



GUIDED PATHWAYS STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Prepared for Spokane Falls Community
College

July 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) is interested in learning from students about their experiences of the College's climate and culture, including their perception of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). As part of these efforts, SFCC would like to understand how students are experiencing recent Guided Pathways (GP) efforts, such as GUID 105, advising, program maps, and Guided Pathway Specialists. SFCC is specifically interested in understanding whether Black and/or African American students experience Guided Pathways efforts differently than other students and, if so, in what ways.



Understand how GP efforts impact students' academic and social experiences.



Explore potential differences in Black and/or African American students' experiences of GP efforts.



Identify challenges or barriers related to GP, particularly those that exist according to racial or ethnic identity groups.

METHODOLOGY



SAMPLE

Hanover Research conducted twelve (12) in-depth interviews with students from multiple racial and ethnic groups.

OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do student groups of interest perceive Guided Pathways (GP) efforts (e.g., GUID 105, advising, program maps, and Guided Pathway Specialists)?
 - How effectively are these initiatives at supporting students academically, helping them navigate college, and helping them achieve their educational goals?
 - In what ways do GP initiatives influence students' feelings of belonging and connection, for better or worse?
- What challenges or barriers related to these GP efforts exist for student groups of interest at SFCC?
 - Have these students experienced perceived microaggression, bias, or insensitivity within these supports?
 - What challenges/barriers specific to the learning environment and navigation of resources and processes exist?
- In what ways could SF improve students' experience of GP efforts/initiatives?

NOTE: Qualitative research is exploratory and designed to add insight and a depth of understanding to a particular question or topic. Qualitative findings provide commonalities and trends but are not intended to be statistically significant or to provide generalizable conclusions.



PROGRAM MAPS

RECOMMENDATIONS

**1**

Develop supplementary materials (e.g., infographics about reading a Program Map or information about returning to a four-year program) to support students' use of Program Maps. Transfer students and undeclared students indicate that the Program Maps do not always reflect their situation.

- Consider how **partnerships** with local four-year institutions can **inform supplementary materials that transfer students can use** as they leave a local, four-year institution and enroll at SFCC. Students in this situation feel the Program Maps are less useful and do not reflect their personal goals or needs.
- **Create or promote existing information about Guided Pathways that support undeclared or undecided students.** These students turn to Program Maps for guidance, but **do not feel any are relevant to their particular situation.**
- **Include information about how to read a Program Map on webpages where Program Maps are listed.** Participants' ability to read a Program Map is contingent upon their knowledge of components such as course codes and credit hours.

KEY FINDINGS



- **Satisfaction** with Program Maps is primarily **contingent upon students' prior experiences with higher education and the clarity of their career goals.**
 - Participants who have **completed college coursework** prior to encountering the Program Maps find them **least helpful.**
 - **Undeclared students and those who are uncertain about their career goals find Program Maps less useful.** They look at Program Maps for programs and degrees in which they are interested, but only use information about general education classes.
- Some participants feel **Program Maps do not support their academic or career goals.** This sentiment is most common among students who enter SFCC with clearly-defined career goals. More generally, participants desire for Program Maps to allow for greater flexibility.
- **Program maps are most useful** for first-time college students who did not enter SFCC with clear career goals. Other students find them helpful, but not to as great of an extent.

MAPS PROVIDE HELPFUL GUIDANCE FOR MOST

In general, the program maps provide participants with **helpful guidance**. Participants describe the maps as **useful tools** that assisted them in **understanding degree requirements**. First-time students find them most useful.

*“The program maps, I do feel like they kind of help because they **give me an idea of what's missing**, what I probably **still need to do**, what I've already completed, so it narrows things down.”*

*“I looked into a couple of them. **I'm a teacher in another country, so the first one was looking into education and what I would need to finish** and things like that. And then we ultimately just **decided to go with the course map for a transfer student**. So that's what I followed. And we use it as a guideline to go through classes and stuff. So yeah, I think they were very helpful. **They're very easy to read**, which is nice because my old college, they're not very easy to find or read. So it was very nice to have that.”*

However, some participants describe the program maps as **confusing** or are **unaware of their existence**. For P2, the maps lacked essential contextual information.

*“I think that the **program maps are a little bit confusing**, but if you have someone to **tell you what everything means**, they're pretty good. At first, **I wasn't sure what class codes were or how to find things on the website**. And the website is pretty good. But **when you're first starting out, it's really confusing** to look up classes and look at the guidance map and try to figure out which ones will fill which credit and stuff. **I think that they assume that you already know which classes will fill which requirements.**”*

“I have no idea what that [program maps] is.”

MAPS DO NOT REFLECT ALL PATHWAYS

Participants who are **uncertain** about their major or career goals find Program Maps to be less useful than their peers. Some of these students use Program Maps to identify general education courses.

"I'm not really sure what I want to do majoring-wise. So I've kind of just been taking classes that interest me. Right now, I decided to go for nursing, but I don't know if I'm going to stick with it. So I took a few classes that could help towards it, but could also just help towards a general AA. The maps, most of the times, they recommend to take three or four or five credit classes, and I don't think that I'd be able to manage that. I think that's for the ideal college student, not really modified for a student like me."

