

Report of the Pathways to Success for African American Males at UIC

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for

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Preface

This report is the culmination of the Pathways to Success project at UIC. The goal of the project was to examine the *Pathways to Success* for African American male students who navigated the academic and social systems at UIC to approach degree completion in a timely manner. The idea of the research design was to better understand the paths, obstacles, strategies and facilitators in their journey to degree completion.

We are grateful to the Office of the Provost for providing funding for The Pathways to Success project. In addition, the Steering Committee of the Black Male Initiative at UIC offered their endorsement of the concept and research design. Finally, we wish to thank the twenty students who completed the Pathways survey and especially those seventeen men who so candidly shared their thoughts, ideas, and experiences with us during the Pathways interviews.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. We also welcome future research collaborations to build on our current findings and to provide information that promotes educational improvement.

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Pathways to Success for African American Males at UIC

Purpose

This study examines the pathways to success for African American male students who have moved through the academic and social systems at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and, as of spring 2009, were approaching degree completion in a timely manner (4 to 6 years). The study was designed so that the responses of the student participants would be helpful in informing the campus about the institutional, social and personal facilitators of, and obstacles to, success for these students, and so that these findings would suggest policy and program recommendations that may benefit future students.

Background

At UIC, the entering freshman class in 1990 was 50% male; by fall 2007, the entering class was 45% male. For African American freshmen, 32% of the entering class students were males in 1990, and 25% were males in 2007. During this 18-year span, UIC has engaged in many efforts to improve the access, retention and graduation rates of all students. Along with these demographic shifts, the UIC six-year graduation rates have risen from 36% for the 1987 freshmen cohort to 54% for the fall 2003 cohort. While the graduation rate for African American students also improved during this period (23% in 1987 and 40% for the 2003 cohort), it is troubling that it still lags the overall rate by 14%.

This study was designed to better understand the paths traveled by UIC African American male students who were making good progress toward degree completion. Through this research, we examined the strategies used, obstacles faced, and facilitators, both on and off campus, for these students. A mixed methods approach allowed us to look at the quantifiable characteristics and, through personal interviews, to uncover the answers to the “why” and “how” questions regarding the success of these students.

Study Framework

We have learned much from research based on models of college departure. Tinto’s model (1993) led to an understanding of student persistence that incorporated the characteristics and abilities of the student with the role of the institution. That is, persistence is not strictly a matter of student pre-enrollment background, ability and intention factors. The interaction of the student within the institution has also been found to play a role in student persistence/departure decisions. Tinto specifically detailed the role of institutional academic and social integration as key factors in persistence.

Volumes of research validating or refining Tinto’s model of student departure have led to a better understanding about why students leave college (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tiernery, 1999; Guiffrida, 2006). In addition, Braxton (2000) has offered alternatives to the applicability of the Tinto model to the variety of students who participate in higher education. From this research, we have learned that the “engaged”

student is more likely to stay, but much less research has been focused on the investigation of the factors that improved student retention.

For this project, we have also turned to important studies that have revealed the strategies and paths of high achieving African American students generally, and African American male students in particular (e.g., Harper and Quaye, 2007; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hyek, 2004; Cuyjet, 1997). These studies suggest that it is important to understand cultural nuances in applying the Tinto model to student retention studies.

In response to criticism about the cultural limitations of Tinto's model, Douglas Guiffrida, in 2006, proposed a modified model that incorporated the psychological and cross-cultural factors that are important for application to minority students. Guiffrida's proposed modified model provided the framework for this study. Specifically, Guiffrida's model provided nine variable domains that informed the development of the study survey, interview, coding and analysis. The domains included Cultural Norms and Values; Family Background; Skills and Abilities; Prior Schooling; Motivational Orientation, Goals and Intentions; External Commitments; Academic Systems (Academic Performance and Faculty/Staff Interactions); University Social Systems (Extracurricular Activities and Peer Group Interactions); and Home Social Systems (Family and Friends).

Methods and Data Analysis

We used a mixed method approach in our attempt to understand the experiences of successful African American male undergraduates at UIC. In this study, we defined success as "advanced undergraduates who entered UIC as a freshman (not transfer students) and were making timely progress toward degree completion." Because we wished to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the African American male undergraduates who persisted to advanced standing, our sample included all African American male students who fell within the defined parameters of student success for participation in the study.

Three methods of data collection were employed:

- Student pre-enrollment and enrollment information were drawn from the student database to outline the characteristics of the students.
- A survey of academic and co-curricular student experiences was administered as a way to gather general student engagement characteristics and perceptions of the campus environment.
- Individual student interviews were conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of the personal facilitators and obstacles experienced, and the individual strategies used, as the students successfully negotiated campus academic and social systems and processes.

While the survey and interview were informed by Guiffrida's model, it is important to note that the design of the survey included opportunity for novel interviewee responses, and all of the interview questions were open-ended.

Description of Study Participants

The target group for the study included students who entered UIC as freshmen and were approaching graduation in a timely manner (within 4, 5, or 6 years of entry). In the spring term 2009, there were 160 African American male undergraduates enrolled at senior level standing. Of this total, 114 entered UIC as transfer students. The remaining 46 seniors entered UIC as freshmen. Forty-three of the 46 (all but 3) entered in the fall of 2003 or later. This figure (43) included one student from the Fall 2006 entering class. This student had entered from high school with 38 placement credits (at sophomore standing). Given the distinct outlier status of this student, he was omitted from the study targeted sample. Thus, the group of 42 seniors was the target sample for the study.

All 42 students who met the study criteria were recruited to participate. Of that group, we received survey responses from 20 students and we interviewed 17 of the 20 survey respondents. The table below outlines the cohort distribution of the respondents as well as the status of other students from each of the freshman cohorts.

| Entry Cohorts | Fall 2003 | Fall 2004 | Fall 2005 | Total |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Initial Freshman by cohort year | 64 | 63 | 78 | 205 |
| Spring 2009 Senior Standing | 4 | 18 | 20 | 42 |
| Still enrolled (not senior standing) | 0 | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| Graduated | 22 | 16 | 0 | 38 |
| <i>Pathways Survey Participation</i> | 2 | 8 | 10 | 20 |
| <i>Pathways Interview Participation</i> | 1 | 7 | 9 | 17 |

The academic progress and entry origins of the spring 2009 African American male seniors, who entered UIC as freshmen, are graphically displayed in Appendix A. It offers a visual representation of the targeted sample (sorted by study participants and non-participants). The total targeted sample represented is 42 students; twenty students who participated in the Pathways survey, and 22 students who did not participate. The average ACT composite for *Pathways* participants was 22.4, and for non-participants; 21.9. The average GPA of the participants at the end of fall 2008 term was 2.76; for non-participants, it was 2.63. Using a simple t-test for comparison of group means, we found that there was no difference between the two groups (participants and non-participants) on composite ACT (pre-enrollment academic readiness) or cumulative GPA (current academic standing).

Although the focus of this report is the students who were successfully progressing toward UIC degrees, it is interesting to note the comparison of the students in the sample with those who were not part of the sample. The two primary cohorts of students in the study entered UIC as freshmen in Fall 2004 (n=63) and Fall 2005 (n=78). From this total of 141, 38 were eligible to participate in the study (senior standing during

spring 2009) – 18 participated in the study; 16 had already graduated; 14 were still enrolled at UIC, but not at senior standing; and 73 were no longer enrolled at UIC and did not graduate. Using ANOVA procedures, we found that the five groups did not have significantly different ACT composite, ACT math, or ACT English scores.

As for the financial aid profile of the 42 students in the targeted sample, 38 students had a FAFSA (application for financial aid) on file. One indicator of student need from the FAFSA is the EFC (estimated family contribution). Of the 38 FAFSA files, the average EFC was \$4521, with totals ranging from \$0 to \$26,534. (A lower EFC indicates a higher need for financial assistance). The table below shows the aid profile of the total targeted sample, the participants, and the non-participants.

| Financial Aid Profile | Total sample | Participant | Non-participant |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| FAFSA on file (2008-09) | 38 (of 42) | 17 (of 20) | 21 (of 22) |
| Average EFC | \$4571 | \$5768 | \$3646 |
| EFC = \$0 | 18 | 8 | 10 |
| EFC <\$5000 | 10 | 4 | 6 |
| EFC \$5000 to \$10,000 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| EFC \$10,000 to \$20,000 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| EFC > \$20,000 | 2 | 2 | 0 |

Survey and Interview Recruitment Procedures

The study target population was made up of the 42 African American male undergraduate students who were at senior standing during the spring 2009 term and began their studies at UIC as freshmen in the fall of 2003 or later. An initial letter of invitation and a survey were mailed to the students. The letter provided a brief description of the study and the nature of participation – specifically that participation in the study was a two-part process that included completion of the survey and a one-hour interview. A participation stipend of \$50 was offered for students who completed both the survey and the interview. E-mail notices were sent to the students encouraging them to participate. Approximately two weeks later, a second mailing (letter and survey) was sent to students who had not responded to the first mailing. Three additional e-mail notices were sent to non-responders subsequent to the second mailing. Approximately three weeks after the first mailing, we began to schedule interviews. Interviews were scheduled as surveys were received. A total of 20 surveys were received by the final submission date. Seventeen students responded to the request for an interview. Several attempts were made to schedule the final three interviews to no avail.

