicates, "diversity work can be what is required, or what we do, when we do not 'quite' inhabit the norms of an institution" (p. 175). While Ahmed (2012) indicates that there is something to be done, some action to be taken when one is considered the 'other', this observation of diversity also calls forward the history of the institution. The institution is only designed to support those students that it has previously supported. When the

demographics of an institution, or indeed a society, are altered, the institution must too change to meet the changing demand. While America continues to rapidly change, institutions have made progress in meeting the needs of new students. However, Ahmed (2012) also notes that "we don't tend to notice the assistance given to those whose residence is assumed" (p. 177). This reflection seems to address the question of intentionality behind student services. Though the university may aim to support each student, it can be difficult to understand the diverse needs of an ever-changing population. In this instance, it is vital that the student population is critically analyzed to determine where preconceived knowledge is acquired to determine the most prevalent gaps in support. Additionally, gaining student perspectives and compiling the experiences of student affairs professionals will better assist in understanding where the barriers to student success lie.

Ahmed (2012) outlines in her work that access to equality in regard to diversity is not only a barrier that must be overcome, but one that is deeply correlated to the institution's ability to make progress. In speaking of barriers to diverse student success, Ahmed (2012) says "the wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change" (p. 175). Ahmed (2012) indicates, "when we are stopped or held up by how we inhabit what we inhabit, then the terms of habitation are revealed to us" (p. 176). In order to fully examine the barriers to success, we must first be aware that a barrier exists. Ahmed argues here that the only way to determine what obstacles exist is to encounter them; to have success interrupted, and progress halted. Only after acknowledging an obstacle are we able to recognize that the impediment exists. Once this recognition has taken place, we can begin to understand why not everyone has encountered this blockage. This analysis not only leads to an understanding of what is prohibiting progress, but lends to a thorough

analysis of what the 'other' has not received that those who have not interacted with the obstacle have already been provided. After we understand what traits must be possessed to circumvent the obstacle, we begin to comprehend how to support students in a way that enables students to avoid or hurdle the obstacle. This assessment determines not only what the obstacle to success is, but also outlines how to navigate negating the obstacle. This negation is, by definition, the necessary support to promote equitable experiences and facilitate appropriate learning for students that do not 'fit the norm' on campus.

Nancy Schlossberg also posits that outlier students – students, who are not a part of the majority, are at a disadvantage. Schlossberg's (1989) theory of Marginality and Mattering focuses on the ways that individuals come to believe that they matter, the negative effects of marginality on individual success, and the long-term repercussions of both mattering and marginality on people and the community. Schlossberg (1989) postulates, "the condition of community is not only desirable but essential to human survival" (p. 5-6). Becoming involved in a community promotes connections between individuals, which encourages individuals to invest in and develop their own sense of self-worth (Schlossberg, 1989). These feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy are vital to the academic and personal successes of students as they progress through their time at the university and beyond.

For individuals entering unknown situations or environments in which they do not feel as though they belong, many people feel a sense of marginality. Shlossberg (1989) maintains that marginality is rooted in the question 'Do I belong?,' and can be "a temporary condition during transition, a description of a personality type, or a way of life" (p. 8). Marginalized populations – those students who are directly or indirectly told that they do not belong – are less likely to feel nourished and supported in their journey within the institution. It is vital for student affairs

practitioner to both recognize the areas for marginality in their functional areas and pursue solutions to these inequities. Because "social action can alleviate permanent marginal status," it is imperative that practitioners quickly, effectively, and continuously address areas of marginality. Through action on the part of the institution and the individuals that work within it, it is possible to negate previously existing systems and spaces of marginality, which dramatically increases the likelihood of success for the entirety of the student population.

According to Schlossberg (1989), the key actions that negating marginality are those that promote mattering. The most basic element of mattering is attention. As Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) contended, "The feeling that one commands the interest or notice of another person" is the basis upon which all feelings of mattering are rooted (p. 164). Recognizing and acknowledging students who are parents as having differing needs and priorities demonstrates that parent-students are indeed members of the campus community. This is the first step toward belonging to the institution community. Similarly, investing in parent students by providing engaging in conversations specifically regarding their individual circumstances as students, family members, and countless other identities, student affairs practitioners begin to help students actualize their importance. Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981, believe that individuals feel they matter when others care about their thoughts, desires, actions and futures. As practitioners, it is our obligation to provide this experience to students to motivate their feelings of mattering and belonging, which will encourage personal growth and self-esteem.

Another element of Schlossberg's philosophy of mattering refers directly to the actions and input of others. Schlossberg (1989) states, "although knowing that our failures are critical to another can be a burden, it also reconfirms that we matter to someone" (p. 10). This perspective confirms that necessity of student affairs professionals to invest personally in the students with

whom we interact. When students believe that others will be proud of their accomplishments and disappointed in their failures, they come to understand that their individual efforts and actions have an impact on their community. Providing support staff as a resource to these students, allowing the students to build relationships in which they may accomplish this ego-extension, is crucial to promoting the success of students.

The impact of mutual dependence also supports that notion that parent-students would benefit greatly from a specified community. While it is commonly understood that individuals rely on each other to determine their own behaviors, it is important to note that others' dependence on someone will also impact their decisions and actions (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Creating a community in which parent-students may create this sense of mutual dependence serves to generate a stronger sense of purpose and importance on campus. Additionally, a localized space for this community on campus that is inclusive of students' children would aid parent-students in balancing their priorities between classes, their children, and the motivational duty/obligation to assist others that belong to their community. However, these duties and obligations must be carefully balanced to avoid overextending energy and manage competing priorities. Through interviews, Schlossberg (1989) identified that one student

> …gave up graduate work and changed her work hours because of her mother-in-law's and her mother's illness. Despite her constant attention, her mother became difficult, refusing to eat and at times hitting her. This, coupled with her eleven-year-old daughter's depression, was almost too much to bear. The woman mattered too much. (p. 10)

Any interventions that serve parent-students must sufficiently understand the totality of responsibilities of the population. By creating a space on campus for these students, which is also inclusive of young children, they are enabled to intertwine their responsibilities rather than maintaining separation of competing obligations. By connecting and bringing together these

competing priorities, the dedicated space for parent-students will make it easier to balance obligations in a process similar to multitasking, rather than through complete separation.

When considering the redistribution of power in the university to the students, it is important to identify why this power must be situation with the population in question. In this case, Feminist Participatory Action Research will lead to a greater understanding of the challenges, struggles, obstacles, and successes of parent students as they engage with the university. A thorough understanding of this identity, or perhaps a comprehension that a thorough and complete understanding may never be achieved by an individual, will aid in the articulation of the necessity of including this population in the decision making process. Including feminist techniques and analyses in research will allow for stronger representation of marginalized women's groups, a deeper understanding or appreciation of women's activities, and a more thorough comprehension of the nuances amongst women's perspectives and experiences. This approach's emphasis on intersectionality will allow for a more broad scope of inclusion, extending past the assumed standard of non-traditional aged women to be inclusive of all that may benefit from the services deemed necessary. Fraser (2000) shares that student involvement in this process ensures that recognition will not "drastically simplify and reify group identities," but will acknowledge that "societies appear as complex fields" that encompass broad ranges of hierarchies and disparities (pp. 117-118). This analysis, when conducted by the students for the students through Participatory Action Research will place decision making and advocacy power with the students, engage students in policy making and revision processes, and will enable students to demand services that appropriately serve the parent-student population.

Reid and Frisby (2008) state that Feminist Research, Action Research, and Participatory action Research all "share some mutual goals;" it is because of these mutual goals and intentions

that they believe collaboration between the research methods would result in a more cohesive outcome (p. 94). By working together across the disciplines, Reid and Frisby indicate that these research techniques will be able to address and overcome the limits and gaps of the other. For instance, including Feminist techniques and analyses in research will allow for stronger representation of marginalized women's groups, a deeper understanding or appreciation of women's activities, and a more thorough comprehension of the nuances amongst womens' perspectives and experiences. Individually, Feminist Research is challenging the norms of the academy in regard to data collection, and seeks to create greater spaces for articulation of differences between women. To do so, feminist researchers work to develop research methods that both embrace diversity and recognize shared experiences.

The Feminist Research techniques, combined with Participatory Action Research processes create an environment that allows for in-depth discussion and understanding not only of self, but of causes of oppression, interplay of domination and subordination, and of intersectionality of multiple identities as they relate to marginality and experience. According to one researcher, "who retains control over the knowledge generation and dissemination remains 'one of the weakest links' one feminist research" (Reid & Frisby, 2008, p. 99). If this remains an ongoing question, are these research methods actually effective? Assuming that the methods of data collection and information gathering are appropriate, isn't the intention to maintain autonomy and promote self-efficacy in terms of power and control over one's own lived experiences? That being said, the answer to the question of who retains control of knowledge generation should be quite clear – the owner or creator of the story/experience owns and is responsible for creating the knowledge. Where the question lies, then, is not in who is

responsible for gathering the knowledge, but is this knowledge being responsibly gathered by non-biased, trustworthy researchers?

The first step in serving underrepresented student populations is to understand what it truly means to recognize the students. At its core, Fraser (2000) states that recognition serves to "promote both universal respect for shared humanity and esteem for cultural distinctiveness" (p. 107). In many cases, recognition manifests as an acknowledgement of the presence of these students on campus. However, this level of recognition is necessary, but insufficient. Instead, recognition must involve a discussion of the likeness of the underserved community to that of the majority, and a celebration of the differences that these students bring to the university. Recognition should be a call to clearly see the ways in which the mission of varying student populations are the same, while cherishing the ways in which their paths to accomplishment may differ.

Recognition as a framework for systemic change relies on the idea that recognition of students plays a role in the redistribution of power. Within the context of services for students who are parents, one of the primary aspects of recognition that must take place for these students is the overwhelming intersectionality of the population. These intersectional identities – rooted in gender, race, class, and obligations outside of the university- must be acknowledged and understood prior to recognition of the student population to avoid misrecognition (Fraser, 2000). According to Fraser's (2000) 'identity model', based on the ideas of Hegel, "recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects, in which each sees the other both as its equal and also as separate from it" (p. 109). To become aware of another's identity thus means that one must become more aware of their own. In this way, recognition plays a key role in the development of self-identity and actualization (Frazer, 2000).

In order to appropriately serve the parent-student population, we must first understand their needs. While it will not be possible to anticipate each individual need of the diverse population, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs allows us to anticipate the root cause of many concerns, which enables us to understand the challenges that parent-students as a whole may face. Maslow has created six levels of human need, which are applicable to people of every age, culture, and circumstance. Poston (2009) describes Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by indicating that while every individual is striving for self-actualization, we can only progress through the levels after our needs in that area have been sufficiently met and maintained. With an understanding that all people begin at the bottom of the pyramid focusing on basic needs and progress only these needs have been met, it becomes evident that supports and services must be offered that address all levels of need if educators seek to promote students into a space of self-fulfillment and self-actualization.

While Maslow's first tier of needs is typically considered in regard to children, the basic needs remain constant throughout the lifespan (Poston, 2009). The physiological needs that must be met are universal; regardless of age or responsibility level, Poston (2009) indicates that "there is still the need to meet the very basic essentials of life: the body must take on oxygen, water and food" (p. 349). The most basic needs of human life, the essentials that are required to make the human body function, are relevant for all people. Before students can focus primarily on academic success, their basic human functionality needs must be met. Similarly, parents must be sure that these needs are being met for their children as well before they are able to turn their attention away from the survival of themselves or their offspring. Poston posits that as people proceed through life, and as students progress through their academic careers, the concept of physiological needs remains constant – these basic and essential needs will always remain the

same (p. 349). Meeting these needs is essential in ensuring that students are able to focus their efforts on higher order needs.