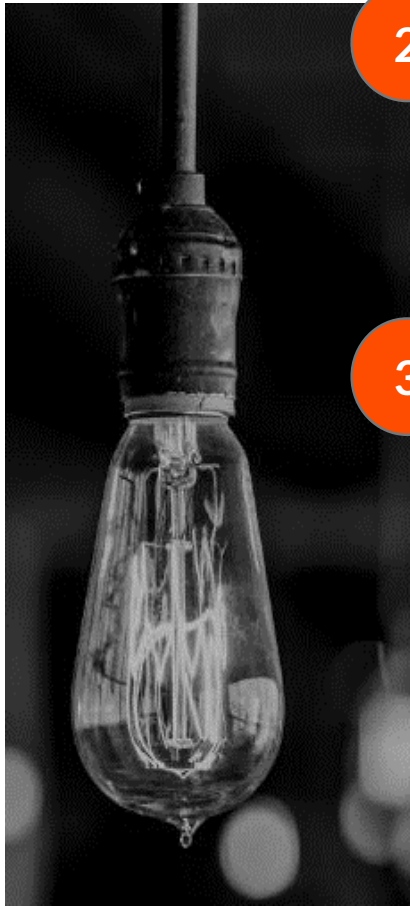
"I would say not a lot [to the question of using program maps]. And the reason for that is because I've explored different programs. The AA is what I'm currently working towards. So that's not anything I need the program for."

The **courseload** that Program Maps recommend does not account for **part-time students** or those who **seek to take a reduced courseload**. One participant feels that following the Program Maps would not set them up for academic success.



GUID 105

RECOMMENDATIONS

**2**

Consider implementing **requirements that students take GUID 105 in their first term** at SFCC to maximize the course's usefulness. Many participants feel they were too far along in their degree for the course content to be relevant. **It will also be important to distinguish** the experiences and needs of **Running Start** students from others to address their unique situation.

3

Explore options for modular design in GUID 105 to increase flexibility, engagement, and afford greater agency. Participants appreciate GUID 105's intent, but **feel the course is not appropriate for all students.**

- **Include opportunities for students to opt-out of specific content**, such as career guidance and navigating college life. Participants feel the outcomes of career guidance within the course can conflict with their personal goals. Those who have completed college coursework prior to GUID 105 feel the course is redundant.
- **Offer in-person options for GUID 105.** Students feel its exclusively-online modality contributes to their dissatisfaction with the course. They feel disconnected from their peers and find it easy to disengage. Conversely, they are much more satisfied with courses that allow them to develop a sense of community with their classmates.

KEY FINDINGS



- **GUID 105 is a source of frustration for most participants.** They understand and appreciate the function of the course, but feel it is too rudimentary for their particular needs. This sentiment is most common among those who took GUID 105 after having completed college courses.
 - Several participants articulate that the course's **online format makes engagement difficult.** This negatively impacts the course's efficacy.
 - **Running Start and transfer students** find the least value in the course.
- However, GUID 105 did **empower many participants to make use of advisors** and other supports within SFCC.
- Participants who feel that they **struggle with academic performance** feel GP efforts have been an **important factor in their ability to achieve academic success.**
 - They find GUID 105's content around study skills and time management especially helpful.

GUID 105 KEEPS STUDENTS ON-TRACK

Several participants, all of whom are Black/African American/Black African, attribute their **timely progression within SFCC to GUID 105**. The course helped them become more organized, plan out their degree path, and resolve issues.

Many participants particularly appreciate that GUID 105 connected them with advisors.

"It's given me a better understanding of what I want to do going forward and make a plan to get there. I didn't have before."

"It was really helpful. It helped me to get organized. There were times where we had to make our own schedules and write our goals and improvements in the same documents. It helps me organize my daily tasks and my homework."

"Guide 105 was helpful because it allowed me to reach out to my actual advisor instead of just the general advisor on campus and stuff. When I first went there to sign up, I told them that I wanted to be on the graduation track to transfer to EWU. But somehow, I got started off on the non-transfer track. And so having that class in the first semester and being able to go talk to my actual advisor helped set me on the straight path that I needed to be on."

ONLINE FORMAT IS NOT ENGAGING

The **modality** of GUID 105 impacts students' experiences of the course. Several participants had **difficulty engaging** with the course's content because of its **online format**.

"For me, personally, I would have liked if they had at least one option where you could take it in person because for me, online classes don't help. It's not a good way for me to do good in a class. Whereas if I was in person, I feel I'd be just a little bit more engaged in the class."

"It's a class that's very easy to just keep at arm's length and not really think about much. You don't really engage with it much, especially because it's an online course. And if I'm being honest, I was watching YouTube videos while reading most of the things for the class, which that's kind of self-defeating. But I'm trying to be honest here."

Participants believe the online format made it easy for them to **complete the course without much effort or thought**. This contributes to **perceptions** that the course had a **minimal impact** on their individual academic success.