The analyses of survey responses include the twenty students who returned surveys. The interview analysis includes the seventeen interview participants. In some instances, interview responses are tied to survey responses. Obviously, these analyses are limited to the seventeen students who participated in both the survey and interview components.

Survey and Interview Instruments

Guiffrida's model, (drawn from Tinto) provided the framework for the development of the survey instrument and the interview questions. Specifically, Guiffrida's model provided nine variable domains that guided the development of the study survey and interview. Appendix B is a representation of Guiffrida's recommendations to Tinto's model. Note that the recommended variable domains are represented in bold print.

For the survey, we used items, and modified items, from three established student engagement surveys; the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), and the College Senior Survey (CSS). We also developed new items when specific variables were not represented in earlier surveys. For the interview, we developed items that would give participants the greatest opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with regard to each domain. We also created open-ended questions to encourage completely novel responses. Appendices C and D are samples of the survey and interview instruments respectively.

The Survey and Student Responses

The survey instrument is a four-page pencil and paper survey which students completed prior to the interview. The survey gathered information on student behaviors, attitudes and views, and served the dual purpose of providing information about the students, and developing a backdrop for the interview with each student.

The survey was divided into five sections targeting specific variables to develop a profile of each student. Each set of responses contributed to an overall understanding of influences, facilitators and challenges for each student. The variables associated with each section of the survey are listed as follows:

Student Background (Pre-Entry Attributes): Parental education; readiness for college; financing college; living arrangements while in college

Drive and Motivation (Goals/Commitments): Student self assessment of skills, confidence and drive; role of outside factors in motivation for learning; key factors influencing success

Time Allocation (Experiences While at College): Allocation of time among various scheduling demands – such as preparing for class, studying, relaxing, volunteering, working, etc.

Gains and Satisfaction (Connections/Outcomes): Self-report of their gains on a range of skills and academic factors; relationships with students, faculty and staff; and overall satisfaction with UIC

Challenges and Supports: A list of the top three challenges and the top three supports during college.

Due to the small size of this targeted sample, statistical analysis on the responses is not appropriate; however, it is useful to note some common themes, and instances in which the responses were evenly distributed. General findings from the surveys are listed as follows:

Student Background

- 55% of the students came from households with college-educated parents; 25% of the parents had attended college, but did not complete a degree; and 20% of the group reported that their parent(s) had no exposure to college.
- All but one student reported a primary reliance on a combination of financial aid and loans to finance college.
- 40% of the students had no experience with the UIC residence halls; while 50% lived in campus housing at least 2 years.

Drive and Motivation

- Students rated themselves highest on: drive to achieve; intellectual self confidence; and cooperativeness;
- followed by academic ability and leadership.
- They rated themselves lowest on math ability and spirituality.
- The students reported that they are primarily motivated: 1) in order to challenge themselves; and 2) by subjects that interest them.
- Getting good grades for the sake of good grades or simply getting good grades to get a better job are less powerful motivators for these students.

Time Allocation

- On most of the 13 items, the students reported a modest allocation of time to any one activity – suggesting a fairly even distribution of time across the various activities.
- Students reported the greatest amount of time overall was spent relaxing and preparing for class/studying.
- In some instances, such as off campus employment, (2 students reported working off campus more than 30 hours each week), and care of family (2 students) skewed an overall negligible time allocation; the impact of the external commitments was evident, however, they were outliers in the overall picture.

Satisfaction and Gains

- Students rated faculty as supportive, and rated staff as somewhat less helpful.
- They rated their relationships with other UIC students as most positive.
- They generally felt positive about their gains in academic, critical thinking and social skills.
- The area of least gain was math ability followed by time management.
- When asked about their overall satisfaction with their educational experience at UIC, 60% indicated that it was good or excellent; 40% rated it as fair; no student rated it as poor.
- When rating their overall satisfaction with UIC, ratings fell slightly with 10% indicating that they were very dissatisfied.

The Interview and Student Responses

Individual interviews were conducted with each student participant. Each interview was tape recorded with the student's permission. During the interviews, one investigator asked questions, while the other took notes and asked follow-up questions. Each interview focused on 11 questions that guided the students' responses regarding the personal facilitators of, and challenges to, their success. At the end of the interview we asked the students to tell us what advice they would give to an entering African American male freshmen about how to succeed at UIC. We also asked what advice they would give to UIC to help students succeed.

While the open-ended interview questions provided an opportunity for students to tell us the story of their successful transition into and through academic and social experiences at UIC, we used the nine variable domains of Guiffida's proposed model as the framework for coding the interview responses. The variable domains and definitions are found in Appendix E. The responses to the open-ended questions yielded a tenth variable domain; Student Support Systems. This domain will be defined and described later in this section.

In the following review of interview responses pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the study participants.

Student Pre-Entry Attributes

Student pre-entry attributes include the four variables that describe the students as they arrive on campus. They include the student's preference for individual versus collectivist (group) study, their family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling.

Cultural Norms – Individualist/Collectivist

In a study by Thompson and Fretz (1991), they predicted that high levels of collectivism would predict successful academic and social integration of successful African American students. Instead, their study findings revealed that the students had positive attitudes toward more competitive learning situations and individualist learning environments.

For our study, the investigation of cultural norms and values was focused on whether individualism or communalism (collectivism) would be more characteristic of successful African American male students at UIC. In the interview we asked students, "As a UIC student, would you describe yourself as someone who mainly works individually, or someone who works with a study partner or study groups?"

Of the 17 respondents, 16 told us that when they came to UIC they preferred to study individually rather than in partners or groups. Eight students indicated that they still prefer to work individually rather than in groups, and they shared their reasons for this preference. Reasons included:

- **a lack of productivity when working in study sessions with a group;**

- **the distractions of group study; a lack of study time for individuals who know the material and had to spend more time in the group teaching instead of learning;**
- **inexperience with the benefit of consulting others; shyness and feelings of vulnerability;**
- **the challenging logistics involved in getting a study group together when many students commute;**
- **poor quality of the product when working with others;**
- **a preference for working alone out of habit;**
- **more confidence in their own ability than in the abilities of the group; and**
- **a lack of study partners of his ethnicity within his discipline.**

The following are representative responses from the student interviews:

Interviewer: Would you describe yourself as someone who works mainly individually or who works with a study partner or a study group?

Andre: Individually. I never had study partners.

Interviewer: And that is by choice? That's what you preferred?

Andre: I've studied with people. But we never did any work. So I just stay by myself. And if I don't get it, that's it, I just don't.

Ervan: I work individually. There are two schools of thought. Some people feel like it would be great to work in groups a lot of times. I found that especially on campus...if you really put the time in yourself to work on and go over the problems, questions will arise; you'll start to figure it out. My experience with group study sessions, if I just join a group; the one who knows the most about the subject will just get hammered down with questions. If he decides to help them catch up, he won't have time to study for himself if he needs help. That happened to me a couple of times. I'm not going to say that I dislike study groups, but it can be difficult in terms of how far you are, or where you are at.

Kendrick: I'm just pretty individualistic I guess....For some classes you really need the study groups, something more like math classes and things like that; architecture, mainly when we have group projects. I just try to stay more to myself to try and get work done. When I am in a large crowd it gets distracting. Like in our studio class some people just play music out loud, socialize, frequent breaks, it's just kind of distracting. So uh, that's why I just had to get my own place or whatever.