After the essential functionality needs have been met, people are able to focus on ensuring that their safety and security needs are met. While these needs are physical in nature, they can also be emotional, economic, and any other area in which humans crave stability (Poston, 2009). For the parent-students which this intervention would seek to serve, it is likely that one primary area of concern would be economic stability. While indicating that adults are focused on the financial aspects of security, Poston (2009) notes that children and dependents may be occupied with the "need for a safe family environment" (p. 350). However, this need also reigns true across the lifespan. The need for safety and security in the home and in relationships remain prevalent, and appropriate physical and emotional supports are necessary to ensure that students are able to sufficiently meet these needs for their children and for themselves, which will enable students to further fulfill their own potential. While these needs must be met in order to promote academic success, it is essential to understand that "fear hinders one's ability to move on to the more advanced platforms of Maslow's pyramid" (Poston, 2009, p. 350). Fear, concern, and stress revolving around one's physical and emotional safety can drastically interfere with the ability to progress onto the more deeply psychologically rooted levels of Maslow's Hierarchy. Providing these supports to our students will allow them to focus on higher-order concerns, such as belonging, esteem, or self-actualization.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs progresses past the basic physical needs into psychological needs with the addition of the need for belonging and love. Poston (2009) is clear that these psychological, emotional, and social needs "generally [become] the priority only after the physiological and safety needs have been sufficiently met and maintained" (p. 350). In order to

promote community and mutual growth, the physiological needs must first be met. However, after these needs have been actualized, it is crucial for humans to feel that they belong to a larger entity than just themselves. As these communities are created, Poston (2009) observed that "whatever gets reinforced, supported, or accepted by these peer groups will often determine which type of group the adolescent will affiliate him or herself with" (p. 350). Though examples of this conformity tend to fall into the negative aspects of group-think, like delinquency, criminal activity, and gang membership, it is important to remember that individuals "tend to affiliate with those individuals or groups who accept them" (Poston, 2009, p. 350). If there are no groups, peers, or those in positions of power that accept these students, students are not likely to achieve high levels of esteem, and thus are less like to develop strong, lasting feelings of self-efficacy. Generating feelings of belonging and empowerment enables students to form relationships that are motivating, supportive, and encouraging. With these supports from peers, faculty, and staff, students are likely to achieve greater levels of personal and academic successes in their lives, seeking support and assistance more frequently from the groups to which they belong.

Feelings of belonging are particularly relevant for students, as there is a direct correlation between the level of belonging that students feel, and the effect that this has on students' self-esteem (Poston, 2009). Similarly to the previous tiers of needs, the esteem level may only be of concern once all prior needs are met and maintained. Poston (2009) shares that one of the foundational elements of esteem in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is that the process of building self-esteem contributes directly to one's own self-awareness. This means that in order to support full development of students, it is vital to encourage behaviors, thoughts, and opportunities that might contribute to higher levels of self-esteem. Poston (2009) postulates that at the core of humanity lies the "strong need to be respected by others" in order to formulate levels of esteem

(p. 351). For students within the institution, there is a focus on belonging; students will create their sense of self based on their ability to belong. In order to accommodate and meet this need, it is crucial to create spaces where community can be fostered and encouraged. Given Poston's (2009) position that the "lower form of self-esteem is met when an individual has established a level of status, recognition, fame, reputation and appreciation," it is critical that services provided afford students the opportunities to feel these elements that contribute to self-concept (p. 351). This solidifies the understanding that recognition of students is critical, and identifies the professional and moral obligation to appreciate students for all of their roles and identities, not just as they relate to the university. Through this intentional building of understanding and recognition, student affairs practitioners are able to influence the ability for parent-students to focus on higher-order needs.

After these initial levels of esteem have been actualized and maintained, students may move forward toward higher-level esteem. Poston (2009) indicates that

> This higher form of self-esteem requires less maintenance because through accomplishment, it becomes a permanent part of who the individual is. We can say that once a person has gained respect for himself or herself, it is much harder to lose that respect or to have it taken away. (p. 351)

By empowering students and helping them actualize their personal, professional and academic accomplishments, student affairs practitioners create a lasting impact which provides students with the skills and abilities that they will need to be successful after leaving the university, and across multiple contexts. Additionally, the idea that higher-level esteem does not require the same consistency of maintenance to be sustained indicates that this should be one of the levels toward which we should strive to support students. As educators, the objective is to provide students with the skills necessary to be successful post-graduation; by instilling in students a sense of self-worth that can be upheld without consistent reinforcement, we better prepare

students to survive and self-advocate in society after they are no longer students receiving student affairs services.

The final tier toward which higher education professionals should support their students is awareness of self. It is in this sector that students become truly free to focus on their own development, their passions, and their futures as contributing members of society. Poston (2009) describes Maslow's self-actualization as

> the internal dialogue that everyone establishes at some point in their lives. In order to do that, there must be some establishment or satisfaction of the prior needs. Once all of the previous needs have been met, an individual can direct his or her focus toward a true calling. (p. 352)

This final focus area is where students become able to identify their own 'destiny,' or begin to develop their sense of purpose, both within themselves and in regard to society. Only after students have achieved this tier of needs and begin to satisfy the desires within it are they able to fully reach their potential as individuals and as community members. According to Poston's (2009) understanding of Maslow, this stage occurs after levels of esteem have been established because "once self-respect is gained, the individual can take a more proactive approach to bettering themselves, as well as being able to remain focused on resolving any dilemmas that may arise regarding the deficit stages" (p. 352). Reaching this level allows students to focus on their passions, direct efforts toward the future, and motivate themselves toward personal definitions of success. In helping students, to the best of our abilities as people, meet all of their basic physical and emotional needs we enable them to change the trajectory of their energy expenditure, mental efforts, concerns and issues, and allow them to focus on their own true power as individuals to create and sustain change for themselves and the world. However, as Poston (2009) mentions, it is crucial to "remember that all individuals are constantly impacted by the forces of life, some of which are far beyond personal control" (p. 353). It is possible for

individuals' most pressing needs to fall in various levels of the hierarchy depending on their most current circumstances; an individual's standing within the hierarchy does not always remain constant or progress forward, but can also regress under extenuating circumstances. For that reason, it is essential to continue providing resources that meet the various needs in Maslow's hierarchy in order to ensure not only that all parent-students are being served in the ways that they require, but that students with significant life changes throughout their academic career are able to receive consistent and appropriate support from those in their community.

As a graduate student, I have had many opportunities to interact with both graduate and undergraduate students. In building relationships with my peers, I learned that one of my classmates was a mother. She lives about an hour away from campus, works full-time close to home, and is enrolled in courses full-time. Three days out of each week, this means that my classmate and friend is spending five extra hours away from home in order to obtain a graduate degree. Over the course of our program, I learned that the rigorous demands of three full-time jobs (employment, parenthood, and graduate school) is leaving this student exhausted. She is consistently concerned about her children's well-being, particularly in moments when they are ill, struggling with schoolwork, or need emotional support – all of which she must support and manage from a distance three days per week. Additionally, she recognizes that her enrollment in courses leaves her partner with added pressures as they had to take on additional roles and responsibilities when my classmate returned to college. She shared with me that for her, graduate school is demanding in ways that she could previously only imagine. However, in order to progress with her goals and dreams, obtaining a degree was necessary. Upon graduation, she hopes that these sacrifices will result in more opportunities for herself and her family.

In my time providing academic advisement to undergraduate psychology students, I had the opportunity to work with an adult student to create an appropriate course schedule and graduation plan. During our meeting, this student shared with me that they had attempted to complete their degree over many years at a plethora of institutions. However, for many reasons, they had previously been unsuccessful. This semester, barring any unforeseen circumstances, they will graduate with not one, but two degrees. While I would assume that this would be exciting and relieving news, the student that I was working with did not seem overjoyed. They shared with me that though they were happy to have finally actualized this goal, they were disappointed that their family would not be able to celebrate with them. In order to complete their degree, this student made the decision to leave their two children in a different state with family members with they finished their degree program. They shared with me that though they knew obtaining a degree would be best for their family, they also felt guilty relying on their teenage son to help raise their younger daughter. Though this parent called home often, checked in with their children and family, and tried to support in any way possible, they knew that this decision had permanently impacted their family. The student had worked to find an educational program that would be affordable, accept previous credits, and would allow them to work full time to help support them and their family. They shared with me that attending this program was the best option that they could find, but did mean that they would have to live with friends in the area, without enough space for their children, in order to accomplish their academic goals. Upon reflection of this interaction, it was clear that this situation was an opportunity to support future students that may face similar obstacles.

If the university had offered resources to better support this student, such as on-campus housing for them and their family, this student may have been able to accomplish their goals

alongside of their children, and without the guilt of returning to school. Additionally, if there were a streamlined method for connecting this student with campus and community resources that would help them find affordable housing, employment, or relocation funds for the entire family, many of the stressors that this student identified would be lessened, and their needs across multiple tiers of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs would be met. Providing these resources would not only allow this student to focus on their school work more easily, but may have enabled them to complete their degree more quickly than the stop-and-start method that led them to this final attempt.

Both in my role as an advisor and working with Residence Life and Housing Services, I worked often with students that held full-time employment in addition to their classes. It was particularly difficult to serve these students given the time constraints of classes and their work schedules. The business practices of the institution made it difficult to serve these students, as university working hours are not always accessible for those who are working, or relying on childcare in order to attend classes. In my experience, these conditions have resulted in poor connections between the institution and the students; those that fall in to the full-time employment category often were not aware of many of the campus and community resources that were available to them because they were not able to attend the information sessions in which they would have acquired this information. These students typically were not as involved as their student-only counterparts based on the additional time commitment and time of day that these opportunities were offered.

As academics and members of the university community, students that work full-time were often at a disadvantage. In the event that a university policy was allegedly violated, scheduling a conduct meeting or hearing was difficult, as it must work around both the students'

schedules and the professional staff's availability. In the event that students did not communicate with hearing officers about their inability to attend, students missed out on the opportunity to share their perspective, which often resulted in a less than ideal outcome for the student. Similarly, if residential students were having issues with their roommates, it was extremely difficult to arrange for a meeting or mediation to discuss the issues. In many cases, by the time a meeting was able to be scheduled, concerns had escalated and the relationships had been damaged beyond repair. In these instances, students will full-time employment theoretically had the same resources available to them as all other students, but were unable to appropriately access these resources.

Academically, these students' status as full-time employees also had a negative impact. Throughout my meetings with students, I learned that in many courses large projects are assigned and mandated as group work. However, it was significantly more difficult for these students to collaborate with their peers based on their work schedules and other obligations that limited their freedom to work on classwork with classmates outside of class. Additionally, the advising hold requirement left many students at a disadvantage. Prior to scheduling courses for the next semester, all students must meet with an advisor to have an account hold lifted. Yet university business hours severely limited these students' opportunity to schedule advising appointments. In many cases, this meant that students were not able to get a meeting until after their intended advising date. This resulted in less course availability, as other students had enrolled before they had the chance. These limited courses rendered it more difficult to enroll in necessary courses, limited students' options of classes to choose in which they may be successful, and delayed students' opportunity to meet graduation requirements. After observing these issues

and recognizing my own inability to properly serve students, I was able to modify my expectations and provide services that were more accessible to students.

As an academic advisor, I was able to provide more flexible options for conducting advising meetings to better accommodate student needs. Rather than requiring in-person meetings, I began offering online meeting opportunities as an option for students that could not come to campus. As I became more comfortable in my role, I was able to respond to many questions and concerns via email rather than requiring in-person meetings, requesting to meet with students only for large issues or conversations that would require discussion and consideration. On a few occasions, I was able to provide advising over the phone to students that would benefit from discussion but were not able to attend an in person meeting. For students with whom I was able to meet, I assisted the students in creating academic plans for the remaining academic career with explanations of how to modify the plan as needed. This thorough collaborative planning allowed student to spend one in-person meeting asking any questions, learning about graduation requirements, and understanding the advising and course selection process, which will make it easier for them to engage in the process in the future. My intention is that this understanding will allow them to move through subsequent semesters without the necessity of an in-person meeting each semester so that they will have more flexibility in their opportunities to schedule. In instances where physical attendance was mandatory, students were permitted to bring their children with them; this made meetings much more accessible by not requiring the financial and time constraints that come along with child care.

In order to best serve students, such flexibility will prove essential. My ability to offer meetings outside of university hours enabled me to meet with many students that previously

struggled to have their needs met. It allowed one mother to attend an information session that led to her changing her major to best suit her needs – all with her children eating dinner by her side. A thorough analysis of university policies, revisiting expectations that disproportionately impact parent-students is critical to the success of this student population. Collaborating across the university to find ways in which students' children might be permitted or included in the classroom will open unimaginable opportunities not only for parents, but for other students across campus. An examination of academic policies that ostracize parent-students by placing them at a disadvantage, such as policies that penalize parents for absences due to children's illness, or those that limit the ability for new mothers to enroll in classes based their inability to attend classes surrounding their due date, should be rewritten to increase inclusivity of the university.