COURSE CONTENT NOT APPROPRIATE FOR ALL

Many participants feel that **they were not the correct audience for GUID 105** because they had previously been enrolled in higher education. This includes Running Start students. Much of the coursework required them to do tasks they had already completed.

Despite their personal experiences, these participants still **see value in GUID 105 for first-time college students.**

Additionally, nearly all participants feel that GUID 105 **could have been more valuable if it were an in-person course.**

*"I felt that it was a waste of my time and money only because I had been in college before. I would get assignments to set up Canvas or my email but I had already done all of those things. I think that for people that are transferring a lot of credits, it should not be a requirement. But I think **for first-timers, yes, I think it's a great class. I felt like I'm doing all of this busy work, and I paid money out-of-pocket for this class, which is a lot of money.** Nothing against the teacher. He was great. He was super nice and helpful." – Transfer Student*

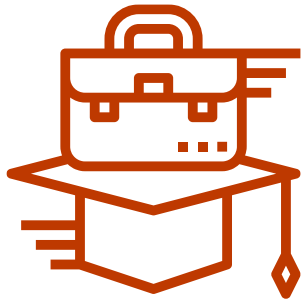
*"Guidance 105 class ended up being just as much work, and **oftentimes busy work, as any of my other classes at the time.**"*

*"The Guidance 105 or 101 class...It existed. I took it. Do I remember anything I learned in it? No. Did I really get any value of it? Well, honestly, not really. **But it was a nice thought, I guess. [...]** It's really hard to say how I would have gotten value out of that class because **a lot of the things that I learned in that class, I heard or was told by other professors in other classes.** I mean, that is good because it reinforces the ideas."*

*"I did like the concept of the guidance class, but I really think **it wasn't as helpful for me as it could have been because it was online.**" – Running Start Student*



COURSE CONTENT CAN FEEL TOO PRESCRIPTIVE



Participants who have clearly-defined career goals feel GUID 105's content **can be overly-prescriptive**. These students do not see significant value in assignments like career quizzes. The assignments can also lead participants to feel pushed in a specific direction that does not reflect their goals.

"In the beginning of some of those guidance pathways, they ask questions to get a feel for what you might actually be interested rather than what you say. So I know that I said that I want to do political science, but we did career surveys and it suggested things that I didn't want to do. I feel like it feeds you pre-curated ideas, like it's trying to say that that's what you should be doing instead. And I feel like if you have something figured out and it's something that you're passionate about beforehand, it's a frustrating experience."



ADVISING

RECOMMENDATIONS



4

Identify opportunities to improve student experiences of campus services and supports, such as advising, financial aid, mental health services, and childcare. Participants' **negative experiences** at SFCC primarily center around these services.

- Prioritize **creating additional support for advising on the Pullman campus**. Participants from this campus **laud the advisor's work**, but indicate that **staff workload issues impede access**.
- **Consider opportunities for peer-to-peer support** to maximize support with minimal budgetary impact. Participants describe their fellow students as eager to help. However, the opportunities for them to support one another are limited, outside of courses in the arts.
 - **GUID 105 presents an opportunity to facilitate the formation of student communities**. Group discussions and other tasks that require students to engage with one another can help students build relationships.
 - **Explore the development of a peer-mentorship program** to connect students with one another. Such a program could provide students with structured opportunities to support one another.

KEY FINDINGS



- **Students on the Pullman campus have difficulty accessing and communicating with their advisor.** They attribute these challenges to the advisor's **high workload** and emphasize that this is not a reflection of the advisor's skills or performance.
- **Advisors are generally highly-effective.** Their support and guidance has prevented several students from dropping out.
 - Students are **unable to differentiate between GP Support Specialists and other academic advisors.**
- **Advisors have led some students to increase their time-to-degree.** Participants who have experienced this feel their advisor mistakenly assigned them to the wrong degree path or encouraged them to double major when they did not want to. **This imposes upon and limits students' sense of autonomy.**

ADVISORS BUILD CONFIDENCE

“At the beginning I was not quite comfortable reaching out to the teachers because I wasn't sure about what they would think about me being in another country. I talked with my advisor about that a lot and shared with her that I was in another country and that I was teaching here and everything like that. And she was super welcoming and excited and actually encouraging. Every email I sent, she replied to me immediately and made me feel like she was actually helping me, which I'd never felt before, which was really cool. I was able to build the confidence to reach out to my teachers.”

“I think her name is Matija. I do not know how to pronounce her name, but she helps me a lot. She helped me with economics and English. Before I met her, I was struggling to reach word limits in English. But after she taught me, I did reach the word limits.”

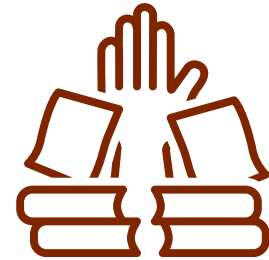
Advisors have proved especially helpful among participants who have experienced academic challenges. Participants appreciate that their advisors are supportive, solutions-oriented, and provide helpful guidance. Moreover, the advisors build meaningful relationships that empower students to achieve their academic and career goals.