Nelson: It's more of an option. I am more than willing to team up with my friends to tackle an issue and things like that but if we're in a classroom with 50 or so other people, and he gave us an option of doing it by ourselves or in a group, I'd quickly do it by myself. When it comes to group, when you're in a class and you don't already know the people in there you're going to get thrown into a group with random individuals. And maybe it's just my luck I always get paired with people who have no idea what they're doing. So you're doing the whole project and they're lucky if they can even comprehend. So from things like that it gets to the point where I dread having to do group projects. Things like that...it's kind of like the deciding factor...I think I had six classes signed up for this semester, one of them sent out the syllabus early. I saw that there was a group project. I dropped that one. It turned out that the other ones had some as well. But I just knew that if I had to do a group project for that whole class I would rather pass on that. I will stick to the individual papers, no matter how long it is.... It's hard to work in a group with people

who you know have no idea what they are saying and are going to depend on you for the whole project. It wears you down so much that it just gets to the point where you just say, "I wish I was the only person in here." In the end they just hold you back. I'd much rather do it myself, get it done, and not have to worry about it. Especially, like I said, with this campus, with people always commuting you have to find time to meet them. And you have to meet them there. And there are always other things they are doing whether it be work or family; whatever. So it's hard to just get into a group and work together. So it turns into not five people working on one thing, but five people working on separate things that just so happen to go to the same place like if you you're doing a power point. It's usually every person does two slides about whatever topic it is, and just throw it together, not us working together to decide what's going on these slides. So if you're doing that, you might as well do ten slides by yourself.

Lawrence: Um....more often than not I would work individually. Even if I do have someone within the same class just because I trust my abilities more than the next person so I'll always usually rank my work higher. So that's actually why the main reason I've never really cheated like off of someone in a test setting or anything like that because I just assume that I know more than them. I would hate to get a grade...even if I'm not totally sure of the material...because I decided to go with someone else's work other than mine. So...more often than not I do work individually

Hasan: I would have to say [I study] on my own. It's what I've actually done throughout my entire time here, but I wouldn't recommend that you actually do that. I mean if you have the support of either other students in a particular class then it would be great for you to actually do that. But it's not your willingness to say...lets meet in the dorm room and let's study all night or something. It takes others as well. And a lot of things go into actually setting up...well I want to study with you. Because a lot of students have stereotypes on who they should study with. When it comes to science, ORGO [Organic Chemistry] I and II, courses that you need to pass for MCAT and PCAT, just look at the diversity make up of those study groups. There's not going to be many, I don't know too many African Americans that are taking ORGO I or II, and if they do, they're trying to study with the same ethnicity or something like that. That's who they feel they would be successful with.

Ten of the students, nine of whom began their college careers as individualists, indicated that they engaged in study groups later in their academic careers, and mentioned the benefits of academic group work. Reasons included:

- **preparation for group work in the post-graduate professional career setting;**
- **getting help in understanding something;**
- **assistance with class notes;**
- **moral support; and**
- **developing friendships through study.**

Marcus:I really like to tackle my work and do things on my own, on my own terms just for convenience sake, but this last semester, with all these group projects and everything its kind of unavoidable. I would say it's like a benefit to work with a partner because you need to get used to being in that environment and working with others. So like the last couple semesters I had a couple group projects. That's really helped me go out and talk to people and get to form groups on your own. Do all these things and learn

to be successful working with somebody. And if you don't understand something you can always ask for help. That's the one bad drawback to that. Like if I sometimes don't understand something. When I first originally came here I would ask my brother or something or I would just sit there and just try and tough through it. But now if I don't understand something I can ask some of my classmates that I've been taking the classes with. That helps out a lot.

Brandon: I have a really good friend; she has been in all my math classes since the get go. I met her here. I'm a year older than her. I met her in Calc I or Calc II. We've been in all the same classes. Her major is different. There have been times, especially now, when we both can't make it to class, or I can make it and she can't. We'll copy each other's notes and she'll explain it to me, and if she misses, I'll explain it to her. We're both learning. And then she's been...we both feed off of each other. I dropped a class that she was in, and she was very upset, but I told her, "you can make it through"...she's doing well. She's not in one of my classes, and I'm doing well. Even though we're not in the same class together -- so she's been helpful in telling me that, "you can do it," this is easy for math majors if you've gotten this far. We're going to finish.

Franklin: In the past definitely individually, recently it's both individually and in groups. As I've gotten older, I've gotten more confidence to go up to people and say "we should study together" and stuff like that.

Otis: I would have to say study groups and study partners. I think it's an added bonus because you're doing well in school and you're building connections and building friendships. Most of the friendships that I built were from study groups. And it's so funny because I would see a whole class who didn't know each other at the beginning of the semester, two, three hundred students and at the end of the semester they all come together and build lasting relationships, because you know, when you're up one to two o'clock in the morning studying, you probably have side conversations. You're talking. You have conversations about life. I think that's the beauty of UIC. You have this interaction of people of different races...different...we're all in the same boat. We're all trying to get through this class. We lean on each other for support. That's how I describe myself.

Interviewer: Was that you, all four years, or did you grow to be more orientated toward study groups?

Otis: I think the first year I was very individual. I was always to myself, trying to study, and for a couple of tests I had, I thought, I have to add at least a couple more people...the bigger the better. My sophomore year to now -- study groups. [I] call people and ask if there is a weekend study group.

Some students consciously chose when they would work individually, and when they would work in a group.

Brandon: ...I like to work individually when I need to understand something. If I have like a study group, I know my friends, they'll study but they're going to take breaks when they want breaks and because they're not doing anything I'll lose my focus and I can't do that. So I think right now I'd rather [work individually]. It depends on what I'm doing. It depends on the subject. If I'm doing math, I'll do it by myself. That's my major I need to understand it. If I'm doing something like Spanish or Anthropology I'll do it in a study group because it comes to me easier than math does. And I like to work by myself. I don't mind groups actually.

David: Half and half. It kind of depends on the course. For 241, that was a big portion of....I read it first. It was better to come together afterwards, then collectively talk about the work. The math and science, kind of more independently, or more so to go over after my independent work was done. So it's really a half and half.

....One thing that isn't big on the campus, by being a big commuter school, there isn't much of an influence among friends. Once you get here, you're here, that's it, and once you're gone you don't really talk too much. But when I met [my best friend] there was a big difference. We hung out outside of school. Me and her and other friends, we'd get together and study. Yeah, this is what was missing before. So, some way to try and create that community among UIC students, I think is needed. Its not strong enough here.

Jamar: You know what...I have done most of my time; I've operated most of the time, individually. But the last semester I did a class, it was pretty demanding, and I did a lot of group studying during that class. It definitely helped.... And most of the time I was helping others understand concepts. But you know when you help others you have to first fully understand the concepts, and as you help them, it reinforces it in your own mind. I found that it was especially in that class and contributed to my success in that class. But the majority, the overwhelming majority of the time I've been here at UIC I did most of my work by myself. Probably to my disadvantage but luckily its not a real, measurable, huge disadvantage, I would say. Would my GPA be a little bit higher if I did more group work, probably.

Isaac: I would say both. I realized freshman year that I used to work on my own. Everything was my own, because I wasn't used to working with people. I would study on my own, and after a while I realized I needed someone to study with, so I started studying with people. Then I realized if you study too much with people sometimes people just come to talk. They really don't do that much. So I pretty much, okay, this is what I do....I study on my own, then I go to people and we'll talk about. So my friend, A., both of us study all the time, we pretty much study on our own. Then we come together to talk about it. We discuss. Ask questions and stuff like that. Sometimes it's in groups and sometimes by myself. So I think both ways are good.

One student moved from working in study groups to working individually.

George: Initially study partners and study groups, but the past year and half I have been doing everything on my own. But mostly just a study partner if anything. My buddy and I, we were always studying together. We tried to study with other people, but they never wanted to study. Well at least the friends we had. They never want to study. We mainly study by ourselves or together. Then, we had a couple classes with this one friend, and again I don't want to sound like a racist, but this does happen at UIC. We had these two friends; we would study together, 5 – 6 hours a night. Or like 18 hours for an exam. We wouldn't sleep. Stay up with NoDoz and caffeine. That's what we do. The minute we're like, we're tired we're going to go to asleep or we just understand this. They would act they were tired or during the entire study session they would be asking us all the questions and have us explain things to them. Then once we went home to go to sleep they would stay up all night studying. And they wouldn't tell us about it. Then they would always score higher than us. We wondered, what the heck is going on? And then we finally figured it out. That's one thing that occurs, with [named specific ethnic groups]. They will study with you and ask you questions. They understand everything already. Then they go home and continue to study. And then they'll pretend like they didn't study

at all. You start to notice methods of deception to get higher grades. [My buddy] and I didn't really appreciate that so we started working on our own. Then [my friend] and me lived together and had a falling out; then I moved on and live by myself. So now I study by myself.

By senior year, about half of these successful students indicated that they preferred to work individually, and the other half indicated that there were times when each mode of study was appropriate. Ultimately, no student indicated that communal study was preferred.

Family Background

Some aspects of family background at the university were covered in the earlier discussion of the survey results, but within the interview, eight students commented on their pre-college family support. For all of these students, it was clear that their parents were invested in their education.