While considering the resources that may be necessary to meet the differing needs of parent-students, it is important to understand that these needs may fall in many different tiers of Maslow's hierarchy of Needs, in addition to various categories of need. Based on my previous interactions with parent students, I was able to identify two primary aspects of student needs: physical, and emotional. In order to serve students, we must address both elements of essential human need. Within the physical realm, it is important to address students' financial stability, safety and security, health and wellness, and access to reliable childcare. Additionally, parents' emotional well-being is vital to their success as students. Finding was to give support and encouragement or achievements, fostering feelings of belonging, motivating persistence as students, and addressing the competing responsibilities and obligations of being both a parent and a student will improve the student experience and promote success within the institution. Though these needs are also true of other student populations, the resounding impact of these

struggles carry on to future generations. In order to serve our community, our society, and the successes of future generations, it is imperative that institutions of higher education intentionally serve parent-students.

The Social Impacts of Better Serving Parent-students

In 2015, the United Nations created 'Sustainable Development Goals' that are applicable to all members. These seventeen goals are intended to create a "better and more sustainable future for all" (United Nations, 2015). The goals, if upheld globally, will help foster and maintain equality among people, quality of life, and livelihood of the planet. While some of these goals relate solely to the Earth and how to preserve it as a life-force, many of the goals focus on the sustainability of human people. As a part of the United Nations, Americans have a duty to uphold these expectations and work toward a more sustainable future for generations to come.

As an institution, universities and colleges should strive to contribute to Goal #4: 'Quality Education.' Institutions of higher education have the opportunity and obligation to increase the number of well-informed citizens there are in the community. The United Nations (2015) outlines that "in addition to improving quality of life, access to inclusive education can help equip locals with the tools required to develop innovative solutions to the world's greatest problems". Creating spaces where individuals not only have equitable access to education, but have the ability to creatively apply their learning will exponentially impact not only the lives of students, but the entirety of the community in which the institution is situated. According to the United Nations (2015), "in the past decade, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrollment rates in schools particularly for women and girls". Providing targeted opportunities for women within the institution not only

supports the goal of quality education, but takes strides toward gender equality and equitability within the institution and society.

Being a parent while also a full-time student disproportionate impacts women versus men. The United Nations (2015) indicates, "women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world" (2015). Regardless of intentionality, biases exist toward mothers as they work to navigate the academic community as students. Providing resources to all parent-students serves the women that are generally marginalized, and simultaneously dismantles the stigma that men are not primary caretakers by providing equal supports for both men and women. The United Nations' (2015) goal of 'Gender Equality' states that "Providing women and girls with equal access to education […] will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large." Providing services that support primarily women in their pursuit of education not only drives forth the United Nations goals, but supports the local economy and contributes both directly and indirectly to the community as a whole.

Another goal, "Decent Work and Economic Growth, Sustainable Cities and Communities" is also supported by the ideal that parents should be encourages as students, and their journey must be supported in order to create a more sustainable society. The United Nations (2015) states "sustainable economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy." Given that many places of employment now require a degree of some level to be considered as a candidate, it is vital that universities support students as they seek a degree for employment eligibility. Institutions create people who are eligible, based on skills and knowledge necessary, for employment after graduation, which increases the number of citizens that contribute to societal development. Additionally, the United Nations (2015) maintains that "job opportunities and decent working conditions are also required

for the whole working age population." With this in mind, it is critical to assist in the application, acceptance, and ongoing employment process for students to ensure that appropriate working conditions are being met that support student success rather than hinder growth and development. When parent-students can work throughout their college experience, they are able to provide for their families, are enabled to be successful in the career search process in the future, and are able to positively contribute to the local economy.

The United Nations (2015) goal, "Reduced Inequalities," focuses on closing the disparities between differing groups of people. In relation to parent-students, this emphasis is two-fold: interventions that address this goal should seek to lessen the gap between students who are parents and those who are not, and those in society who are educated compared to those who have not had the opportunity to seek or complete a collegiate education. The United Nations (2015) recognizes that "inequality persists and large disparities remain regarding access to health and education services." However, it is possible to negate these differences. "To reduce inequality, policies should be universal in principle, paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations;" this is a primary tenant of the United Nations' (2015) objective regarding reducing inequalities. This is true as well for students on campus – policies must take into consideration the parent-students who are traditionally marginalized and underserved.

Finally, it is critical to observe the United Nations' (2015) final objective, "Partnerships for the Goals". The United Nations (2015) states:

> A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level.

In order for all interventions and goals to be successful, they must rely on consistent and mutual collaboration. Intentional collaboration between departments, academics/student affairs, and institutions will enable colleges and universities to provide appropriate services to the parent-student population. As institutions work to meet the needs of their students, it is critical to remember that collaboration that is required for these interventions to be successful. Just as each goal is dependent and intertwined with another goal, each element of an intervention must also be cyclically intertwined with another. The students, institution, and community must all be involved in, contribute to, and benefit from the relationships that are formed and services that are provided in order for the results to be both beneficial and sustainable over time.

According to Anthony Cortese, a sustainability advocate, education should and must serve as the basis for all sustainability reform. Cortese (2003) outlines in his work *The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future* that institutions of higher education will play a vital role in shaping a sustainable future across the globe. In order to do so, institutions must focus on four pillars of education: the context of learning, the process of education, practicing higher education sustainably, and creating partnerships with communities. By creating programs, policies and procedures that cater to these four tenants of sustainable education, higher education institutions will create an environment in which sustainable citizens of the future will learn, grow, and develop alongside their peers. At this point, however, it is unrealistic to imagine that institutions are capable of truly attaining these objectives in the current systems that exist and dictate higher education. Before colleges and universities can truly emphasize sustainability, they must first turn their focus away from the business model of education. In order to achieve this, I propose a radical transformation of the university into a charitable non-profit organization.

In order to justify my proposal of a radical systemic overhaul, I will examine each of the four pillars of education that Cortese outlines in his work. Through this lens, I will articulate the rationale for converting institutions of the higher education system to charitable nonprofit organizations. Because I believe that the current university system is not capable of supporting the intrinsic value of creating sustainable citizens on a global level, I have come to the conclusion that the only way to drastically modify the values of the university is to overhaul the entire system. By creating an education system that is not focused on quantity of output but rather is focused on the qualitative impact of the experience, we become able to shift the missions of higher education institutions toward a sustainable and livable future.

The first of Cortese's (2003) recommendations for how sustainability takes shape within higher education is in what he refers to as 'the context of learning'. Here, Cortese (2003) argues that institutions must modify themselves to make environmental "values and ethics a seamless and central part of teaching" (p. 19). As the university currently stands, this is not possible. In the current structures, the central elements of teaching are the information and skills necessary to survive in a capital-oriented society. However, by modifying the university to reflect the needs of the Earth and the people rather than the needs of the economy, we as professionals become better equipped to have honest moments of teaching about the ethical responsibility of humans to take care of the Earth, rather than teachable moments about professionalism in the workplace, or how to negotiate a higher salary. Though professionalism and negotiation are key skills in modern work forces, they negate the potential for, and often overpower the necessity of, conversations of sustainability in the university. If the university were to exist as a sustainability-focused non-profit, learning would occur within the context of sustainability rather than sustainability occurring within the context of learning.

Cortese (2003) also argues that sustainability will occur in in the 'process of education'. Within this tenant, education occurs not only through lecture and study, but through experience and practice. Instead, courses and services would focus on 'inquiry based learning, and information would be gathered through personal experiences rather than traditional lecture-style courses. This approach is supported by the works of John Dewey and John Locke, who value experiential learning above all else. Though information transmission can be useful and should certainly be continued in some contexts, Cortese's (2003) argument that "we retain 80 percent of what we do and only 10 to 20 percent of what we hear or read" cannot be ignored (p. 19). In order for the vital studies of sustainability, sustainable actions, and future global ramifications to be impactful, the knowledge must come from personal experience and application. As an organization that works to achieve lasting sustainable goals, the non-profit university model provides the environment necessary for this category of critical education.

In the current education system, decisions made inevitably come down to the monetary impact or burden of the choice. Often the financial burden of making sustainable choices is great enough that the less sustainable, and significantly more cost effective, option is chosen instead. However, when the university shifts its focus away from capital gain and onto the social, ecological, and economical benefits of behaving sustainably, the university itself can begin to make decisions that uphold the highest level of accountability in regard to sustainability. Cortese's (2003) third outcome for a sustainable university is that the university would "make sustainability an integral part of operations" (p. 19). In short, the university would practice the same sustainability initiatives and values that it works to instill in its students. This outcome becomes significantly more achievable when the obstacle of institutional financial gain is eradicated and replaced with a renewed purpose. Rather than working to make profits, the

institution exists to uphold the values of sustainability and further the mission of creating sustainable citizens for the future.

Cortese's vision for the future of higher education includes one vital extraneous element that is pivotal to the lasting success of the sustainable model. In order to fully attain sustainability within the institution, universities must create strong partnerships with the local and regional communities. Through this community building work, Cortese (2003) states that institutions will contribute to "socially vibrant, economically secure, and environmentally sustainable" communities (p. 19). In doing so, the university upholds the United Nations (2015) Sustainability Development Goals of Creating Sustainable Cities and Communities, and generating Partnerships to Achieve the Goal. While these partnerships may be possible now, placing a heavier emphasis on the relationships that exist between members and divisions of the community will aid in demonstrating to students the importance of collaboration toward a common goal. When the mission of the university is to promote sustainability, anyone in the community is capable of participating.

The university as it stands now is incapable of the drastic changes necessary to accurately reflect the need for sustainability in education and in our daily lives. However, it is possible for educational institutions to transform into platforms for change. It is possible for Higher Education to become the leader not in debt creation, but in generation of sustainable citizen. With a change in framework and methodology, the university can become more than a space for antiquated resource consumption – it can become a space of deep learning, influential experience, and cultural change. Though the concept of transforming the entire education system may be radical, the anticipated outcome truly is simple. By creating a space for students to learn and

experience the world in a space that values and promotes sustainability, we as higher education professionals will work to promote sustainable global citizens for generations to come.

Chapter 4

Design

Purpose

In order to identify exclusionary practices and truly understand the impact of these practices on the lives of students with children, I believe that Action Research is a necessary means of knowledge acquisition. Primarily through the use of Critical Action Research and Feminist Participatory Action Research, I intend to engage in knowledge acquisition directly through the experiences of individuals that have lived and experienced marginality based on their status as parents throughout their time as students. Action Research is not only an appropriate means of knowledge acquisition, it is a necessary component to understanding the underlying issues that marginalized students face daily. Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) indicate that Critical Action Research and Participatory Action Research both allow the researcher to gain insight into lived experiences of the populations with which they work, and allow the researcher to develop "practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes" (p.10). Rather than working to gather a theoretical understanding of the issues at hand, Action Research is concerned with generating knowledge from the practical implementation of current policies and procedures, and the daily lives of those that experience oppression. Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) maintain that Critical Action Research is done in the "pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people," and works to support the "flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (pp. 10-11). This method of research and knowledge gathering is not done simply for the act of knowing, but is undergone with the intention of supporting social justice and creating social change.

Using Critical Action Research to generate knowledge enables researchers to formulate a thorough understanding of issues and systems that cause oppression. Participatory Action Research takes this system further, and engages the researcher in the community with which they are concerned. This engagement enables members of the community to interact directly not only with the researcher, but with the research that is being done. Utilizing Schlossberg's (1989) theory of Mattering and Marginality as a lens through which Participatory Action Research is viewed, it is clear that participation in the knowledge acquisition that is taking place not only enables individuals and gives them a sense of self-efficacy; it enables a transition of focus away from marginalization, and begins to emphasize the reality of the lived experience of the community. In recognizing the experiences of individuals in marginalized communities, researchers give participants a sense of importance – an acknowledgement that their experience is real and true. Feminist Participatory Action Research utilizes all of these facets to identify and overcome intersectionality and power dynamics, and work to create social change through the research.