“With my new advisor, he's made me feel I should just keep going, not give up. [...] I was put on academic probation and academic suspension, and he's basically talked me through it and said that it's ok. It happens to a lot of college students and that I can keep going. [...] To become more academically successful, I think my counselor has helped because I don't really want to let him down after he's helped me out so much. But besides that, I don't think I've talked to a pathway specialist or program specialist other than my counselor or advisor.”

PULLMAN ADVISORS NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

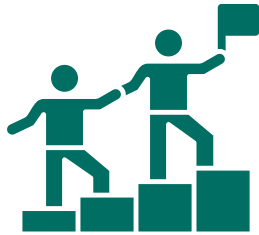
*“In the advising department, **Veronica did a great job**. She was always working hard. **She was just the only one for every single student**, so it was often difficult communication-wise, whether via email or trying to catch her in her office. More often than not, **she was crazy overwhelmed, and I could just feel that**, if you know what I mean. [...] I would say the **communication**, while it was often tricky, **when it was uninterrupted, it was very valuable**. So I always have commended the staff for working hard because, for me, **So success comes with relationships with my peers and with my professors. And that was something the staff did a really good job of reciprocating.**”*

*“I'm a Pullman student, so I work through WSU through the small campus they have there, and **we only have one advisor**. During the time that I was doing an **assignment [for GUID 105], which was to set up an advising appointment**, it was when my advisor was out of office, so I **couldn't actually complete the assignment**. So when I contacted the instructor, she was like, 'There's nothing I can do for you because you're a Pullman student.' So **it felt kind of unrealistic**. Not really well-thought-out assignments that they'd have you do. So it was a little bit frustrating when I couldn't do the assignment for like two weeks because I had to wait for my actual advisor to come back.”*



Participants who are students at the Pullman campus praise their advisor. However, these participants experience **additional challenges** with communication and GUID 105 assignments because **there is only one advisor**.

ADVISORS PROVIDE MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT



Participants are unable to distinguish between advisors and GP Support Specialists. Still, they place **significant value on the support their advisors provide.** The advisors played a pivotal role in many, but not all, participants' ability to meet their career goals while graduating on time. **Students who have the greatest need for additional support are most satisfied with advisors.**

*"I think the **most useful** out of those [supports] that I've encountered was **definitely the advising.** The advisors have been **really great at helping me figure out this whole college thing** and working through taking the correct classes, and talking about how I can aim towards the goals that are best for me."*

*"I saw my advisor before every quarter to make sure I was taking the right classes and to talk about **transferring to a different college.** My advisor has been super helpful. Super, duper helpful. It's Joanne Eppers, and she's great. I would **probably not be going to the Falls still if the advisors weren't as helpful as they are.**"*

ENROLLMENT DOES NOT REFLECT DESIRED MAJORS

“When I first went [to an advisor], they put me on the non-transfer track, and I asked to be put back on the transfer track, but they wanted me to do a double degree. Honestly, I'm not going to lie, some of those people are hard-headed. It's like you tell them what you want to do, but they tell you what they want you to do. I understand why, but if I'm spending my money and I've got to pay all this back, then I don't want to waste time staying here longer than I have to. That's how my situation ended up. Somehow, now I'm in a double degree for digital filmmaking. Though the thing is, when I first showed up, I told them I want to transfer. So that's what I don't get.”

Advisors and counselors **do not always assign students their desired major(s)**. One participant attributes their experience to a one-time mistake. Another participant believes their challenges resulted from their goals going unacknowledged. **These cases resulted in an increased time-to-degree.**

*“When I went in, it was for the guidance class. Scheduling a counseling appointment was one of the requirements. **We went over all the classes I had from Running Start as well as this year.** Her thoughts were that I only needed **less than a quarter** or maybe one more quarter to fulfill my graduation requirements. **When I applied for the graduation, and then it came back, and then it showed that I needed two more quarters for graduation.**”*

A black and white photograph of a woman wearing a light-colored hijab and a dark, vertically striped garment. She is seated at a desk, looking down at an open book. Her hands are positioned as if she is reading or turning a page. In the background, other people are seated at desks in a library or study area, but they are out of focus. A large, semi-transparent teal banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION' in white, bold, uppercase letters.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS



5

Consider pursuing further research into the relationship between curriculum and Black, African, and African American student experiences, as well as other ways in which the curriculum directly or passively marginalizes various identity groups. Participants identify racial and ethnic homogeneity at SFCC (and the region more generally) and feel underrepresented as a result. Some participants articulate curricular content as further exacerbating issues of diversity on campus.

- **Identify and promote conversations about curriculum that invite diverse perspectives.** Participants feel their unique experiences and opinions are accepted and welcomed in classes. This sense of inclusiveness could be leveraged to generate support for inquiries into the curriculum. It could also counter assumptions of persecution or exclusion among students; several participants recounted their assumptions as having been proved false because of their classmates' and instructors' inclusive conduct.