One student told us that there were differences between his goals and those of his family, and he discussed the family conflict about his college choice:

David:....I actually wrote about this in a paper. When I talked about my family, as far as, selling drugs, going to jail....and not actually achieving much outside of high school, ...and just knowing that I wanted to go above and beyond that. I want to see the world and go past the four corners of Adams and Kostner....and maybe take a trip to Italy one day....or Paris. Just go above and beyond. They don't quite grasp that concept, its more, "lets kick it at home, watch TV, drink, smoke," and um, we have that constant battle. But I hear, "you know you're kind of boring," because you don't want to do the things we want to do....and I'm like, no, I just want to do more than what you want to do.

Another student told us about the positive influence his parents had in helping him to be prepared for a diverse social environment.

Brandon: The social aspect [of college] wasn't as difficult as the academic aspect because even though I did go to an all Black high school, my parents made sure that I did do a good amount of diverse things. We did a lot of traveling and going to other states for vacation and stuff like that. But it wasn't as bad, but it was different to be on my own; transition by myself. My parents weren't there to start the conversation with someone or to tell me to just go ahead and do it...you'll be fine. And then again I was only 18.

Six of the students discussed the significant positive influence that their mother's had on their academic success, whether it was support when they did well, encouragement in the face of challenge, or the expression of confidence in their ability. The following are two examples of their comments:

Nelson: Family...my mom has always supported me. If I have any issues I can call her. She is always willing to give me comforting words, saying again, that it is, just a paper, or one issue. It's not something that's going to blow up in your face. Just take it easy and think things through and there won't be any problems for you.

Carl: Well let me see, I went to a very good high school and my family always pushed me to do well academically. As far as family goes, my mom and my grandmother...have always been a big support behind my back. They've always been, "you can do it" you know, they've always been the type, that they want the best things for you. They always have your back and want the best things for you; they always do what they can to help you, academically, etc....One thing, growing up, my mom always pushed me...pushed for harder challenges. So all throughout my academic life; from elementary school through high school, I always took honors and AP courses. I would say my first two years at UIC were quite simple. I already had college prep; I was already prepared for college by mid-high school, per se. As far as challenges go, I liked that the school had challenges regarding, like Education. I was studying to be a teacher, originally, before I changed my major. I believe that those classes were really challenging and I liked it. It pushed me to work harder for my major.

Two students discussed the support received from a brother.

Marcus: Family; well my brother actually went through UIC and he graduated a couple years ago. So he kind of prepared me for the business core classes, because he got a degree in marketing and management. I am going for accounting in the same College of Business so he had prepared me for what I was going to do. All the teachers, he had given me a heads up on all the teachers and everything. He pretty much told me that my writing was a little bit weak and that I would need to work on that. So I got a lot of input from him, so I would be ready.

Jamar: My brother, he's in New Jersey. We talk from time to time so. I don't know....

Interviewer: Is he an older brother?

Jamar: No he's a younger brother. We talk. It was funny, he was going to school while I was in the service. And when I was in the service, I was in the Marine Corps. That's where my mind was. That was the track I was on. I was ultra motivated gung-ho marine. I would talk to him and he'd be trying to talk to me about college and I was like na na na. He would say...you have been educated stupid. You can talk about anything without approaching it from all these different angles...you don't enjoy things. That's how some of my conversations would be. Then, when I got out and decided to go to school, I had all new experiences. I really learned to think about things in different ways. I started to see where he was coming from. I guess he helped me in that fashion...now we can bounce our brains off each other, because that's always good.

Skills and Abilities, Prior Schooling and the Transition to College

When the students responded to the survey question asking them to rate themselves on a number of traits in comparison with the average person their age, they rated themselves the lowest on mathematical ability. Within the interviews, when the students were asked about their prior schooling, preparation for college level work and their transition to UIC, nine of the students told us that their transition was relatively smooth. However, eight of the students indicated that they were not adequately prepared, and as a result, the transition was difficult. The students who experienced a smooth transition emphasized the importance of high school support. It is important to note that one of the interview questions directly asked students to comment on their academic transition in math, writing, science and computing.

The following are two student responses are characteristic of those students who experienced a relatively smooth transition:

Carl: When I got to middle school, 7th and 8th grade, I went to a public school, but then I was in an honors program. I was already taking high school algebra and classes that were getting you ready for algebra II. Freshman year I was already take geometry. Sophomore year I was taking algebra II, etc. As far as science goes, I consider myself an average science student. I never really got really big into biology and chemistry. I took an AP chemistry class; it didn't go too well for me. In high school I took AP calculus and AP English and both those classes worked great for me. Calculus was right at my level my senior year and I felt like AP English was right at my level senior year as well. I took the AP exams for both those courses and I scored a 2 on both AP exams. And when I got to UIC I always said I wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't know which I wanted to be a math teacher or English teacher so I just decided to be an English teacher....I already knew how to use computers. I was computer literate. I always had the Internet. Again, I took the AP English and math course. So when I came in taking Math 118, and taking English Composition I and II, it was more like high school work to me because I was basically exposed to those already. ...And one thing, from my background, going to high school and taking accelerated programs and classes all throughout my academic years, you learn how to multi-task very well. Some people can multi-task, work full-time, go to school full time. During the day they have to squeeze time out for their own personal leisure. They can do all three, or do multiple things; be part of organizations and still go to school. Some students can't because they are not able to multi-task. That's an important trait you have to master. In your adult life you have to learn how to balance work/career your family and the unexpected things you come across.

Otis: Well, I think for one, I would have to credit a lot of that preparation to my high school. I attended Brooks College Prep., which is a college preparatory academy, and they really prepared us in ACT prep; prepared us on how to work on various projects; prepared us in math, and things of that nature. Going right in to UIC I knew I had the preparation to excel, but I knew I had to work a little bit harder, because it was a different level of education. I never said I could come in and ace every class. I knew that wasn't going to happen. I knew I had to work hard, but I would have the basic tools to get me through the classes.

Of the eight students who told us that their transition to UIC was difficult, seven mentioned that math was a challenge, and one mentioned chemistry; and science in general. Following are responses of students who discuss transition challenges:

Hasan: So just coming from a Chicago public school into a four-year university is a transition in itself. You have prerequisites when you come into school so they cover a wide range of subjects. So, when you enter a four-year university and you come from a Chicago public school, you will find out whether or not you are prepared to actually do well in these classes. A lot has to do with the actual person in itself. The study habits and things like that....but at the same time, the majority of it comes from what you've actually carried with you from high school. So I think the social transition was most difficult for me because, I came from a vocational high school, so we had the choice of either taking some type of math class, I forgot what it was, or we can choose physical education.

Brandon:I went to a majority Black high school. The education there at the time when I got out of high school I thought was great. Until I came to UIC and realized that I didn't understand the fundamentals in order to succeed in some of the classes that I needed to succeed in. Which is why...which led to two semesters of not doing so well. And because of that, I tried my hardest to tell the [high] school that they should fix that, but of course, I'm only just one student. But it was very hard to transition from high school to college -- because of that....also because of the different dynamic...UIC is very diverse, so going from an all Black high school to everybody else, it was very hard, and very challenging to adjust to.

Interviewer: Could you tell us a little bit more about academic preparation? You said you felt like you didn't have a good solid grasp of the fundamentals. Can you tell us what you mean by that?

Brandon: For like, um...well I guess. The teachers at the school, at the high school I was at, they tried to, instead of teach the curriculum....they tried to just get through the curriculum. They knew that they had to give us information but they didn't try to make sure we understood the education. But the majority of the classes that we needed as far as the physics and the sciences --they just tried to get through...so that they can tell their boss, "see I taught them." That's where the fundamentals come from, and coming here, I needed those fundamentals in order to get on with physics, chemistry and biology, which I didn't have.

Kendrick: In high school I was already accustomed to computers. Math and science were my strong points. English wasn't so much. But um, I was doing pretty well in high school, then I came here, and well....my senior year, I didn't have to take a math class senior year, so I placed out of the math pre-requisite for UIC. So I came in freshman year and did calculus and I guess completely forgot about the whole year of math, so that kind of put me behind and um, science is no problem, physics is no problem, English I did fairly well. My junior year I had the choice to take algebra or trigonometry and I guess like, the school suggested that I do the advanced algebra. I guess that didn't help me. I should have taken the trigonometry.

Goals/Commitments Motivational Orientation

When students enter the university, along with the pre-entry attributes discussed in the previous section, they also bring a motivational orientation, goals, and external commitments that influence college adjustment, commitment, and success.