Incorporating Feminist Participatory Action Research, I intend first to focus on the concept of reflexivity in relation to resource provision on campus for students with children. Reflexivity is the concept that power dynamics are constantly at play in any given situation, and must first be acknowledge before they can be dismantled or addressed. According Reid and Frisby's (2008) articulation of Feminist Participatory Action Research, reflexivity is "attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process" (p. 100). Generally speaking, reflexivity addresses power dynamics in relation to ongoing issues by identifying and examining these systems as they specifically relate to the issue. Reid and Frisby (2008) emphasis the importance of reflexivitity, as it identifies "power relations and their effects

on the research process" (p. 100). Power dynamics are not only in existence with regard to the issue being examined, but exist within the research process as well. These dynamics must be thoroughly identified, considered, and analyzed prior to engaging in any level of research. One of the primary power dynamics that is identifiable through Feminist Participatory Action Research is that of the relationship between the researcher and the community members. A large concern when conducting Participatory Action Research, from the feminist perspective, is accountability for any knowledge that is produced. In order to address this concern, researchers and participants must first address the existing power dynamics that would interfere with or inform this decision making process. Reid and Frisby (2008) indicate that generating a working understanding of the "ethical judgements that frame the research and mark the limits of shared values and political interests" between participant and researcher plays a key role in ensuring that participant voices feel truly valued, that the research methods are agreed upon and acceptable, and that participants genuinely feel appreciated (p. 100). Only after generating a true understanding of the researcher and the participant's role in knowledge acquisition can a decision be made regarding ownership of the knowledge created.

Feminist Participatory Action Research places significant emphasis on identifying intersectionality and working to uncover women's experiences. Primary elements of this research focus on intersectionality, and the impact on research outcomes. This allows researchers and participants to first identify areas of intersectionality that may be impacting their experiences in relation to the issue at hand. Additionally, this analysis provides a space to begin examining areas of shared experience across the population, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, and many other identifying aspects of marginality. Reid and Frisby (2008) argue that, in the Feminist approach, "conceptualizations of oppression have inadequately captured women's

experiences and that intersectional analyses can be productively advanced by adopting a FPAR framework," which serves as the catalyst for identifying areas of intersection and working to uncover the impact that this has on experience (p. 97). By acknowledging these overlapping identities and the role that they play in overall experience, participants have the opportunity to understand and deeply criticize the structures that marginalize and assume power in their lives. This recognition leads to a more comprehensive analysis of concerns, and provides a platform to begin working toward social justice. The intention of Participatory Action Research is not for the researcher to understand and 'solve' the problem' but rather to 'co-generate' the research questions, and the outcomes of these research efforts. However, Reid and Frisby's (2008) feminist research perspective says that these attempts at collaboration in typical Action Research "often fall short of creating genuinely inclusive, safe, and unbiased spaces of relevance for people who live in the 'margins' of society" (p. 99). With that being said, a substantial effort and emphasis should be placed in ensuring that all participants are included in decision making processes, have access to their own stories, and play a significant role in the understanding of their own knowledge generation.

Given the influence and perspective provided by the feminist lens, I intend to approach my concerns regarding service for students with children through Critical Action Research and Participatory Action Research. Feminist research methods will enable me to engage directly with the community of students that I believe are currently underserved, and will involve the population in all research methods. Reid and Frisby (2008) outline Participatory Action Research as "research toward social justice" – a step that I believe is warranted and necessary given the exclusionary and oppressive policies currently in place (p. 94). When choosing Feminist Participatory Action Research, Reid and Frisby (2008) outline an essential consideration as

whether “individual and local actions eventually link up to a larger social change agenda” (p. 102). Though I will not know until after this project is implemented whether this is true for students that are parents, I believe I will find that many of the procedures, policies, and exclusionary practices that target this population are rooted in considerations of other critical social justice movements. In the future, as more knowledge and information is created and gathered, an analysis of these intersections will be necessary and influential when considering further steps toward social justice.

In order to produce the knowledge that I at this point deem necessary, I intend to rely heavily on testimony of students with children. By engaging with and including past students that had children at the time of their studies, we can collaborate to reflect on their experiences as parent-students. This reflection will enable us to collaboratively identify and areas of marginalization that they recognized throughout their experience, or that they were able to identify after their engagement with the university. Acevedo (2007) maintains that using testimony as a means of information gathering is a “crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to erasure” (p. 2). The feminist perspective indicate that there is a need for alternative and inclusive research methods that will engage all participants by recognizing diversity and difference in women’s (participants) perspectives. However, this perspective also outlines that identifying areas of similarity is crucial to the success of knowledge generation and community development throughout the research process. Reid and Frisby (2008) explain; “exploring different methods of representation can help cut across difference to understand the contextualities of women’s experiences of discrimination, prejudice and disadvantage and how they are located in their particular social, economic, and political contexts,” which supports the notion that in addition to understanding intersectionality,

is it equally necessary to develop means of recognizing and understanding similarities of experience to successfully engage in critical research (p. 96). Testimony allows researchers and participants to monitor trends in experiences, and identify common areas for necessary support.

Historically, Acevedo (2007) shares that testimony has been "critical in movements [...] to create politicized understandings of identity and community," particularly in global women's movements (p. 3). Upon reflection of those involved in these movements, Acevedo (2007) maintains that testimonies have been critical because they expose "common themes and parallel experiences despite difference of national, ethnic, or regional background" (p. 13). Through this method, I am able to negate the influence of overwhelming intersectionality, and assist in community recognition of ostracizing systemic policies that prohibit the successes of students with children. Without engaging in Action Research, it is difficult to forecast what areas of oppression these testimonies and conversations will uncover. However, I intend to use the knowledge generated to develop and justify the implementation of support strategies, resources, and programs to aid in the success of students with children in institutions of higher learning.

In order to generate these necessary supports, I propose creating programs that enable congruence between institution missions and their practices. This involves a focus on diversity, inclusion, and reciprocal learning from others in the community. Institutions should encourage the success of all students, unconditionally. Students must feel that they are joining a supportive community, which requires investment of the entire university in promoting an exceptional student experience. Effectiveness of this methodology requires continuous communication with the affected population, which will lead to continued development of programs and policies, and will ensure that needs of the students will continuously be met. While I recognize that my experience of this issue has been second-hand and through the reflective testimony of my father,

I truly believe that the most effective and influential method of knowledge acquisition and motivation for change is through the lived experiences of the parent-student population that the university intends to serve, but for which university supports have often fallen short. Through an analysis of the successes, struggles, failures and triumphs of this student population, we will gain an in depth understand of the necessary supports and policy modifications that are needed to support the educational success of parent-students. These methods ensure that the program is integrative of parent-students' experience, is understanding of the individuality of students, and that services will be provided based on expressed need rather those perceived by center staff.

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (2019), "ensuring student parents have access to affordable, quality, child care - which one study found more than tripled their likelihood of on-time graduation - in addition to supports like coaching, affordable family housing, emergency financial aid, mentoring and peer support, and physical and mental health care, would improve postsecondary success" (p. 7). This justifies and supports the foundational functions that the center intends to serve. As a space for child care, peer and mentor community building, campus community outreach, and resource advocacy, the Family Resource and Advocacy Center (F.R.A.C.) will promote student success and increase graduation rates of this vulnerable population.

One goal of the Center is to increase parent-student retention rates, ultimately leading to an increase in graduation rates. With this in mind, the objective is to increase parent-student graduation rates by a measurable percentage each academic year. In order to achieve this goal, policies and procedures will be updated to be more inclusive of parent-student needs. The parent-student Advocacy Board will review the academic catalog and provide input on academic policies with the intention of creating a more inclusive environment for parent-students on

campus. The center will also enable access to campus and community resources that will support student retention, success, and graduation by creating a user-friendly website for students to find resources with ease. The website will be updated at least bi-weekly to accurately reflect the resources, services, and events available. Additionally, by providing reputable and reliable care for children during class, study, and homework time, the F.R.A.C. will allow students to focus on their academic needs and pursuits.

The Family Resource and Advocacy Center will also seek to create an inclusive and supportive campus community for parent-students. To do so, the Center will provide a space for parent-students to create community with other parent-students, serving at least 50% of the parent-student population in some capacity each semester. Through revision, policies and procedures can be modified to intentionally include the parent-student population. This process would allow the F.R.A.C. to recommend that the institution instills policies mandating that essential services have flexible office hours outside of the typical university work day. This would allow the offices to better support parent-students, as well as working student populations. F.R.A.C. staff will also facilitate reasonable access to community resources that will empower students to meet the needs of themselves and their families. By creating and maintaining relationships with members of the community, the Center will be able to provide additional resources and services to parent-students. These increased services will be listed as available and accessible via the Center's website, increasing access to services and supports for parent students.

In creating an inclusive and supportive environment, the F.R.A.C. shall aid in providing individualized, professional support for parent-students' academic, personal, and professional concerns. This means that parent-students should have access not only to full-time office staff, but other resource staff that are specifically trained and able to provide support to this student

population. Employing and offering meeting availability with an academic advisor that is aware of the challenges, obstacles, and strengths of parent-students will greatly improve students' opportunities for academic success by providing targeted feedback regarding course requirements and scheduling. This may improve retention, grades, and graduation rates of parent-students. Similarly, offering opportunities for group counseling sessions related to parenting and challenges regarding students with dependents will greatly assist these students. These staff and counselors with specializations in parent and student concerns will enable the parent-student population to connect to the professionals, creating an environment of true helpfulness and support.

The F.R.A.C. and Advocacy Board should also serve to foster faculty respect and understanding of parent-student perspective. Through training sessions, accessible materials, and direct conversations, the Board will help faculty members identify at least three barriers to parent-student success in their individual courses. Additionally, the Board will assist faculty in developing at least one method per identified obstacle that the professor may implement to assist parent-students through various teaching methods, flexible instruction, or identifies supports that may assist any parent-students in their courses. Not only will these procedures positively impact the parent-student community, it will contribute to the professional development of university faculty and provide space for teachers to reflect on teaching practices that may be unnecessarily biased toward various student populations.

As the Center begins to serve a larger population and builds connections with the community to increase resource availability, they may also be able to provide events and programming intended specifically for parent-students. The F.R.A.C. may create programs that aid with networking and connecting parent-students with the community, like a resource or job

fair. In planning events, the attendance of children should be considered. An emphasis should be placed on events where children are permitted to attend, and an effort should be made to allow children to participate at a free or reduced rate. For programs and events where children's presence is not possible or reasonable, childcare accommodations should be offered through the center.

This proposal is created in response to a need that has personally impacted my life. However, reflected within each component of the structural intervention is my philosophy of education- one that has developed through my own educational career and through my interactions with students of all levels and intersectional identities. Reflected in these elements you will see an emphasis on individuality. Focusing on the intersectional needs of both parents and students, this intervention assumes the position that while there will be some 'overlap' in the needs of the parent-student population, each student will have their own story, their own objectives, and their own needs. In order to serve these students, the center staff must invest in embracing the individuality of students, hearing their students, and finding ways to creatively meet their needs. The same need may not be met the same way between any two students; successful intervention will rely on a keen understanding and interpretation of available resources to meet the needs of students.

The creation of the F.R.A.C. also relies on a holistic approach to education and support. This is the belief that practitioners and professionals have an obligation to serve the entire student, not simply the academic elements of student identities. It is through this approach that we see the necessity of providing supports and services not only to the parent-student, but to their children as well. In recognizing and catering to these intersectional identities, higher education professionals become better able to support and encourage students through their

academic journeys by assisting in their development as students, family members, employees, moral beings, and all of the other obligations that parent-students may have to themselves and society. To support individual development and success, the community-centric aspects of this center motivate inclusion and belonging. Each of these elements and rationales are supported by the theories and models previously discussed in Chapter 3.

The creation of a physical center, emphasis on emotional connection and advocacy, and accessibility are motivated by the works of educational and psychological theorists from various ages. Schlossberg's (1989) theory of Mattering and Marginality, particularly Schlossberg's articulation of 'Belonging' as an essential human need, is evidenced in the creation of a physical space for students on campus. Additionally, this is a motivating factor for the importance of creating community for and within the parent-student population. Experiential learning is incorporated into the intervention plan through targeted and intentional programming opportunities, as well as the center's emphasis on parent-student involvement within the daily operations of the center, and their involvement on campus at large. Primarily, this intervention has been created in response to an understanding of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In order for parent-students to meet their full potential as academics and contributing members of society, the center focuses on meeting student needs at each tier, from basic needs to emotional belonging. In doing so, the center provides holistic, inclusive, and individualized services to the parent-student population.