KEY FINDINGS



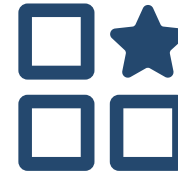
- **Instructors, staff, and other students all create a welcoming and inclusive environment when they come into campus. Participants feel accepted on campus.**
 - Participants feel the **greatest sense of belonging in arts classes and clubs/associations**. These environments create opportunities for repeated and sustained interactions that build relationships.
 - **Instructors support diversity of thought in the classroom.** Participants feel their opinions and experiences are welcomed. These experiences counter their expectations prior to enrolling at SFCC.
- **Black, African, and African American participants find it difficult to discern instances of bias, microaggressions, or racism at SFCC.** This reflects their experience of race and ethnicity in eastern Washington more generally.
- Participants **experience challenges related to aspects of their identity that are not related to race or ethnicity**, such as parental status or gender identity. These challenges center around access to services and facilities.
- **Students on the Pullman campus experience communication difficulties with their advisor.** They attribute these challenges to the advisor's **high workload** and emphasize that this is not a reflection of the advisor's skills or performance or any perceived racial/ethnic bias.

DIVERSITY

RACIAL/ETHNIC HOMOGENEITY IS VISIBLE

"I wouldn't say it's uncomfortable being there, but I also don't feel I belong there because I moved from Florida, and it was way more diverse and inclusive. I wouldn't say it's very discriminatory. It's just predominantly white. And I'm black and Caribbean. So I feel out here, I am very different from everyone."

"Well, to be honest with you, in a lot of my classes, I am the only colored person, so it's hard to tell whether or not it's because of my color because I am in a predominantly white area as a college person. And so maybe they don't really know how to interact fully with someone like me, per se, or know what's appropriate and what's not."



Many participants observe SFCC's status as a **predominantly white institution in a predominantly white region**. This lack of representation leads some participants to feel out of place. However, participants **do not** feel they have encountered any **overtly discriminatory or racist experiences**.

RACISM IS HARD TO DISCERN

*"We've had instances where **some students may think that other students are being biased**, and it's hard because you never know. You don't want the first thing that comes out of your mouth to be, 'Oh, racism,' but in the same sense, **it still happens, and it's so subtle that you can't notice it.**"*



Participants who **identify as Black or African American** find it challenging to identify racism. As a result, they are hesitant to label or call out specific instances as problematic or harmful.

*"It's hard to really gauge that stuff when I'm thinking on that level. I don't know if it's because I'm black, but **it's hard to say it's because you're black when you're the only black guy to draw a reference point from or black person. So it's hard to pinpoint, honestly.**"*

'JOKES' AND MICROAGGRESSIONS ARE PRESENT

"There's still some kids who make racist jokes every now and then. There's a kid in the BSU who makes racist jokes every now and then. It doesn't necessarily make me uncomfortable, but I could see how it could affect other people and make them uncomfortable."

*"I guess another kind of more general experience was I took a sociology class about race and ethnic relations and just learning about that **and being in a space where people were constructive for the most part and willing to learn and have open dialogues is really helpful.** But during that class, I **did see a few microaggressions** towards other students."*

*"I feel like maybe I come off as this easy to get along with guy, and **sometimes people probably take advantage of that or joke too much, joke too far.** But I know that it's not true hostility unless they decide to put their hands on me, which nobody has done yet. But there were definitely times where I was just like, 'Well, I don't like to be the butt of everybody's jokes.' But it comes and goes. I know that it was all lighthearted and not serious, meant to hurt me in any way."*



Participants report that classmates make race-based 'jokes' and display other microaggressions. However, these participants **do not feel these experiences necessarily make campus less hospitable** for Black, African, and African American students.

RACE/ETHNICITY HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON BELONGING

Black, African, and African American participants do not feel that their racial or ethnic identity impacts their sense of belonging on campus. They feel supported by other students. Several participants drew on their previous experiences to underscore SFCC's inclusivity.

"I haven't really felt any types of stigmas or just general discrimination during my time there. Any kinds of conflict that I may have had, it was more in terms of just academic processes rather than it felt like I was being singled out. So I'd say that the diversity there and just the general atmosphere in terms of racial equality is really good. It's a very diverse group of people that enroll in that school, so."

"To me, when I entered, people didn't see color. They were extremely nice. They were really friendly. It was better than I thought. And whenever I would ask for help for my task, people would help without hesitating. [...] Before I came here, I thought I was going to experience a lot of racism. And I thought people wouldn't be nice, but they were really nice and offered help. I didn't think they would be helpful towards the hijabis or black Africans. It's way more overexaggerated in social media than in real life."

"I would say [my race has had] zero [impact on my experiences at SFCC]. I'm mixed race. My dad is black. My mom is white. I grew up in a very white and Indian community, and I went to school in a very white community. I also lived in Washington, DC, in a very black community. I never felt particularly different from anybody else at any time, including at Spokane Falls."

HISTORY CURRICULUM GENERATES CONCERNS

"I think we should spread more awareness in terms of Black history and African history and stuff like that. It'd be nice if there was an African American history class offered or something like that to allow people to know more about minorities and people of color."



Participants identify issues with diversity and inclusion in the curriculum. They note that the content of history courses feels as if it **does not appropriately account for the contributions of African Americans and Black Americans**. This leads to feelings of exclusion and a sense that the curriculum is incomplete.