Motivational Orientation

For this study, the examination of motivational orientation was drawn from self-determination theory (SDT). Guiffrida (2006) explained that according to SDT (Deci and Ryan, 1991, and Reeve, Deci and Ryan, 2004), people are motivated to learn by one of two motivational orientations: (a) *intrinsic motivation* (learning because one finds the content interesting; the material is closely aligned with interests or values; it satisfies the need to be effective in interactions with the environment, or it satisfies the need to establish close, secure relationships with others; or (b) *extrinsic motivation*, or learning as a means to an end (i.e., grades, praise, pay). SDT theory posits that the most meaningful and successful learning occurs when students are motivated intrinsically.

In a study of 100 first generation Latino students by Dennis, Phinney and Chuataco (2005), personal motivations, and the motivation to work toward a fulfilling career were found to be predictors of college adjustment, and slight predictors of college commitment, when they controlled for certain variables like high school GPA. Contrary to their hypothesis, the extrinsic motivation of family expectation did not prove to be a predictor.

Of the 17 interview respondents, 16 students commented on their motivational orientation. Fourteen of the 16 described themselves as intrinsically motivated, having strong personal drive or career goals. The three following comments are good representations of many of the student responses:

Carl: I just value education. No matter what I'm doing. I have to get this done. I have to get this paper done. I have a test coming up. It's an overall value of education. You automatically prioritize things. I can't hang out tonight; maybe I can hang out later in the week. I mean I'm not an angel. I got excessive from time to time. My first semester, I had a perfect 4.0. It's difficult though; going into college there should be so much structure for freshman....and so when you get that freedom right away, some people can make that transition and become responsible early-on. Where they can not have their parents, how do I put this...their parents are not there to monitor everything they do, but they can still stay focused and accomplish what they are supposed to do and do their work. When they get the freedom they don't have the backbone right away so they buckle down and stay focused. That can be a challenge for some students, not necessarily a challenge, but something that is valuable. You feel like an adult a lot more.

.... Staying focused. Staying focused. I mean, no matter what happens. When I was student teaching, I told my sister, no matter what happens, you can't lose sight of your ideals and your goals. A lot of my friends ended up dropping out or transferring to another school; and the reason why, not because UIC is a bad school; it's about priorities. One thing that I did was simply stayed focused. No matter what happens, yeah I like to socialize. I had to work off campus. But my whole purpose at UIC is to get in; get a college degree; get cultured; in many different aspects, regarding social studies, liberal

studies and get a bachelor's degree. That's the whole goal. But then a lot of students come on campus and they don't have that goal. They come on campus and put education on the back burner and forget, "wow, I'm here to learn." And they're not in school anymore. So basically it's how to stay focused.

Otis: I have a drive like no other. I am very passionate. Very driven. I think that's always been a part of me. I think my drive did not really awake until high school when I recognized that college was my only opportunity to make something of my self. There was nothing in my neighborhood. The social aspects of gangs and drugs. Not having an education but still trying to make a living was not a life that I wanted to live. Was not a life I wanted to partake in. It was not a life where I would birth a kid and have them live in a household with an uneducated parent; people who could have made a better life for themselves. I think that was my drive to really get the education. Educate myself and persevere. AndI'll say this, that train ride home on the red line, coming from the blue line to the red line, that was a motivation. Be on the train -- and you see people who are not educated. Not...you know...making something out of themselves. That drove me to work hard, and study hard, and make something out of myself.

Brandon: My own sense of drive fit in, I would say, I didn't want to be a statistic. I didn't want to come here and be another African American who didn't finish or just...I don't like to quit. I don't like to let things defeat me. I know my GPA is not where I want it to be. I'm not going to just stop, and say let me not graduate and stay here; time is money. I have to keep it moving, regardless. There will always be a way.

Two students who fell within the group of the intrinsically motivated students also discussed other factors that influenced their motivation. The following student response describes the influence of faculty mentors:

David: Professor LS, I had her for advanced fiction writing about two years ago. When the semester was over, she said, "it was pleasure having you in class, and I challenge to write outside of what you normally write in," and "you excelled beyond what I thought you were actually going to do." And she said she "I am very proud of you." And that continued me to actually push me to do things outside of what I normally do. For my writing, as far as fiction goes, I was going down the whole Harry Potter route, and she said that I could do much better than that. I tried, and I actually enjoy writing...and I thought, "I rock."

Another student told us that knowledge of the Guaranteed Professional Program Admission (GPPA) program would have given him an extra push.

Quenton: One thing that I did know when I came here, I don't know if it's off topic or not. I heard of a program just last year, they call it GPPA. I didn't hear of that at all in high school... I'm not sure and I don't want to discriminate. But it seems like all the north suburban kids, the Caucasian kids, they all know about it. But as far as south side and African American kids, nobody had ever heard of it. It was...I want to say schooling. Not to say I would have [done] it. But if I would have heard about it, maybe I would have decided to do it. We had honors classes, which I took, but not to say, hey, if you get this score on the ACT you can pretty much be guaranteed that you'll get into a pre-professional school. I mean I would have tried a lot harder. Not to say that I didn't try, but it might have given me an extra push.

Finally, two students provided descriptions that were a strong indication that they are extrinsically motivated. Their responses reveal their lack of connection to the campus community or to a larger academic or professional goal.

Andre: [When I graduate,] I'm going to celebrate. It's not like that; walking across the stage and all of that. That can wait. I just want the diploma.

Franklin: um, yeah. I had definitely a lot of friends my sophomore year. And a few of those friends were really on top of their academic work. They are good guys who I am still friends with. They would say, [student's name], if you keep this up, not doing your work and partying all the time, you're going to fail out of school. We need to talk. I remember going back to my room and thinking, oh they're right. And I started doing some work right then and there. So those guys, for a while, put me on the right path. But you know once you get into a habit it's hard to break that habit. Even though I started doing my work right then and there for about a week after a while, I was back... When I'm not that interested in something it's just so much harder for me to really put forth the effort. So I just did school to, you know, to do school I guess.... My dad wanted me to be a lawyer or a doctor. I majored in philosophy thinking that that would be my major to get into law school. I wanted to make him happy, but not really thinking what I wanted to do. So I never really like tried to do what I wanted to do. I never even thought that way. I was just like, I'm going to go to class; work hard; then come back and hang out with my friends.

It is important to note that many of the students overcame obstacles as they attempted to maintain their motivation, and many students spoke of individuals who inspired them in the face of challenges to success.

External Commitments

We asked students to tell us about how their external commitments affected their academics. Twelve of the respondents commented on their external commitments. Ten of the twelve held off campus jobs that were a challenge to academic success. On and off campus jobs are included in the extracurricular activities and external commitments category that will be discussed later in this report.

Other comments regarding external commitments included volunteer work, religious activities, entrepreneurial ventures, and family obligations (children or ill parents). Two students mentioned the lack of time for girlfriends. The following are representative student responses:

Volunteer and Religious Commitments

Quenton: Yes, Saturday mornings I go to the Chance, a program at IIT. Saturday mornings I go there and I do a big MCAT review but I also volunteer as a tutor, mentor. On Thursdays I go to Project Brotherhood, which is on 64th and Woodlawn. For the first three hours I shadow doctors, and then I call back patients. Volunteer; give patients the right prescriptions.

Interviewer: Is it a clinic?

Quenton: Yeah it's a clinic. Pretty much, low income people I tell them about health care. Try to get them to take their medications. It's pretty much, just on Thursday it's a Black male clinic. You can come in and get tested.

Isaac: Sophomore year I was working and I was volunteering at the VA hospital. Then after a while I realized that I was spending way too much time out there and maybe I need more time to study. So I made a rule... study, then I volunteer. Then I realize I need more time off. I can't volunteer this much because I have like, too many credit hours. I pretty much didn't do anything outside of campus and study so it's just...I go to school, I study and I volunteer. And I work on campus. That's too much for my life. I didn't do anything after that.

Marcus: Yeah, on the weekends I would go and work at a retirement facility in the kitchen, or whatever. It was a challenge because I would have to find time to do my work and everything, and with off campus commitments, I have like church and a few other things, like groups and meetings we like to do. Those were more like pressed for time. If I do those then I won't have time to study or I would have to like squeeze in studying.

Marcus: I'm committed to like church and I have a job and everything. Church is just helping out around the church whenever they ask. If they have a program just doing it...or participating in the program or whatever.

Entrepreneurial Commitments

George: I'm a budding entrepreneur. I'm on my fourth or fifth entrepreneur venture. Based on entrepreneur books, entrepreneurs usually have about seven ventures that fail before they hit big. I'm right on time. <laughs> Working, watching TV, social commitments, doing my own research on different topics that I want to learn about -- that I might not be learning in school, family.

Of all of the descriptions, only Jamar described his external commitments as having a substantive influence on his motivation.