Based on andragogy, the methods of teaching adults, this intervention meets the needs of a majority of parent-students. According to Knowles et al. (1989), adult learners seek increasing levels of independence, and look to deviate from situations of dependence. While seeking assistance from the resource center may seem to contradict this ideal, the center provides

services and resources that will allow parent-students to depend less on others by teaching them the skills necessary to move forward with greater independence. Additionally, services such as child care will allow parent-students the freedom to pursue their educational and social needs. Additionally, Knowles et al. (1989) indicate that "andragogy assumes that learners as ready to learn the things that they 'need' to" based on the roles that they hold (p. 47). Assuming that this is true, the parent-student population is likely to seek out supports and services that will meet their needs. Not only does this support the use of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a guiding position, but it can be used to help evidence the lasting impact that these resources and services will have on parent-students as adult learners. Knowles et Al. (1989) shares that adult learners seek interactive experiences, and learn best from these experiences when their learning can be applied as they participate. Within the F.R.A.C., students will have an interactive experience as they work collaboratively with center staff, peers, and other resource partners to learn new skills and solve problems. Parent-students will participate in needs-based learning as they address individual needs and concerns to provide stability and peace of mind for themselves and their families. Additionally, parent-students will receive group support from staff and peers, sharing learning experiences and supporting each other in moments of need.

Given the needs of parent-students as outlined by andragogy, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, theories of 'othering' and inclusion, and the historical contexts of parents within the university, it is critical to provide intentional services and supports for parent students. An on-campus resource center for the institution's parent-student population is a clear choice. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (2019), 53% of parent-students have children under the age of 6. For this reason, the center will seek to serve full-time parent-students and their dependents under the age of 10. This additional age range will allow for the services to reach the

largest demographic, with an impact of serving students' who have children still heavily dependent on child care. The Center will serve students by providing this childcare while students are on campus or at institution-sponsored events. For parent-students, the F.R.A.C. will provide a space to build community with campus professionals and peers, which will promote student engagement and success. The Center and Center staff will facilitate access to resources that will support student in meeting the basic needs of themselves and their children, enabling parent-students to focus more readily on academics and professional endeavors. The center will serve as a central hub for parent-students, directing the population to appropriate campus and community resources that will best meet their needs. The F.R.A.C.'s role as a 'resource hub' will greatly improve parent-student success by connecting students with those that are most equipped to understand the various needs of the population. In addition to boasting extended, accessible hours for parent-students, the Center will also head an Advocacy Board that will include and act on behalf of the parent-student population to enact change on campus, increasing the accessibility of education for parent-students and increasing parent-student graduation and retention rates. The Family Resource and Advocacy Center will serve as a space where parent-students can develop their sense of independence, build community, seek appropriate resources for academic and personal needs, and rely on professional staff to assist as they raise their children while navigating their academic journey.

Component #1: Physical Space

In order to provide the best possible services for students, it will be critical to identify a designated space on campus in which these students may be served. When identifying a location for this center's space, it is important to find a space that is easily accessible to students near the main campus center. The space should have access to its own parking lot, or be close by to a

student-designated parking area. This will allow parent-students to easily and safely bring their children with them into the space. Because the center will allow children, and may at times have a loud volume due to this service, it is vital that the center be placed somewhere that is not directly adjacent to learning spaces so as to avoid disruption of students while classes are in session. If the building in which the center is located has access doors that automatically lock to students after university business hours, it is vital that the center have an alternative access point for students and staff. If this is not possible, collaboration with the university to ensure that the primary building access doors remain unlocked for the duration of the office's open hours is critical.

The space must be large enough to accommodate all of the needs of staff, students, and students' children. Upon entrance, there should be a welcome area in which students may themselves and their students into the center, allowing staff to measure the needs of those present, scheduling appointments and providing direct intervention if necessary. This step will also aid in ensuring the safety and security of the children within the center by informing staff of who is present. Signing children out prior to leaving the space will also promote this level of security. In addition to a welcome desk, there must also be a comfortable area for students as they wait for appointments with professional staff. If needed, this space may coincide with a working space for students.

The center should serve as a community space for students to gather, complete work, congregate between classes, or take a break from the campus environment if needed. The ideal space would have separate areas for individual work, group work, and social gathering. Each of these spaces would require varying furniture and equipment to serve the students. Individual work spaces might include secluded, quiet areas for studying. Additionally, these spaces might

provide access to necessary technology, like computers, printers, or webcams as needed for student course work. The center may also include large open-concept tables on which students may choose to spread out their materials, or where they might congregate to work on assignments together. There should be multiple options for students to choose their ideal work space, and must have enough space to accommodate the size of the parent-student population on campus.

To promote community building and support parent-students both as academics and as people, the center should offer a space in which students can comfortably relax and spend time with other parent-students. One way to achieve this outcome may be to provide an area with comfortable furniture, such as couches and stuffed chairs, organized in a way to facilitate conversation and interaction. This space may also include items like televisions, video games, board games, and other entertainment sources for students' use. Because the goal for this area is to promote community building and interaction, which may result in high levels of noise and distraction for those students working, this space should be somehow separated from the student work area and professional offices.

Due to the wide breadth of services offered to students within the center, it will be vital to have independent spaces in which professional staff may meet with students. Including individual offices for staff to meet with students as they seek advice, counsel, and share personal information will support students' feelings of security and comfortability, will reduce distraction, and will allow staff to collaborate with other campus partners is a private arena. These offices will allow the center's staff to provide attentive, individualized services to the student population. Additionally, a 'guest office' within the space would be beneficial to provide an area for campus and community partners to meet individually with students in a secure space. This will support

the center in providing specialized programming to the population, offering individualized supports to students, and will welcome the opportunity for lasting relationships with campus and community partners.

The final significant component of the center's physical space is a designated area for children. Providing this space will enable students to work independently, study without interruption, meet with professional staff, and attend classes without violation of faculty or university policy. This space should be separate from the work and community spaces, but must include windows for parents to check in on their children throughout their time in the center. Ideally, this separate space would be sound-proofed to further eliminate distraction. This designated area will be supervised by adult staff, and will include many of the same resources that the center provides for students. The children's area will have work spaces for students to complete homework as applicable, a wide area to play, and will have many entertainment options to keep children busy throughout their time. This area might include age-appropriate games, a television, comfortable furniture, and/or books. It is imperative that this space be child-proofed to the best of the Center's ability, and that children not be able to leave the designated area without a guardian. This may mean that installing a restroom and changing table in the space if necessary.

Instituting each of these spaces within the Center is imperative to the success of each defined initiative. Strategic placement of the center on campus means that it is both accessible to students, yet will not disrupt the academic or professional pursuits of any students or faculty on staff. The additional safety and security measures that are instituted will require collaboration with the institution, but will insure that parent-students have access to the necessary resources

and that minors under the care of the center are adequately attended. Each space serves a specific purpose, and will support parent-students in their academic, professional, and personal endeavors.

Component #2: Staffing

There are many roles that must be fulfilled in order for the Center to be successful. While the ideal for most positions may be a professional staff member, there are a plethora of options that might be pursued in order to not only meet the needs of the Center, but to provide opportunities to graduate students, include the parent-students, assist other undergraduate students within the institution, and adhere to budgetary constraints. Each person will fulfill a particular role, but may not necessarily require a full-time position. Staffing of the Center may be flexible, and will be dependent on the size of the parent-student population, funding opportunities, institutional structure, ability to hire, and any existing resources that are already in place.

When students first enter the Center, they will be asked to sign in if they are looking to meet with a staff member, and will be required to sign in any children that have entered with them. Confirmation of meeting times, understanding of staff availability to organize new meetings, and timely correspondence with office staff will be necessary. Additionally, children must be signed out of the space before leaving; this process will need to be monitored as well. To facilitate this process, at least one staff member will be required to monitor the entrance of the space, and guide students through the process as necessary. Based on the hours of operation of the Center, additional personnel may be required to ensure that the welcome desk is staffed at all times. As a professional staff member, this individual may serve as a liaison with community partners by scheduling meetings, compiling and maintaining contact information, and sending out updates as necessary. However, this role may also be filled by a graduate assistant seeking

experience in Public Relations, graphic design, or another related field. Parent-students may also fill this role as a paid work-study opportunity, on a volunteer basis, or as compensation for free childcare within the Center. If hiring a full-time or part-time employee for this role is not possible, there is potential for all functions to take place electronically. Though this would lead to additional security measures and considerations, students may be able to check themselves in via technology available at the entrance, schedule meetings online, and complete the child-based sign in/out process without regulation. All phone calls could be redirected to professional staff of the Center.

In order to provide appropriate care for children within the F.R.A.C., there must be an individual on-site that is dedicated to providing supervision to the minors. This individual would be responsible for supervising 10-15 children within the Center; this ratio should be maintained, and additional staff brought on if necessary to ensure that adequate supervision is provided. Multiple shifts may be necessary to accommodate the Centers' hours of operation. Any individuals in this role should be CPR certified, have a passion for childcare in some capacity, and be willing to work hours outside of the standard institutional working day. These care givers could be paid professional staff, work-study undergraduate students, or parent-students. These parent-students may be paid, volunteer, or may accept responsibility in shifts with other parent-students utilizing the Center to ensure that everyone has reliable, affordable, and flexible child care on campus. Additionally, it may be possible to collaborate with the Education department on campus, allowing undergraduate students to use work or volunteer hours at the Center toward any program-required practicum or experience hours. Utilizing students to fulfill these roles will help keep the service affordable to parent-students, enable students to get involved and

contribute to the Center, and will facilitate community and friendships as parent-students converse during child drop-off and pick-up.

Professional staff members will be necessary to provide supports and services to students. Individuals in this role should have experience in a counseling, advising, or supporting role, and should have a working understanding of the obstacles that parent-students may face. These individuals will meet with students to assist as they navigate the campus community, provide information about campus and community supports, and gain an understanding of the individual challenges that students face. All Center staff will collaborate with students, faculty, campus resources and community members to help parent-students meet their needs and the needs of their children. These staff members will be responsible not only for meeting with students, but will also oversee the welcome desk and child care Center staff. Additionally, these individuals will create connections with the campus and community partners, and will serve as advocates for parent students in the academic realm, as well as across campus and in the community. Though there should be at least one full-time professional in this role, it may prove beneficial to have graduate assistants serve as additional support throughout this process. Graduate students with children, or those with a particular interest in education, student affairs, or counseling, would make excellent candidates.

In fulfilling each of these roles, it will be crucial to articulate that the role requires a level of flexibility not demanded of every functional area on campus. These areas of consideration include office hours outside of the norm (8am-4:30pm), the ability and willingness to have children present for professional interactions, and a dedication to aiding students with personal and non-academic concerns. There are a variety of individuals at a diverse level of professionalism that may be qualified and willing to fulfill these roles. Creativity with role

description, responsibilities, and fulfillment will prove crucial in the first steps of implementing this intervention on campus. Creative thinking will aid in initial implementation, help circumvent budgetary constraints, and will allow the Center to support a variety of initiatives and students across campus. While the number of staff required to meet the needs of the Center may vary based on the size and needs of the student population at individual institutions, the basic responsibilities for each role will remain universal.

Component #3: Website/Technology

Creating a technology-based component to this intervention is a responsible way to proceed given the ever-changing landscape of education. Generating a website for the Center greatly increases student awareness of resources available. Creating a website that is integrated into the institution's main website allows current and potential students alike to view the resources that may be available to them. An online resource exponentially increases accessibility of resources by providing a platform for students to access services at any time or place that is convenient to them. The website allows for a visual representation of verbal information that may have been covered during orientation or a one-on-one meeting with Center staff, which helps connect information across multiple learning styles. One such example may be referenced in Appendix A: Active Website. The electronic format allows students to explore the potential of the Center before ever stepping foot inside, which may help alleviate some fears about stigma, stereotyping, and expectations upon arrival. The website may help provide answers to questions that students may not know that they had, and will aid in outlining the mission, goals, and services that the Center hopes to provide.