*"In my history class, there's a lot of history that's missing. And **there's nothing really the school can do because of the contracts, I guess, they have with the people that make the books and all that stuff**. This is the curriculum that they teach. And **that's more a problem with the curriculum itself**. [...] There are great [Black or African] Americans who should be taught about. **There's a whole bunch of people that we're missing that I don't even know that's out there that stories are not being taught.**"*

EQUITY

SUPPORTS CAN BE DIFFICULT TO ACCESS

“For a period of time, I was doing therapy at SFCC. The fact that they offered free therapy that was on campus, so it was easily accessible was good for me when I was using it or when I was part of it. [Now,] there are not as many interns available, so not a lot of people can get into the program. I know the therapist that I was working with graduated, so I could no longer work with her.”

Participants experienced several challenges when **seeking out supports and services at SFCC**. These challenges appear to **arise from staffing issues** and impact students on the basis of their identity (i.e., parental status and ability).

*“The **childcare program that's on campus has been the most difficult obstacle**. It all comes down to **not being able to talk to anyone**. When I first started, my oldest daughter was old enough and met all of the qualifications to use the program. **I had to stop at the building 4 times to get a status update**. Eventually **I thought might have to bring my daughter to class**, but my family has had to step up to help. I would have really liked if I could have dropped off my daughter. I don't see that [using the childcare services] changing because it makes me wary of using it if that's how they handle things.”*

FINANCIAL AID SUPPORT IS LACKING FOR SOME

"The only thing I think I struggled with was financial aid. I never was actually able to get financial aid because they wanted my husband's tax paperwork, which we weren't married for. And I tried to explain it. That was hard because I can't call like everybody else, or I couldn't go down there and talk to them."

Most participants who are **non-traditional students struggle to access financial aid services**. Other obligations and personal circumstances introduce significant barriers to communication.

"The whole financial aid process was something I ventured out and did on my own. Not because there weren't a lot of resources at the Falls, but because those resources take a decent amount of time and that's not something I always have with kids. You can call, but you don't always get through to people. You'll get an automated call or voicemail."

"I am a low-income student, so finances were an issue. So she [Veronica, the Pullman advisor] really helped me plan my schedule around being able to receive my financial aid in addition to completing my graduation plan. So I really appreciated that she was able to make the time to structure my last year in order for me to receive my benefits while receiving my degree at the same time."

This participant's experience indicates that these challenges may not be present on the Pullman campus.

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

TRANSFER SUPPORT IS MISSING

*“They need to push the pathway of a **pipeline school to WSU**. In the Pullman campus, I was absolutely shocked. I **was one of the only people that were former WSU students trying to get into WSU**. And the amount of people who drop out, flunk out, and never give college a chance **after leaving WSU the first time have a really amazing opportunity to get a degree**, set themselves up for the next level to receive a bachelor's, and still be on a major university campus with those resources, with those social environments so you don't miss out.”*

This participant identified **transfer support** as an area for improvement for SFCC. Specifically, they see opportunities for SFCC to develop transfer pipelines that help students **move into SFCC and then return to the four-year institution from which they left**. Such a pipeline could strengthen Program Maps.

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

OVER-POLICING OF BLACK STUDENTS IN CLASS

"I'd say [it would be helpful to] train instructors and staff to be careful with what they say and what they use. I've heard too many instances of them being too personal into people's business. It makes students a little bit uncomfortable. You start asking questions about yourself the motivation behind it. One of our instructors was into a mixed-race students' business when they said that they couldn't make it to a lab. They were a little too nosy about what they would be doing that day, and it raised some questions [for me]. I know, at the same time, sometimes students make excuses to just not show up, but also, it felt like they were specifically [focused] on that person. [...] [I think SFCC should] make sure that instructors and staff feel okay mentally. They've got the support that they need. They're going through the right training processes. They have study plans. They have syllabuses and stuff planned out, especially for instructors so that they know that they're supporting each student equally, and that those students don't have to feel afraid to come and ask questions. I do think just helping them, in general, get a feel for how to present themselves to peers below them is a really important factor that I think could help a lot, and just equal education for everybody."

One participant encourages SFCC to provide **staff and instructors with more training around general classroom behavior or demeanor**, including how to support students. This participant feels such training is necessary because of experiences wherein Black/African American students' behavior is subjected to additional scrutiny. They are uncertain about the exact motivations of this instructor's conduct, but feel training and support could have prevented this uncomfortable situation. **This participant's experience may also be linked to the perception that Program Maps and some GP content feel too prescriptive. Both exhibit a sense of benevolence that ultimately limits students' autonomy.**

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

CAMPUS BUILDINGS EXCLUDE SOME

A non-binary student feels SFCC could be more inclusive if more buildings had gender-neutral bathrooms. This issue causes additional, unnecessary stress that selectively impacts non-binary and other gender-marginalized students.