Jamar: But my second year I was trying to get personal business things going on. And I had started a business, and going through that process, it hurt my grades -- but at the time I was thinking, I'm going to be super successful with my business so it doesn't even matter. You know as soon as this business gets off the ground, I'll take a little hiatus from school and I'll come back whenever I feel like it, whenever I get down spending my millions. So...you know I wasn't all that concerned about school at the time and my grades reflected it.

Family Commitments

Quenton: ok...off campus commitments. I have a five year old daughter. That's an off campus commitment. That's a big commitment. There was a time she was staying on campus with me but housing didn't allow it at the time. She had to go home with my mom. And that was a stressor because I wanted her with me. The whole agreement was, as long as I finished college, when I go to medical school she'll come back to school with me. So that's a big burden, I wouldn't say burden. She just turned five.

Carl: As far as involuntary stuff. My father died in the middle. My mom bought a house halfway through college. Those involuntary things can be a distraction.

David: My nephew who is seven. I try to spend as much time as possible as him. I think he may have seen his dad a couple times in his lifetime. I try to be there as much as possible to kind of balance that. I can't replace his father, but I can do the best I can¹³⁹:

Jamar: I'm sure you can imagine. Going to school and taking care of a toddler. Its not exactly...when you get done with school it requires so much attention. I could never really get started with school work 'til after the kids go to bed. Half the time I'm taking care of one child and half of the other time I'm taking care of two kids. And the one, the mother works in the evenings. So I get the kids to bed. By the time that's done its like 9:30 or 10. I got my own evening things to do. That is difficult I guess. What else...

Girlfriends

Ervan: I tried to keep my commitments down. My friends outside of campus will always say get a girlfriend. I would say I don't have time for all that.

Kendrick: Yeah, extracurricular activities. I had a girlfriend.

Experiences While at College

After considering pre-entry attributes, motivational orientation, goals, and external commitments, we finally turn our attention to the experiences students have while they are attending college. Four major variable domains help us to sort out the experiences, and include formal and informal academic systems related to academic performance and interactions with faculty and staff; student support systems (campus level support that augments the student's academic success); formal and informal university social systems including extracurricular activities and peer group interactions, and the home social systems of family and friends.

Academic Performance

While we know the actual academic performance of the students who participated in the study, the interviews provided an opportunity for us to learn about students' perceptions of their academic performance. We asked students to tell us about their academic adjustment to UIC. We also asked them to specifically describe their adjustment in math, writing, science and computing. The students' descriptions of their performance fell into two broad categories; those students who generally found academics at UIC challenging, and those who did not.

Earlier, we presented student responses regarding broad transition issues that focused on the influence of high school on academic preparation and social transition. In this section, students describe their transition experiences after they arrived at UIC. Of our 17 respondents, 7 did not find the transition to UIC, or their ability to perform while at UIC, particularly challenging.

One student told us that while he was always a good student, he never found a major that interested him enough to put forth effort.

Franklin: I'm a communication major now. I don't know if I want to do anything with communications. I think it's a good major because it's so broad. I can find a job once I graduate. My heart...everyday, whether I'm happy or sad, I go to the gym six days a week; play basketball for hours; work out. I love playing my guitar. I love music. I love drums. Through thick or thin, happy or sad, I always make time for that. So it's just...those are my main interests. When I'm not that interested in something, it's just so much harder for me to really put forth the effort. So I just did school to, you know, to do school I guess.

Two of the students talked about the similarities and differences between their high school and university academic performance. They also expressed a bit of disappointment that the experience at UIC was not more different from high school.

Nelson: My adjustment, to me, I think it was pretty smooth. In high school, I was an underachiever....Say I had homework for that day, the next day, I would come in before class, I would scribble something down, get it done, and turn it in. I would pretty much get through with that. Getting A's and B's doing it that way....so I kept doing that. So when I got into [UIC], I started the way most people did. I am going to read the book all the time, and I'm going change my academics, and things like that. Most times it ends up being; if you can do half the work and not really try, and get a B, you'll just do that again. And I just found that I could do that again. So again, I ended up being an underachiever, waiting 'til the last day, and scribble some stuff down, or stay up all night, write the 10 page paper, get an A or B the next day; no problem. It was a pretty easy transition. I didn't really even think about much....oh I'm going to college, and I'm going to have to do this and this now. It was more, when I get to college, we'll see how it works out. If I have to do more I will, but if I'm not going to have to, I'm not going to.

David: Computers didn't really change too much until our last semester when I took social statistics and I had to use SPSS; so that was a new thing that I hadn't done before. That was when computers changed. Otherwise it was pretty much the same. Math....I took a couple of courses, when I first started, where it was very different from high school; where I had the same teachers there with me every day. No TA, nobody else. I had the time for one-on-ones. I had 12 people in my Calc [calculus] class in high school, versus having a lecture hall full of students. It was also kind of a wake up call ...I realized even though they weren't requiring me to be in class, I had to be in class on my account. So that was a big wakeup call, because that didn't quite happen at first. "Oh I don't have to be in class today." I kind of took that and ran with that for a little while. The writing, I grew dramatically, from having Professor S as my first English teacher, to working in the Writing Center now. Seeing other people's writing, and revising mine like there is no tomorrow, I didn't do that too often in high school. Now that I do take the time, I actually revise a paper about three times before I turn it in. That's something that did not happen in high school. You did it the week of, and that's it. Science....I'm taking a class this semester. There really isn't that much of a difference, with the exception of smaller classes. I liked bio [high school biology] then; I like it now. Nothing has changed too much.

Interviewer: When you said something about the accountability of going to class. If somebody had called you on that, early on during your freshman; that first term, and said, you know you're not going to class, do you think it will affect your grade? Would that have made a difference?

David: I think it would have. I really didn't think about it at all. I just got the taste of "oh you don't have to go." I honestly believe that it definitely would have made a difference.

Three students made a point of talking about the relationship between good academic preparation in high school and their academic success at UIC. They also appreciated the challenge of the courses in their major.

Carl: I went to a very good high school and my family always pushed me to do well academically. Taking accelerated classes throughout middle, all throughout all my childhood academic years. This was big help here at UIC, so when you take your first two years, your Gen Eds. It's like a repeat of what you did in high school. Then you get to your core level classes, your distribution class, or in teaching, your methods courses. That's when it finally clamps down and gets a little tougher and exciting; a lot exciting. If anything I would say make the Gen. Eds. a little harder, but at the same time that's biased on my opinion. And I know there are a lot of high schools out there don't prepare students for college as well as the high school that I went to. The community high school in the southwest suburbs.

Carl: One thing, growing up, my mom always pushed me -- pushed for harder, for challenges. So all throughout my academic life; from elementary school through high school, I always took honors and AP [advanced placement] courses. I would say my first two years at UIC were quite simple. I already had college prep.; I was already prepared for college by mid-high school. As far as challenges go, I liked that the school had challenges regarding, like Education. I was studying to be a teacher originally, before I changed my major. I believe that those classes were really challenging, and I liked it. It pushed me to work harder for my major.

Otis: Going right in to UIC I knew I had the preparation to excel but I knew I had to work a little bit harder because it was a different level of education. I never said I could come in and ace every class. I knew that wasn't going to happen. I knew I had to work hard, but I would have the basic tools to get me through the classes.

Perry: Oh yeah, well coming out an accounting major, it requires a certain amount of perseverance and persistence to get through that major, to pass the courses. One thing is that taking those courses has helped me to get through some of the easier courses that I have taken....and also they put an emphasis on studying, and made it a priority while I've been here.

Jamar told us that he owed his smooth transition and good academic performance to being "blessed with above average intelligence."

Ten of the 17 respondents described considerable challenges in their transition or in academic performance at UIC. While three students told us that challenging programs and courses were motivating, overall the students' descriptions of the challenges were varied:

- **One student described his education at UIC as more challenging in general in comparison with what his friends were saying about the experiences they were having at other institutions;**
- **another student explained that in freshman year his mom was in poor health, and that as his mom's health improved, his grades improved;**

- two students talked about being on probation, one explaining that after 3 semesters on probation, he decided that he needed to make some changes if he was going to succeed, the other stating that he did well in classes when he was interested in the class, and that he learned that smaller classes helped his interest level;
- one student took classes elsewhere to improve his grades in particularly challenging classes, and he talked about the challenge in being the only Black male in his UIC classes;
- one student talked about the importance of the proper sequencing of courses, and in a similar comment, another student discussed the importance of the entrance exams in assisting him in making a smooth transition;
- one student told us that he thought his CPS education had not prepared him, particularly in math, and that as an English major he should have been better advised about his options in fulfilling the math requirements;
- finally, one student explained that, as a Nigerian, he came to UIC with a language barrier that affected his performance when he first arrived. He overcame the challenges with the help of the Writing Center, friends and in consultation with faculty.