Additionally, electronic media is particularly useful in reaching the new generation of student. Not only are websites a frequent source of information, but social media platforms such

as Instagram®, Facebook®, and Twitter® are becoming popular news outlets. Creating areas on these platforms for students to receive information, connect with each other, and build community with the Center will prove crucial in marketing these services to students. Implementing a Facebook® page for the Center would allow students to see updates about services, connect with other parent-students within the institution, and demonstrate to the public the impact of services that are provided. Instagram® and Twitter® may be useful tools to send out quick reminders, celebrate successes of students, and keep the parent-student population informed of any programs that might be happening to boost attendance at the Center, engagement with the Center and across campus, and foster parent-student success in different areas of campus life.

Electronic media is not only a useful platform in which to reach students, it is extremely sustainable. Creating electronic spaces for students to form connections with the Center means that less time, resources, and funding are necessary to continue running the Center. Electronic platforms are environmentally conscious over printed materials, and require less funds than it would to purchase the materials for physical fliers or posters. Additionally, in the event of mistakes or 'typos' that are made in creation of materials, new information can be created and released without a physical or monetary waste of supplies. Electronic media requires less "people-power", or paid working hours, to create, as it eradicates the need to follow through with print production, distribution, hanging of signs and fliers, and can be modified from any media source. There are a plethora of free and reduced-cost services and programs that can assist in creating marketing materials. Not only is it financially effective to create electronic means of communication, it is quick and relatively easy.

The ease with which these materials can be created indicates that materials can be quickly and more consistently maintained, so that resources updated quickly and with greater frequency. This provides more accurate information to students, and increases the helpfulness of the services provided. Additionally, the low time commitment required after initial set-up of these electronic media lowers the responsibility for staff, and affords staff the ability to fulfil more than one role within the office. It also grants Center staff the opportunity to collaborate on marketing and informational materials, which will benefit the student population without impacting the budget of the Center. Placing an emphasis on the electronic components of this intervention also allows for modification of the intervention to fit the needs of the institution and their parent-student population. As new and differing needs arise, adding resources as they are developed has never been easier, and these resources have become increasingly assessable to students.

Component #4: Advocacy, Community, and Connection

Though the physical space of the Center and the resources provided to students are essential to their success, the emotional support that staff in this Center provide will be what truly enables students to succeed. Providing parent-students with the resources necessary to meet their safety and security needs, like food, childcare, and a place to go between classes will be necessary in preparing them for the next stage in their journey. In advocating for students on campus, the staff of the Center will proved to students that they matter. Connecting with students will help parent-students understand that they are valued. Reserving a space for parent-students to create community will let them know that they belong.

Ensuring that parent-students feel valued, heard, and supported is critical in promoting their success as students and their retention within the institution. To achieve this, it is critical to

create relationships with each parent-student that is served. Though each relationship will be formed differently and will have different outcomes, investing the time into getting to know the students will not only enable you to provide individualized supports and targeted recommendations, but will aid in creating a relationship built on mutual trust and understanding. These relationships will be crucial as the Center moves forward and works to provide relevant and helpful supports to parent-students. Similarly, the relationships formed with students will enable the Center staff to engage in ongoing Critical Action Research to understand the pressing needs of the student population and conduct continuous modification to services to best support and advocate for the student population.

One way in which these staff members may provide advocacy may be to serve on an Advocacy Board. The Board may consist of Center staff, parent-students, faculty, academic advisors, and alumni community members with a vested interest in the success of parent-students. Service on this Board will allow Center staff to articulate the experiences of parent-students on campus, identify changes that may need to be made across campus to promote inclusion, and advocate for improved student experiences for parent-students. The Advocacy Board should serve as a unit to review institutional academic and social policies, identifying and proposing changes to any that disproportionately impact parent-students. For example, the Board may want to examine academic policies that penalize students for absences when the absence is due to an ill child. The Board may also propose and advocate for a campus-wide revision of open office hours to be more inclusive of parent-students and other students who are working full time and may not have access to resources and offices prior to the standard afternoon closing time. Based on the successes and needs of the Center, the Board may also advocate for more resources, such

as increased funding, larger spaces, and additional services as identified through the continued service of parent-students.

As individuals, the Center staff is responsible for building connections and relationships with the community. These relationships will better enable the Center to provide support to parent-students by identifying reliable off-campus resources and opportunities for students. These relationships may result in:

- Housing opportunities for parent-students and their children
- Employment opportunities
- Flexible internship opportunities
- Scholarships
- Free or reduced cost services for parent-students
    - Tax preparation
    - Legal assistance
    - Insurance agents
    - Assistance with government documentation and applications
    - Childcare outside of Center hours
    - Mental health services

Additionally, these relationships may assist the Center in providing free or reduced-cost programming for parent-students, inclusive of their children. These programs might include movie theatre tickets, bowling, trips to museums, and other group activities that would allow parent-students the opportunity to build community with other parent-students, give their children new experiences, and participate in the 'college experience'.

Overall, though a space on campus is crucial for student success, the connections and advocacy on behalf of students will be the most imperative element of service that the Center provides. Hearing parent-student concerns and working with the institution to create more inclusive policies and implement inclusive practices across campus will enable parent-student

engagement and encourage feelings of belonging. Advocacy on behalf of students on campus and within the surrounding community will promote individual mattering and recognition of self-worth in parent-students. Collaboration with the community and other campus resources will help meet student needs by providing these resources in a way that is most accessible to parent students. Finally, individual connections with parent-students will not only allow the Center to provide resources based on students' need, but will provide students with lasting, positive experiences from their college career.

As the institution moves forward with implementation of the Center, there are a few areas of preliminary concern that must be addressed. The answers to these concerns will vary by institution, leadership, and available funding. However, on many campuses, finding a space large enough and that meets all of the requirements of the Center will prove challenging. In the best-case scenario, new construction would be possible to accommodate the needs of the space. However, the reality of implementation is that the Center will be lucky to find any physical spaces on campus. With this in mind, compromise will be essential. This will again depend on the availability of resources and the physical spaces that are available. However, the services and offerings of the Center could be paired down to accommodate the needs and abilities of the institution. Rather than an on-campus space, the Center may consider a space a few blocks away. If a designated childcare space and staff is not feasible, the Center staff could coordinate community options at a free or reduced cost for students as an alternative. Finding the infrastructure, and navigating the legal implications, or having minors under the supervision of institution employees will also be a major consideration in implementation. Rather than offering work spaces in the Center, staff may be able to rely on public areas, such as the library, to designate work spaces for parent students. In all of these cases, relying heavily on a well-

maintained, easy to use, and readily accessible website to relay information about services to parent-students will be crucial.

I foresee that much of the work conducted by Center staff immediately following implementation will revolve around advocacy with the campus community. Finding effective and influential ways to communicate demands will be imperative to the successes of these initiatives. Building relationships with the institutions' leadership, academic decision makers, and any active unions will also be crucial as the Center seeks to make changes on campus. For instance, if recommending that essential service offices, like financial aid, offer extended or flexible hours to accommodate the needs of parent-students, it will be vital that the Advocacy Board understand implications for any union employees of straying from the university's typical working hours. Additionally, the Board must understand how to appropriately make these demands in order to be heard while respectfully building and maintaining relationships with those in positions to be of assistance. The implications of these suggestions and demands will also require buy-in from long-term employees and stakeholders, which will require those serving on the Advocacy Board to possess great communication and persuasion skills, as well as an understanding of the many perspectives on campus. The best practices of communicating with campus and community partners will vastly differ based on community culture, and must be carefully considered prior to implementation.

In order for this intervention to be successful, the student population must be aware of its existence and purpose. Effective communication of the goals and objectives of the Center to current parent-students will prove vital. While the campus population and communication preferences will vary by campus, focusing on electronic means of communication will help ensure the accessibility of information to parent-students. Linking the website to the university

website, ensuring that it is one of the top results on search engines, and maintaining competitive functionality based on speed and user interface will be essential. In order to reach students, including this information as an element of admissions conversations during high-school visits and workplace recruitments events will assist in advertising this as a resource for potential new students. These conversations will also serve to 'normalize' the parent-student experience to decrease marginality of students in class. By increasing student and faculty awareness of the parent-student population, and accepting more parent students to the university in various programs, this population will feel the effects of increased levels of belonging and understanding. Not only will these steps promote the Center as a resource for students, is will begin to make cultural and systemic mindset change within the university and its constituents.

Though funding for these services will remain an ongoing concern, there are many opportunities for assistance to gain the support necessary to implement this intervention. While the budgetary needs will vary based on geographic location, institution type, size of the parent-student population, and approved services to be provided, the desire for external funding remains constant. In order to fund this office, I propose relying heavily on restricted donor gifts. I believe that alumni and other givers will be highly interested in this program, as it is rooted heavily in community building, and motivating the success of an underserved population. The community / campus partner outreach events outlined will not only foster the relationships necessary to provide resources to student-parents, but provide donors the opportunity to interact with the Center and begin to understand the impact of restricted gifts that are made on behalf of the Center. Combined, these relationships will bolster the longevity of the program. Similarly, I propose submitting grant proposals to a variety of foundations and organizations that will provide funding to support initiatives that cater to women, parents, and parent-students. The

Institute for Women's Policy Research and the Higher Education Alliance of Advocates for Students with Children are two examples of resources that may be called upon to aid in funding this intervention.

While the Family Resource and Advocacy Center would ideally take root and remain an integral part of each campus on which it is implemented, it is important to remember that many institutions do not currently offer any similar resources. When creating a new office, it is vital to consider to day-to-day needs that may not already be available (such as desks, chairs, and computers) to ensure that all staff are able to complete their work in a comfortable and conducive environment. Though starting from the ground up can be expensive, it also affords great opportunity for creativity, flexibility, and ingenuity. Remaining steadfast and invested in the good that these services and supports would do for students, as well as properly articulating the long-term impact that this will have on the institution regarding recruitment and marketing, will prove to be essential when proposing this intervention as a way to better serve the institution's student population.

Budget

The fiscal needs for this Center will vary based on institution type, area, and preexisting supports and functions. Please see Appendix B: Sample Budget for a sample budgetary consideration. The institution may rely on restricted donor gifts to help fund this Center. Institutions may also consider utilizing a portion of student fees to fund the staffing of the Center, as this resources seeks to serve students that have limited access to the resources and events typically funded by student activity fees. Additionally, I recommend applying for various grants to help fund the initial and ongoing expenses of the Center. For instance, the U.S. Department of Education's Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant program awarded an

average of $174,000 to 86 institutions in 2017 to promote the implementation and ongoing funding of childcare services on college campuses (Kreighbaum, 2018). Utilizing and exhausting all funding options will allow the institution to offer the best possible services to parent-students. Continued evaluation and communication of successes will increase funding for the Center over time.

Timeline

In order to formulate a reasonable timeline for initial implementation, a thorough understanding of the individual institution is critical. Initial areas of consideration lie with the physical preparations, financial abilities, and stakeholder buy-in at the institution. The Center relies on having a physical space in which students may build community, seek guidance, and spend time. Each institution will need to identify or build a space large enough to serve its intended population, and furnish the space. Additionally, the institution must invest the time and resources necessary to identify the size and demographics of the target population, hire the staff necessary to run the office, and begin marketing the services and supports to these students. Before this initial work can begin, funding for the Center must be identified, and a budget solidified. This information will come from donors and leaders within the institution, all of whom must believe in the importance of providing these services. Please see attached Appendix C: Implementation Checklist for a listing of events that must take place prior to implementation. This listing is inclusive of factors that may influence the timeline.

Chapter 5

Assessment and Evaluation

What is leadership?

In order to achieve success within the institution, faculty, staff, and students alike must embrace and pursue the powerful impacts of leadership. However, this vague expectation holds differing direction for everyone. Considering my philosophy of education, my advising style, and my personal values, it stands to reason that my definition of leadership relies heavily on interactions with others. For the purpose of understanding the successes of Center staff and parent-students, I believe that leadership is rooted in the intentional and unintentional ways in which one interacts with the world and themselves to promote holistic growth. Leadership provides the opportunity to engage with, challenge, support, encourage, and uplift those whom you encounter. Through genuine caring and compassion, the Center staff shall build and maintain relationships with parent-students and other departments on campus. Effective advising and a complete investment in others will enable the Center staff to support both the parent-students that they serve, and the other professionals with whom they serve. By maintaining flexibility, creativity, and ingenuity, this Center can successfully serve their students and the campus community through effective leadership. This definition has been crafted by my experiences as a student, an undergraduate leader, and a paraprofessional in higher education.