*“I’m queer and non-binary as well. And I one thing that really bugs me, and it makes me feel really **conflicted and like I don’t belong**, is that **there are certain buildings that don’t have gender-neutral restrooms**. And I know for me, I get very uncomfortable and I’m like, ‘Oh, God, which bathroom do I use, essentially, men or women?’ If there’s no gender-neutral bathrooms in the specific building, overall, honestly, that really sucks. **It makes me feel silly**, but having to **choose my battles** and figure out which bathroom to use just **isn’t fun**.”*

INCLUSION

PASSIONATE FACULTY ENHANCE SFCC EXPERIENCE

*“It seemed like these people are **very passionate about teaching. And that was really refreshing.** They love their job and they love working with students.”*

*“I’m in a geology course right now, and I was actually extremely nervous because it would be the first time that I had no shared classes with anybody I knew. **But the instructor, overall, is just very enthusiastic and very passionate.** I like when instructors are passionate about the work that they're teaching. **It motivates you to be more interested in what you're learning, and he really conveyed that well.** He got to know all the students individually. Got to know their interests, their goals academically. He did a lot of group projects for the first couple of weeks to kind of get people familiar with each other. And I'd say **by the third week, I'd basically known everybody in that class, and was just comfortable talking to any of them.** So I'd say that's a really good example of kind of how I felt belonging.”*

“The most connection or belonging I felt was with the professors. They have been really great. I don't know if I should mention them by name, but they were all great, especially, both of the creative writing professors I've had. It was really easy to talk to them.”

*“I was really bad at school from middle to high school. The Falls has really helped me understand that...I don't know [how to say what I mean]. School was very overwhelming before, but it's nice with **the professors that are at The Falls because most of them are really understanding and will work with you.**”*

Instructors and faculty **add significant value to students’ experiences of SFCC.** Participants feel **academically supported** because instructors seem passionate and make an effort to get to know their students.

STUDENTS ARE SUPPORTIVE

"I feel connected to the campus. As soon as I joined, there was a lot of people helping me because I didn't know where I was going. There was a lot of people nicer than I thought. They kept helping me to find areas, and they didn't even hesitate. [...] I met a lot of friendly Africans there too because when I was going on my way to the Cougar Card, there was this woman that was lost, and she asked me to help her [find the] way to go make her Cougar Card. When I was helping her, she showed me there was a place for Africans to all meet in the area. And I met a lot of nice Africans"

Participants describe a **supportive campus environment overall**, particularly among students. This environment likely contributes to Black and African American students' challenges with identifying microaggressions. Students are **easy to approach and eager to help one another**. However, as P5 notes, these **opportunities can be infrequent** because community college students **spend less time on campus** than students at four-year institutions and have less opportunity to develop relationships.

"The sense of belonging is...it's a really weird one for community college because a lot of people will just appear in class. We do the thing and we just disperse because, ironically, it's a community college, but because it's not like you don't live there. And outside of the clubs, you don't really connect much with the students. Although this last quarter, I was able to meet people in really odd ways, mainly because one of our professors didn't notify us so we weren't having class one day. And it was in a weird building. So we were all lost. So we formed a pack of students, and we bonded over being lost. So that was pretty nice."

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Participants feel **most connected** to SFCC and one another **because of student organizations**.

"I help put on events for campus through my job. And I feel like that helps me belong on campus. Putting on these mental health events in the Mosaic Center makes me feel a lot more connected to my campus, as well as a lot of the students because it'll be the same people who show up to the events."

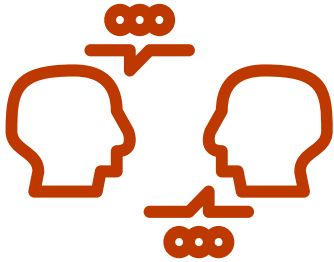
Clubs and organizations are **especially beneficial to Black/African American, Hispanic, and Latinx students**. These clubs help **minimize the impact of SFCC's predominantly white campus** and help students **build meaningful relationships**.

"My first quarter, I did take one or two classes in person, and it was predominantly white. In one of my classes, I was one of two people of color. In the other one, I think I was the only one. It made me want to just do online classes until I was done. But after taking more in-person classes and joining the BSU [Black Student Union] and getting more connected, I feel the college isn't all too bad."

"They have a Spanish-speaking club at the school. It's been really nice to just drop by there every now and then and get to talk to other students who speak English and Spanish like me or are there to study or are they're from other parts of the world like from Guatemala, Puerto Rico. Just getting to know some other people from around the place. That's been really nice. I guess that's the main thing that's related to my ethnicity was just being able to connect with other people similar to me while on campus."

"My experience might be more positively impacted by my ethnicity if I joined an international club or was more involved in the school. It'd probably be an amazing experience. I have noticed that the amount of Latinos just walking down the hall feels pretty minimal. Sometimes that can be daunting because Latinos are pretty proud of their heritage and want to share it with people who understand that."

CLASSROOMS SUPPORT DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT



Participants who feel they hold **outspoken beliefs** feel **respected and included in the classroom**. They appreciate that they were able to share their perspective **without judgment** from instructors or classmates.