The following responses are representative of this group:

Kendrick: With the challenging academic program, it's nice to have something more interesting. Being bored throws me off a bit, I guess.

George: In terms of academic program, I spoke to a lot of people about it. The chemistry program here, the science program here, I feel is a lot harder than it would be at another university. I consult with other friends, and I tell them about certain things we do in class, how my tests are structured, and I hear about how easy it is where they are.

Quenton: My College allows you to take difficult science classes somewhere else as opposed to here [at UIC]. In classes that I would get a C in, now I score an A – like in Orgo [Organic] Chemistry. You need 12 hours here to be a full time student, but I wanted to get those classes out the way, so I ended up combining [classes at UIC and at a community college]. Would I advise it? No! Was it doable? I work...my UIC classes were pretty much Monday through Friday. Physics at Olive Harvey was Tuesdays and Thursdays in the afternoon. On Mondays and Wednesdays Chemistry was 6-10 at night. So you go 6-10 at night; try to get some sleep. Say you get back at eleven o'clock; you've got to get up at 1:30 just to be at work on time. A lot of people ask me, how do I do it? I don't know, but I still do. Honestly, it's taken a toll on me. Because I call my mom....I've had a couple of emotional breakdowns, I don't know why. I guess I'm just really stressed out....I think the professors made a big deal [of difference], but at the same time, because I know I got a C in the first one [class], I told myself that I would get an A in this one. It was the professor, but at the same time it was me too -- wanting to do better....I kind of knew how everything was going -- it was more time management based....I had a more of a set schedule. You come in; you sleep. You do this, this and that. [It was] probably more time management skills. Different from first semester where you are trying to come to college, but still trying to figure out everything else, professors, what you're classes are. Yeah, first semester I guess you can say I was kind of overwhelmed, and by second semester I was kind of used to it....As far as

academics...by going into the medical field, I have to take a lot of science classes. I don't particularly like chemistry, but I do what I have to do to get the grade that I want. But for me personally, any mathematics and science classes taken here at UIC are challenging. I'm not going to say that it's discouraging, but being the only African American male in a classroom is overwhelming. That's always been a part of it. You look past it, and do what you got to do. And that's pretty much what I do.

Brandon: In the beginning....around junior year was a very good year socially. I led an organization. That's when I was taking the hardest classes. I led the organization and my grades suffered. About three semesters I was on probation. Then I got out of that. I decided that I can't do this anymore. I let that go. I saw that I was giving more to the organization than I was my schoolwork. I changed. As the classes got harder I changed. You're now going from Pre Calc to Calc I. All the math I've taken here, it changed, because things started to get harder....If my friends had questions, they knew they could come talk to me. At the same time, freshman year to junior year, I would be..."who would like to have a study group?"....and I would be teaching them. I would learn because I would be doing it myself. As time went on, and they changed their majors from something to something else. I was forced to be by myself. It's kind of hard to be the only Black male in most of these math classes....I feel like some of the majors are not socially there, so it's hard with communicate to them. If I needed help I would go to the Math Learning Center and ask for help there....And when I came to UIC, English 160, was where I was placed into. I liked that UIC has topics you can pick. I picked topics that I liked, and I wrote about them....and the resources here at the Writing Center, and if you have a professor where you can hand in drafts, that helped me out a lot. At first I would just hand it in, and if I didn't do as well as I thought, well this is how I wrote in high school. He [the professor] explained to me, well this isn't high school; you have to write for college, and he told me about the Writing Center, and if you need a proofreader you can do that...and I did that...and I got an A in writing....in English 160 and 161.

Interviewer: So you're saying that the business writing class (BA200) should precede some of the other...come earlier or at least...

Marcus: Well yeah, if you're in the business school, I would say yes, it should definitely precede. Like in one of my classes I had to write a case study and ...with business writing there are all these techniques and formats that you can use to put in the case study that will enhance your writing overall.

Ervan: When I first took the entrance exam I didn't realize how important the entrance exam was to your starting classes and your career. I took five years [to complete my degree]. I could have taken four if I would have thought about it then. I could have taken Calc I, and Chem 112, and passed them easily. But I'm kinda glad that I took the path I did. I didn't fail any course. It took me five years because I started off a step behind.

Hasan: I took [Math] 090. I just had trouble with [Math] 070 and 090. I should have focused on math. You know I didn't think the transition was going to be so difficult when I got here. But if I really buckled down and focused on my math in high school, I would have been alright when I got here --but it took a while; I had to take them over. I never completed 090....and then, through the grape vine, I found out that I can satisfy my quantitative reasoning with political science, statistics [course]....You know, taking alternative routes to get something satisfied. When you come in, and its that transition, who do you talk to, to actually find out...can I get this satisfied so I don't have to keep taking it over and over and prolonging my, you know, my progress? To actually get

credit coursework so I can actually graduate....So I actually took that [statistics course], after so many unsatisfactory grades and a satisfactory in 070; I got that coursework out of the way.

Interviewer: No academic advisor?.

Hasan: You know what, I went to an advisor.

Interviewer: you went to an academic advisor while you were struggling in math?

Hasan: Right. You know what they told me? They said you have to pass; you have to get past the pre-credits to go on to the credit courses.

Interviewer: No one offered you other options?

Hasan: Right, it was like; the alternative was not an option. I guess that's why I kept taking the course over and failing. And they presented it as if there was no alternative option when actually there was.

Interviewer: Was that an academic advisor in the college?

Hasan: Right.

Interviewer: And clearly 070, doesn't sound like it prepared you for 090 and 090....070 is supposed to prep you for 090.

Hasan: You know, it is....it didn't happen so. I mean ...I'm not saying that UIC has committed any wrongdoing. It's just an uphill battle when you're making the transition to a four-year university. And you know if you're not prepared then...in any aspect, if you're not prepared to study, if you're not used to actually taking math courses --. If math courses are not really required at your [CPS] high school -- then it's a different language to you. Just the entire routine of actually transitioning; sitting down, attending class lectures and discussions. If you have a question; actually taking the initiative to reach out for help from your professors or TA's. That all is combined in completing and successfully passing those courses.

Interviewer: It's like you said, seeking out these instructors.

Hasan: It's reluctance....it's just a lot of things. It's nothing that you can really put your finger on. But if they [students] are able to get those basic foundation skills....you know, getting to class on time; making sure you make the classes; and like if you're discouraged from math or something like that -- I was discouraged. It was another language to me when I got here, so you don't go to class, or you think you've already seen the material. You just graduated, and you actually did take an algebra class or something like that, and you already think that you know the material and a lot of these math professors will tell you: "you think you know this material, and then you're in for a rude awakening at the end of the course when you don't actually pass the course."....and it's the truth.

Hasan: I'm an English major, I've always had an interest in English writing and reading, not necessarily reading. But writing, I've always been good at it. I would focus on English in high school. We didn't really have to do math in my high school. When I got here, I placed into the English courses. I didn't place into the math course. So I did well in that...in English. I had one difficult transition, my freshman year, and that was Shakespeare. So ...at my school, it wasn't really an emphasis on the Complete Works. It's just preparation. You come from a school and you're not familiar with the Complete Works that a lot of these professors have assumed you've read. If you don't have those under your belt when you get here, it's another language to you. Just like pre-credit 070 or 090, if you don't have that under your belt, then it's going to be a setback for you. English 101 was another course that set me back. Having those foundation skills of actually sitting down and having to independently read, and then actually taking the time to actually use the elevated language that Shakespeare uses. Being interested. Working

yourself to figure out what's going on. I wasn't interested in that at all. It was another language to me. I can't recall reading any Shakespeare. It's pretty appalling.

It's important to add that all of the students were asked about their computing skills. All of the students reported that they had no challenges with computing. A number of the students indicated that they had access to computers in high school, and some said that they received a computer as their high school graduation gift. They all had adequate computing preparation in high school.

Many students mentioned that they received assistance from the UIC Writing Center to enhance their academic performance. The Writing Center and other support units will be discussed further in the section entitled Student Support Systems.

Faculty/Staff Interactions

The survey revealed that the students rated faculty and administrative personnel as generally supportive of their success at UIC. They rated teaching assistants as helpful, but less so than faculty or staff. Of the 20 students surveyed, 11 students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that a faculty member had been important in their success. Thirteen students indicated that an administrator had been important in their success.

The review of the interview responses reveals that of the 17 interviews, 10 of the students spoke only of positive and supportive relationships with faculty; the other seven providing a more balanced description of some faculty who were supportive, and others who were not. One student discussed an experience in which he believed he was the victim of racism on the part of the faculty member.