I believe that all students who are expected to succeed should be given the proper supports to do so. On my undergraduate campus, the campus culture promoted student engagement in organizations, and glorified taking on many leadership roles across campus. Peers, professors, and student affairs professionals encouraged students to ‘be involved’ and ‘become a

leader;' yet there was no education or support for student leaders. This left me, and presumably many other student leaders, in a space where we had met expectations, but did not know how to create a sustainable experience within these roles. The lack of identifiable central support for student leaders resulted in a reliance on mentors, friends, and other leaders on campus for guidance and advice on how to proceed.

One of the largest deciding factors when choosing to delay my own graduation was the job that I held on campus. I had the unique opportunity as an undergraduate student to serve as a Resident Director – a role in which I had the opportunity to supervise six undergraduate students and lead campus-wide crisis management efforts. This position led me to some of my greatest friends and strongest supporters. My friends, some of the first "good company" I had on campus, served in the same role, and encouraged me to pursue the position after their graduation (Baxter-Magolda, 2002). These friends consciously stood by me as I made mistakes, questioned my choices, and figured out what it meant to be myself. They watched as I struggled to grow as a student and individual, and were always the first people to support me and help me make changes when the time came. In this role, I also had the privilege of working for one of the greatest supervisors I believe I will ever encounter. From the beginning, this individual recognized that I was in the role for more than just a paycheck. He took the time to get to know me not as an employee, but as a person. His investment in me helped demonstrate what a strong leader is; not someone without weakness or flaws, but someone who is unafraid to be human, make mistakes, and be dedicated to growth. In working with this supervisor I learned what leadership looks like outside of the classroom, and finally began to understand my purpose in this world. Through their guidance, support, and occasional stern conversation, I made the

decision to pursue a career in student affairs where I hope to impact other students as this mentor has impacted me.

One of the most valuable lessons that I learned while working with this supervisor is how to care for others while still maintaining healthy self-care. I think that the biggest challenge that I faced, and ultimately the biggest change that I underwent throughout my undergraduate career, was learning how to say 'no'. Though I still catch myself occasionally feeling selfish or guilty for saying no, I have come to learn that often it is the least selfish action in the situation. My first year, I struggled to keep up with my fast-paced lifestyle. I was often tired, irritable, and lonely at the end of the day, and had few deep relationships to rely on for support. I transformed from an overcommitted, stretched-too-thin teenager, into a strong, compassionate leader as I walked across my graduation stage. I learned that sometimes saying no to one activity or favor means being able to dedicate all of my energy to prior commitments. I have seen that cutting out commitments does not mean helping less people, it means being a better resource for the people that I can help.

Overall, my mentor was one of the recurrent motivators in my development as an undergraduate student. They were not only able to recognize the areas where I had room to grow, but saw my potential and were willing to pour time and energy into me to ensure that I succeeded. My good company challenged me to believe that my actions did matter, and supported me as I worked to find a balance between responsibility and perfection. They aided me as I navigated the turbulence of becoming involved, accepting leadership roles, and working to understand what it meant to be an effective leader. In the end, this supervisor is the one that pushed me to define my own dreams and passions. Through each of these processes, they were supportive, motivational,

and willing to provide any assistance possible to help me develop into the best possible me. Without them, I would not be the person that I am today.

One of my biggest challenges as an undergraduate student was learning what it meant to be a leader. Based on my previous experience, I knew the general requirements of leadership. However, what I did not understand is the impact that leadership has on the college experience. Though I knew that being a leader is a great experience and helps you grow as an individual, I did not yet understand that individual leadership impacts everyone in the organization. Before this understanding, I fell into a trap of joining organizations and volunteering for leadership roles to build a strong resume for the future. I worked myself past my limits and disregarded my own happiness to meet the expectations of the campus (be involved) and of society (build a marketable resume). By the end of my third year, I was at a crossroads; being hyper-involved was not working for me. I wrestled with the expectation of building a bulky resume for potential employers, and choosing to step back in order to maintain my own happiness. One intervention that would have been helpful for me is a campus resource dedicated to aiding students through the engagement process.

However, it is only through truthful and realistic exploration of our own experiences that we are able to articulate what events and supports motivate student growth. My student affairs mentor has taught me through his actions, words, and care what it means to lead undergraduate students. To appropriately serve students, one must act with genuine authenticity and truth. Active investment into students and the work of your department is crucial to successfully supporting and leading students. One must continuously foster relationships with the campus community and the community at large to continue understanding and recommending appropriate resources to students. Through active reflection with supervisors, peers, and oneself,

student affairs practitioners are able to continue their own growth, thereby motivating the growth of others. Though no two students are alike, it is in recognizing the supports that both motivated and hindered our own growth that we become better able to support others interacting with similar issues. While the students' paths may not be identical to our own, understanding the basic necessities of individual development will aid in generating, implementing, and providing the necessary supports to motivate student development. Only when we recognize and articulate a need are we able to begin providing resources that meet those needs in students across campuses.

Role of leadership in the Family Resource and Advocacy Center

Throughout my time as an undergraduate student, much of my experience was shaped through the interactions that I had with professional student affairs staff. The relationships that I formed with these individuals contributed greatly to my successes, and the individualized supports that I received as a result of their investment were un-paralleled. These experiences not only shaped who I am as a professional, but serve as the motivation for creating individualized supports for parent-students within the Family Resource and Advocacy Center (F.R.A.C.). Responding and intervening individually to students' situations and leading the community through relationship building will allow F.R.A.C. staff to exemplify the expectations of professionals across campus.

In this intervention, the roles of leadership revolve around direct interaction with others. Given the need for personalized conversation and intervention, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory will provide the foundational information for the majority of roles that the Center staff will play. According to the Situational Leadership Theory, coaching - or "telling" - "requires telling people what, how, when, and where to perform" (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 422). The only situations in which parent-students will receive this level of leadership is when

staff are giving instruction for accessing resources. Instead, parent-students will more often be involved in Hersey et al.'s (1979) "selling" or "participating" elements of leadership (p. 422). In the 'selling' phase of Situational Leadership Theory, leaders (Center staff) will "guide the followers" toward the ideal solution (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 422). This will come into play when encouraging parent-students to build and participate in community, when recruiting parent-students to participate in the Advocacy Board, and through interactions with professors and faculty that are being asked to provide accommodations to parent students. Primarily, Situational Leadership's stage of "participating" will be utilized as Center staff hear students' testimony, provide information about available resources, and "share in decision making" (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 422). This level allows Center staff to collaborate with parent-students to find creative, individualized solutions to address a wide variety of concerns.

Higher education professionals are subject to the pressures of inconsistency. Allen and Cherrey (2003) reflect on this phenomenon, called "white-water conditions" (p. 32). This concept refers to the semi-permanent turbulence of higher education landscapes. The consistently changing information, student demographics, and expectations place high demands on institutions and those who support its endeavors. These conditions rely on the assumption that all elements of higher education are interconnected (Allen & Cherrey, 2003). This means that when issues arise, they are likely to impact other areas and require input from a multitude of sources. With this in mind, it is imperative to rely on the strong and lasting relationships built with the campus community.

Including faculty, staff, and partners in decision making can help avoid some of the 'unforeseen disasters' that may come with decision making and initial implementation of the Family Resource and Advocacy Center. Additionally, maintained and stable relationships with

partners will prove vital when addressing and solving issues or concerns that do, inevitably, arise. Allen and Cherrey (2003) also note that problems that arise are often unpredictable. In order to address these issues, the strong relationships that are formed and maintained through interconnection are essential. Additionally, the structural emphasis on flexibility of the F.R.A.C. will aid in the persistence of the Center through time and circumstance. With an intrinsic focus on shaping services to meet the needs of parent-students, the Family Resource and Advocacy Center's commitment to adaptability will be essential in the higher education landscape. White-water conditions, as described by Allen and Cherrey (2003), mean that issues that arise are often messy and multi-facetted. In order to accomplish viable solutions, contributions from all involved are necessary. To expedite this process, the ongoing meetings and development of the Advocacy Board will play a large role in the communication and implementation of solutions across the campus community landscape. These new and challenging situations, as noted by Allen and Cherrey (2003), can be extremely costly. For a newly implemented intervention, this may mean eradication of services. However, relying on many of the same resources utilized to create the F.R.A.C. will help support the Center in the event of emergency. Focusing on additional grants, expressing needs to individual donors, and communicating the ways in which community members can be of assistance will be vital to supporting the F.R.A.C.

Allen and Cherrey (2003) share that the final element of these tumultuous conditions is the concept of recurrence. In many instances, it can be impossible to know if the issues and events that have occurred are once-in-a-lifetime, or if they will recur. To address this, it is imperative that the F.R.A.C. generate contingency plans for any imaginable circumstances. Additionally, implementing general practices that allow for flexibility of resource and service provision will prove invaluable.

Astin et al.'s (1996) Social Change Model of Leadership Development Guidebook outlines the "Seven C's of Leadership" for implementation within higher education settings (p. 29). Astin et al. (1996) indicate that the intention of this leadership model is to "to facilitate positive social change at the institution or in the community. That is, to undertake actions which will help the institution/community to function more effectively and humanely" (p. 19) Each of the identified elements of effective leadership contribute to positive change within the institution and community. "Commitment," one of the foundational elements of Astin et al.'s (1996) theory is vital for the implementation of new interventions, as it "implies passion, intensity, and duration" (p.7). Perseverance through the implementation process, ongoing relationship building with the community, and continued advocacy for parent-students will be crucial for the F.R.A.C. to make change. According to Astin et al. (1996), "collaboration" is essential, as it means "to work with others in a common effort. It constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust." (p. 23). This highlights the importance of building relationships not only with other Center staff, but with campus community partners to empower the community as a whole. These relationships and collaborative efforts support the objectives of the Center and provide support to other partners. Each of these pieces are vital in creating lasting impact. Formulating and developing trust through continuous, individualized relationship building is essential to the successes of these initiatives.

Astin et al. (1996) also identify the importance of community development in implementing social change. The foundational necessity of "Citizenship" is made evident by Astin et al. (1996) through the reflection that "citizenship is the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity. To be a good citizen is to work for positive change

on behalf of others and the community" (p. 23). Institutions focus on the concept of citizenship as part of their missions; whether spoken or unspoken, this is a fundamental element of education. Fostering these connections between the institution and the surround community contributes to the ongoing citizenship of the institution. Connecting students with the campus community affords them the opportunity to develop their own concept of citizenship, interacting positively with others in mutually beneficial situations. Through these actions, the Family Resource and Advocacy Center, institution, community, and students contribute to a sustainable society – and work toward social change.

In order to create the desired social change on campus, the relationships that F.R.A.C. staff build will be pivotal. First, these relationships may serve as a catalyst for change on campus where there exist separations between divisions. The relationships built in the name of this intervention will bridge the gaps between student affairs, academic affairs, and the surrounding community. Through diligent engagement, these relationships may help mend previously inflicted harms, and will work both intentionally and unintentionally to resolve lasting issues and concerns. These relationships, by way of individual conversations and implementation of the Advocacy Board, elicit, engage and value the perspectives of all. As described by Astin et al. (1996) and as explained in detail in Chapter 3, this intervention contributes to a more sustainable campus, community, and society, which is integral to the continued successes of students for generations to come.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic currently impacting institutions nationally and world-wide, the need for versatility is greater than ever. The F.R.A.C.'s intentions of creating electronically accessible resources under 'normal' circumstances would allow them to address this pandemic directly, having already introduced the structures necessary to continue providing

services to parent-students both on and off campus. The flexibility and understanding that services offered will vary based on student need allows this intervention to be easily and quickly adaptable to new situations: staff would intentionally connect with students, seeking feedback on student needs, and receiving candid and truthful responses rooted in the foundational, trusting relationships that staff had built with parent-students. Creating services and providing resources through various platforms, as well as fostering ongoing connection with the campus community, will prove vital in allowing quick and effective responses to concerns as they arise. These responses will allow Center staff to navigate the 'white water conditions' of higher education with confidence, and will support the endurance of the Center as it stands the turbulent tests of time and circumstance.

Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation of the successes of the many facets of the Family Resource and Advocacy Center will rely on a multitude of feedback sources. This information should be both formative and summative, quantitative and qualitative, and must be consistent and ongoing. Each feedback format will provide a different perspective on the Center, and will enable the Center staff to gain a holistic understanding of the works' impact. The data gleaned from each source will serve a different purpose and provide information to be utilized in a myriad of ways.

One way to collect information regarding the success of the Center is from institutional annual reporting. Though this feedback will come only annually, this will provide information regarding graduation rates, retention and matriculation records, and will provide demographic information regarding the parent-student population on campus. Monitoring graduation rates of parent-students will allow the Center to articulate growth toward their goal of increasing parent-student graduation. Not only will this number allow Center staff to measure their own progress,

but providing this numerical evidence of impact to stakeholders will prove useful. This information may help F.R.A.C. staff increase funding for and recognition of the Center on campus. This recognition will impact the available opportunities for space, as well as increasing funding for staffing, program offerings, and advertisement of the Center to students.

Reporting this data will further the mission of the Center by increasing recognition of the parent-student population on campus, and raising awareness of parent-student needs both in-and-out of the classroom. This data will also inform the Center staff of the population to be served. This allows the Center staff to compare the student population as a whole to the population served, which will enable the staff to concentrate on development of new communication methods and outreach initiatives as needed. Because a majority of institutions already complete annual reporting, acquiring this quantitative data will not require invasive procedures or a lengthy implementation processes.

Another primary method of knowledge acquisition will come from surveys conducted on a volunteer basis. Asking those students that access the Center, and those parent-students that do not access the F.R.A.C. to provide their feedback will help the Center immensely. Posting the survey on the website, sending it out electronically via email or social media, and allowing students to complete it in person greatly increases the accessibility of the survey and will increase completion rates. Including questions that rely both on numerical selections and open-ended thoughtful responses allows this survey to cater to the needs of various stakeholders and office staff. These inquiries may help gather information for annual reports to divisions of academic and/or student affairs.

The numerical elements will help quantify the experiences of students, and help staff gauge the successes of each element. The survey will indicate areas of improvement, as well as

identify any areas of services that may not be necessary for the current population. Qualitative questioning will help parent-students express the impact that the F.R.A.C. has had on their student experience. This information will helpful in donor acquisition, as it outlines and personifies the usefulness and need of students who benefit from the Center. Additionally, it will aid in evaluation of Center staff to receive feedback from the students with whom they interact.

Overall, this survey will provide the Center with information to make necessary updates, give the institution and stakeholders data necessary to continue funding, and offer students an opportunity to formally participate in shaping the direction of the Center and services that it provides. Please see Appendix D for a sample survey. All of the information gathered will help the Center make modifications to better serve and meet the needs of parent-students.

In addition to understanding the impact that the Family Resource and Advocacy Center has on students, it will be crucial to understand the needs of faculty and staff surrounding the parent-student population. Conducting an annual poll of faculty, once upon orientation then again each subsequent year, will provide the Center and department heads with information needed to continue professional development. This survey shall seek to gauge professors' comfortability serving the parent-student population. One such example may be referenced in Appendix D. The poll will help identify any need for training or conversation regarding serving parent-students. Finally, this information will be used to compile a list of best-practice techniques, gleaned from peers, that may be used to support new professors and any that might reach out to the Center seeking advice. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative modes of questioning will yield the most beneficial information.

The assessment tool that will be immediately impactful for parent-students are the individual conversations that take place in the Center daily. These conversations will not only

serve to build relationships between staff and the population which they serve, they will serve as the pathway to resource and service access, and will enable to the Center staff to address the needs and concerns of the students. These conversations will lead to individualized understandings of parent-students' situations. In building an ongoing understanding of parent-students and their needs, staff will be empowered to make modifications to services offered to best meet the needs of their students. By utilizing this individualized element of critical action research, this increases the overall usefulness of the Center to the students by providing services and resources that parent-students have identified as needed. Center staff can ask targeted questions about the interventions and supports to make ongoing improvements, and ultimately helps students by demonstrating the influence that they have on their own experience. This ultimately empowers parent-students to ask for the supports that they need, advocate for themselves across campus, and continue utilizing the Center to meet their needs.

All of the information gleaned from surveys, conversations, and reports can be utilized for ongoing assessment and communication. By creating infographic reports presenting the quantitative and qualitative data gleaned throughout the year, the Center can visually present the vital information. These reports, when created consistently, will represent the impact and change that takes place over time as a result of the Center.

Ongoing analysis of the parent-student experience will support presentations advocating for continued support and funding of the Center. Continued review of faculty self-reflect of ability and comfortability will allow the Center staff to create any services or trainings that may need to be provided, and will help them measure the impact that the Advocacy Board has had on the campus community. Finally, all reporting information from the institution, faculty, and parent-students will enable Center staff to set goals, implement new and differing services, and

provide feedback to staff for ongoing professional development. Overall, these assessments create positive outcomes and conditions for the institution, the Center staff, and for the parent-students which the Center seeks to serve.

Limitations to Research and Implementation

Prior to implementation of the Family Resource and Advocacy Center, it is necessary to understand and acknowledge some remaining points of consideration. Throughout the endeavor of assembling this intervention, the budgetary and funding concerns remained unanswered. Generating an understanding of the scope of this Center at individual institutions will play a large role in understanding exactly what service must be provided, and which human resources must be in place to ensure success. In this instance, a 'bottom-up' approach may prove useful in creating an exact outline for the F.R.A.C. on individual campuses. Additionally, the legal implications of the Center, primarily considering minors on campus, must be acknowledged prior to implementation.

In generating this intervention, a series of assumptions regarding the student population and professional staff were made. First, the success of the services offered within the Center rely on Center staff having connections with offices that may not be interested in building relationships. This ability will vary greatly based on campus culture and the differing abilities of individuals interested in holding these positions. Additionally, this proposal assumes that Center staff will be equipped to successfully execute a multitude of roles, which will place considerable time constraints and added pressures on these employees. Finding ways to balance the work-load and appropriately recognize the tremendous work done by the Center staff will be imperative.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the Center as it is currently developed could further marginalize students. This intervention, while offering childcare, does

not fully consider the children who are of school age. Further thought regarding transportation to and from grade schools, as well as the ways in which these methods may impact parent-student success, is necessary. By focusing only on those students with young children, the Center excludes students who may have dependents that fall into other categories. For instance, those students caring for parents, siblings, partners or older children with short- and long-term care needs would likely benefit from many of these services, yet would not have access according to the eligibility requirements currently outlined. Finding ways to offer services to all who might benefit rather than excluding those who do not belong to the target population will be increasingly important through the implementation process.

Moving Forward

After initial implementation of the Family Resource and Advocacy Center, further consideration should be given to the development and execution of programming and events. Additional efforts to be inclusive of families, partners, and friends of parent-students must be taken to be inclusive of parent-student's support systems. Making the argument for extended office hours across campus may prove difficult, as it involves deviation from the institutional norm, requires buy-in from professionals across functional areas across the campus, and may necessitate approval processes through unions and other supervisory bodies. The approval process and implementation time required for this undertaking may also prove to be an obstacle, as it may span many leadership and structural changes through which the process must endure.

Throughout the implementation process and across all areas of higher education, the theoretical and experiential rationale for the services provided by the F.R.A.C. remain more relevant than ever. In working with students of all demographics, it is crucial to maintain awareness of their intersectional identities. Serving students holistically through an

individualized understanding of their needs is relevant and essential in academic affairs and all functional areas of student affairs. An awareness and understanding of the various tiers of need that must be met to encourage and promote student success allows student affairs practitioners to not only provide their own services with optimal outcomes, but to advocate for additional supports to better serve their students. Creating community in any and every way possible on campus, in offices, and in our daily lives allows student affairs professionals to lead by example in creating inclusive environments for all. Every person deserves access to education, and enabling equitable provision of the resources and supports necessary for student success is vital. It is our responsibility as student affairs practitioners to foster spaces where students have the opportunity to be academics, be members of the community, and to be human. It is with these opportunities that students will gain the skills necessary to change the world.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Active Website

The following serves as one example of an active, informative website for parent-student resources. This site is not affiliated with any institution, and is not intended to be representative of any services offered at any institution. This website has been created for example purposes only.

Sample Website

Appendix B

Item	Description	Cost	Amount Needed	Total Cost	Funding
Office staff					
Family Services Center Coordinator	Salary for full-time coordinator	52000	2	104000	Grant
Family Services Center Coordinator	Benefits for full time coordinator	20000	2	40000	Grant
business cards	Business Cards for Coordinator and Center relations	10	2	20	Grant
Desk Chair	IKEA FLINTAN office chair - coordinator work space	99	2	198	Restricted Donor Gift
Desk	IKEALINNMONM desk - coordinator work space	127	2	254	Restricted Donor Gift
Computer	HP Laptop - coordinator work space	$240	2	$480	Restricted Donor Gift
Academic Advising Staff	Support salary for staff that will be providing services	54000	2 hr/week (of 40 hr/week salary)	2700	Grant
Counseling Staff	Support salary for staff that will be providing services	54000	4 hr/week (of 40hr/week salary)	5400	Grant
Website/Student Portal					
Web Developer	To create initial website	75/hr	4 hr	300	Grant
Web Developer	To perform updates and maintenance	75/hr	(0.5 hr/ 2 weeks) x 32 weeks	600	Grant
Platform/eSpace	Electronic space to host website	35/month	12 months	420	Grant
Community/ Partner Outreach					
Hors d'oeuvres / light refreshments	For community members/potential partners during outreach and partnership events	200/event	4 events	800	Restricted Donor Gift
Miscellaneous					
Customizable pens	To serve as advertisements and office supplies	40/100 pens	200 pens	80	Restricted Donor Gift
Chairs	IKEA NOLMYRA chairs for waiting students / community visitors	40	3	120	Restricted Donor Gift
Bottom Line					$155,372

Appendix C: Implementation Checklist

Before the center may take shape, all of the following must occur:

1) The institution must believe that the services offered by the center are necessary and possible. The time that it takes to make this argument will vary based on the beliefs of these individuals, and on any previously identified needs or competing proposals for services.
2) The institution must approve the implementation of a service center. This will vary based on the political landscape of the institution.
3) A budget must be agreed upon. This process will vary by institution, and will take into consideration many sources of income, competing need within the university, and potential for ongoing funding. Funding sources must be identified, and a plan for continuous financial support outlined.
4) All hiring processes must take place. These processes and timelines will vary by institution, available applicant pool, and may vary by time of year based on hiring 'waves in higher education.
5) A physical space for the center must be identified. If new construction is to take place, all processes regarding this - including building design, contractor bids, building permits, and other necessary approvals- must be properly followed.
6) The services that the center will offer must be advertised to current students, clearly communicated to admissions and recruitment counselors, and acknowledged across the campus community.
7) Relationships with campus partners and community members should begin prior to the center's grand opening.
8) The center's website shall be fully functional prior to the grand opening.
9) Assessment tools, even if preliminary, should be in place. Please reference Appendix D: Surveys for examples.
10) An understanding of stakeholders' expectations should be clearly understood by the institution as a whole, and by center staff.
11) Consultation with institutional legal counsel regarding minors on campus should be conducted.

Appendix D

Student Survey

How often do you utilize the center? (circle one)

Daily	A Few Times/week	1x/week	1x/month	1x/Semester	Other:

Which service/resource(s) do you utilize most commonly? (circle all that apply)

Work Spaces	Website	Childcare	Connection to Community
Campus Resource Recommendations	Advising	Community Building Space	Other (list any that apply):

What services do you need greater access to? (circle all that apply)

Work Spaces	Website	Childcare	Connection to Community
Campus Resource Recommendations	Advising	Community Building Space	Other (list any that apply):

How well do you feel that the center is meeting your needs? (circle one)

Not At All	Somewhat	Fairly Well	Very Well

How did you hear about the center? (circle all that apply)

Social Media	School Website	Word of Mouth	Faculty Recommendation	Flyer	Other:

How has this center changed your college experience?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Faculty Survey

Do you have any experiences working with parent-students? (circle one)

None	A Few Interactions	Some Experience	Many Years

How comfortable are you working with parent-students? (circle one)

Not Comfortable At All	Pretty Uncomfortable	Relatively Comfortable	Confident

Are there any resources that you need to support your work with this student population?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What skills or accommodations are you likely to implement when teaching parent-students?

_____
_____
_____
_____