"I feel 100% like I belong here. The teachers have been really open to different perspectives, which I was kind of surprised about. Even when there was a misunderstanding, they let me explain exactly where I was coming from, so they better understood my perspective. I had one situation in film class where we watched a film from the 1920s. Most people would look at it as a comedy film, but it was actually, from my perspective, a film that glossed over the horrors of slavery and glorified or romanticized the Confederate time period. The only time black people were shown in the movie was in the beginning where they were carrying large trunks on their backs. I noticed all those things others wouldn't because I am a black man, and I understand the time period. And so a lot of people were like, 'Oh, it's just a comedy movie?' But I was like, 'No, it's a propaganda piece that romanticizes the South.' And at first, my teacher didn't understand it, but once I explained more in-depth, she understood. And I thought that was pretty cool because normally, in life, it doesn't work like that."

"There was a class I had where we talked a lot about gender and equality and stuff. And my belief is I don't agree with that lifestyle, but I'm not one to be against it. Even when I had said things about being a Christian or openly said 'Oh, I don't agree with this lifestyle, but I don't judge you or condemn you for it,' I never felt any backlash or any kind of 'You're wrong,' or any kind of fight or anything. It was just like, 'Okay. Well, thank you for your opinion.' And that's how I approached it, too."

ARTS CLASSES INSPIRE BELONGING

*"[I feel like I belong] in my photography class where the **teacher will help explain an assignment** or walk me through a point in the darkroom that I don't understand in development, or why my paper's coming out wrong. **The students would offer to help me**, show me how things are done correctly and stuff like that. Give me opinions, pointers, and stuff like that."*

Participants feel the **strongest sense of belonging in arts classes**. These classes help students like part of a cohort, which leads to more meaningful relationships. These classes also help build respect and trust among students.

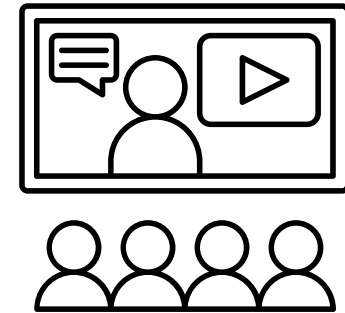
*"I have social anxiety, so it's hard for me to connect with other people a lot of the time. But **I feel a very good sense of community in the arts department** at the Falls because there are people always chatting during downtime, and you basically **get to know a lot of people** there because everyone's **taking the same classes**. I don't necessarily feel a huge sense of belonging with my classmates in other classes, but that could just be because I don't get as much time to talk with them. [...] **I've taken two-quarters of figure drawing**. It's really nice because I've taken **multiple classes from the professor**, so **I'll just chit-chat with her**. And I recognize a few of the students. **I'm pretty comfortable in the art department** there so **I just strike up conversations with people**."*

*"If it were on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being no belonging, and then 10 being, 'Oh, yeah, I belong completely,' **I feel like I'd be at a solid 6 or 7 just because I feel very connected to the people in my program**. And most of us, we get along, and it's a **very tight-knit community, at least in the filmmaking programs**. But overall, on campus, I think a downside to that is **all the cool events and activities that ASG and the campus does are during our classes**. So I don't feel very connected to the campus overall. But with my peers in the program, I feel very connected, and I feel there's that connection there."*

ONLINE LEARNING CAN IMPACT EXPERIENCES

*“As far as connected to others, very, very little. And I believe that the majority of that has been because I've taken a lot of online classes throughout working towards that AA degree. And so just because they're an online class, the interaction between students and teachers and me is very limited, even if there is discussions. In my experience, most discussions, for online classes, at least, it's more so everyone's just trying to **get through the assignment rather than actually working towards actual connection.** And so for that reason, I'd say I feel very limited connections or belonging at SFCC.”*

*“I've had **several teachers that have been very, very helpful with different assignments.** I would tell them I'm in another country and can't come down to office hours, or another time zone and can't go to the Zoom office hours. And I was working a full-time job. So they would be like, 'No problem. If you need help, just email me and we'll set up a time that works for you.' **And they were very, very, very helpful with that. And so that made me feel like I wasn't just an online student being forgotten** or whatever. Sometimes sitting behind a computer and just turning in assignments can make you feel like you're not part of the class. **I've had teachers comment on every single discussion post privately to me,** saying whatever comments and helping me and guiding me. [...]. I'm in a philosophy class. **And I am struggling to connect because she doesn't comment or give any real feedback** on anything. It's just we watch her lectures and if you email her a question, she'll email back. So I felt less connected in that class. There's not really any discussion posts between the students. **I guess that would be the only time that I've ever felt like I didn't belong.**”*



Course modality can positively or negatively impact students' perceptions of belonging. Participants prefer instructors who provide individual, direct feedback. Instructors who interact less frequently with students lead participants to feel less like they belong at SFCC.



APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS

There were 12 total participants. Identifying factors have been suppressed to preserve anonymity.

Count	Ethnicity
2	Hispanic/Latino
3	Asian
4	Black/African American (including those of African or Haitian descent)
3	White (including mixed race)

Count	Other Identities
1	Queer/Non-Binary
1	Living abroad
2	Parent or caregiver
1	Military family
1	Recently arrived in the U.S.
2	Faith-oriented



Thank you.

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