Representative positive responses indicated that their professors are skilled teachers who engaged students in learning by creating a friendly, engaging, interesting, motivating and open learning environment.

Nelson: [I] think if you talk anyone, they would have faculty in their top three [supports]. The majority of the professors, over time, a lot to them, fall into the category of real amazing. They have great ideas; they really bring you into the topic. I took a philosophy class; he brought you in, and gave all these different ideas of how to look at things. It was very interesting. He didn't teach it straight out of the book -- here are the ideas, here are my interpretations of it, and here is how it's used in real life. It was a friendly open environment. You could ask questions if you wanted to. If you didn't, it was ok. Most of the professors I had, I would consider above average....they wouldn't just focus on the black and white. They give you what they did in their research, or whatever, but they still had it tied into the book or the readings. I'm trying to think of other examples. There were a couple of others. I think Prof. B. was pretty interesting. They took it where, here are the basic facts, and then here are how things fit into the major scheme of things. Not just, here is the bare-bones minimum, and that's all I've got for you. They were more than willing to give you the insight, but not to just feed you their opinion. I do have professors, who try not to do that, but you can see they are just giving their own ideas -- and like forcibly just saying this is what it is and this is how I feel about it. As long as they can keep it open for you to decide and still give you what you still need to

know, and give you some extra, it makes class so much easier. Most of the time, you are more than willing to show up for class and sit through the whole thing. Especially like for Prof. L's class; the class would end at 15 after, and he would have to call it at 25 after because everyone wanted to stay and keep talking about it.... It's good to have a professor who can give you everything that they know, and say, this is what I think about it, but you can make up your own mind about it. Things like that make it so much easier. It's amazing.

George: Dr. S. in ASAP [Academic Support and Advising Program in the College of Applied Health Science], in kinesiology and nutrition. She really helped. She made sure I stayed on track. She helped to guide me mentally, finding what I really want to do....just really searching with in myself, and mustering the extra whatever to study....to go above and beyond, in terms of research and things like that. Just going to class, I don't feel like I was taught enough. Taking that extra step, she was very instrumental in that way. Then another professor, he really opened my eyes to a lot of things, in the school system, and the outside world, I would say.

David: My sociology professor, Prof. J., I had him my first semester. He said I'm very proud to see another African American male on the verge of graduation. He told me that there were not many at UIC who actually start and finish. He said that statistics show that one of nine of us goes to jail, and I was thinking, I know. Trust that I have seen that, just in my cousins...We actually still talk, even now, as far as my progress in school; he was the one who actually guided me to a sociology minor, which I am enjoying.

Ervan: When I started taking more sophomore and junior courses over in the Chemical Engineering building we had a smaller classroom setting. There are only two classrooms in the building. One is used for everything. There is one giant classroom on the second floor. All the teachers' offices are around that classroom. We see all of our professors every day. We're right next to their office, so when I was taking classes in the lecture center for Chemistry 112 or for Physics, or a giant lecture course, the professors teach you there. Then after class, they say "come to my office if you have any questions." It's always way over somewhere else. I know for me, I didn't feel like going way over there to an office. If I had a question I'd ask right after class, as opposed to trying to go find him. In the Chemical Engineering building you couldn't help but see them. If you had a question they are right there. So it made it a lot easier....and the faculty in the Chemical Engineering building are really helpful. They are a mix of professors. Some are more helpful than others. From what I've learned, there are a few main Chemical Engineering professors. One of them is a brilliant guy. He is not as good at teaching you what he knows, but he knows a lot. Sometimes he is so mathematically attuned he says stuff and it just goes over your head....but he's a good guy. I have another professor, he can teach you little bit better. You ask him a question and he can tell you the answer in more simplified terms. This other professor, he's really old. He's brilliant but his teaching style is different. He doesn't bring notes. He teaches straight from what he remembers doing. He has to teach on a regular set schedule. He knows all the chapters. They are all really nice guys they are helpful and supportive.

The representative comments of the students who provided a more balanced view made some of the same positive comments. The following students added positive comments about professors who understand the student's perspective, and provide supportive challenges. These students also discussed the negative effects of professors who were too research focused, not prepared as teachers,

and were disorganized, or made disparaging remarks about students who are struggling academically.

Quenton: I've had some professors, I'm not going to say many, that could actually understand [the student perspective]. But we've also had professors who are strictly by the book. I prefer the professors who can kind of understand college life, and commitments outside of college that you have to do. For example, for Nutrition I was actually failing the class, and the professor and I had a talk. And he said, I bet you ten dollars that you can improve your grade. I ended up coming out with an A just because he bet me. I guess, in a way, I kind of needed motivation. I was in his office and the TA's office all the time. They were actually very supportive.... same for my anatomy class, and my math classes; Prof. J.'s classes.

As far as other classes in my actual major, you have some professors who are very vague and just tell you about their research. I don't know if they do this for college, but for high school, you have to go and get a teaching certification, but in college, as long as you have a Ph.D. you can just teach. I'm not sure if that's the case, but if so, they need to change that rule; it's ridiculous. I mean,...I'm an organized person....[and one of my professors], he's like the most unorganized person I've ever met. When you have disorganization, and you're trying to teach it to me, I don't comprehend it at all. I have like a systematic approach to learning. If you don't give notes, and all you do its talk, and you're lectures are not based on the material that you use for the test, I don't know what you want us to do. There were five of us actually talked about it in class,and he took offense to it. We tried to speak up, but it didn't go anywhere. I want to say that some of the older professors are more understanding. I think the younger professors probably have something to prove. That's just my intuition.

Interviewer: Are you seeing that more in your college, or generally across the campus?

Quenton: Generally, across the campus, of all the teachers I had, I think I did better with older professors than with professors who were in their late 20's or early 30's. Maybe they just got out of graduate school and think, ok, I know all this and this. They don't teach the basics of what you need to know. I just need to know what I need to know for the MCAT; lets just take the test. And the MCAT is very general, so I don't want to know everything, I just want to know the basics so I can get where I'm going. Maybe that's just me. I'm not saying that I take the easy way out but I try to make things as easy as possible on myself as opposed to doing all this stuff. Just teach me the basics of what I need to know to get where I'm going.

Hasan: See I'm an English major so I've only been focused really on the English department. Some faculty are supportive. Others are not and that's just, I can tell you now, its devastating, you have a lot of faculty and professors that are understanding for whatever reason, but you know you have a lot of faculty and professors that are not too understanding. They can't relate to the transition. I've learned that. The best example would be...last semester I was a peer tutor at the writing center, and we would have round table discussions where English professors would come in and talk to us and say, this is what they're working on and they're going to be coming into the Writing Center, and I want you to work on this. I'm going to give you samples of their writing. I'm not going to give you're their names and I want you to work on this...this is what they're struggling with. And I would ask questions, and they would make comments and say...one professor said I don't know how these kids got here; I don't know what they're doing in college. Wow. Then you speak with professors who teach the pre-credit courses, you get these a lot at the writing center. Its like explore Chicago, I don't know the topic of the class, it's a pre-credit course, before you place into 160 or 161, and then

you stick with those professors, and they just can't relate to where these students are coming from. So when they get into these pre-credit courses, they just can't picture them in the classroom...they act like they don't want to work with them. Since I'm going into teaching...when they make comments like that, it makes me idolize what they've actually said; it makes me upset but at the same time....And you learn that in the pedagogy of teaching and race, if they already have preconceptions of students when they come here ..."well why don't you know how to do this?"..."you should already know how to write a thesis statement, punctuation and grammar should already...yada, yada, yada," and once you move up in English courses they say, well didn't you take 160, 161; didn't you learn this already? Those are the attitudes that I've encountered my entire time here, but you might have one or two professors who say...ok...you know they understand why you're struggling, so they're not trying to tear you down or anything.

Interviewer: But you're saying that those professors are in the minority. I'm just reflecting back...

Hasan: I mean just the racial make up of the English department period. I mean...but regardless of their race, it's just the way I've actually encountered...just my experiences. Some will help and some will just....some just won't lend a hand. Because they feel like you should already know this stuff. It just goes back to secondary education and that takes a toll on you before you even get here.

Students' negative comments centered on the effects of a professor's lack of preparation to teach, carelessness in grading practices, and racist behavior.

Nelson: I had a Spanish teacher who was Chinese; spoke Chinese, and she taught Spanish; but she didn't know English. When you asked her to say a word, we had to figure out what it was in English so she can say it. We were guessing a lot. It was more of a challenge to do all these things. I just need someone who can come in and teach me. You get to the point where you just say, can I just go home and read the book, because you're just making it so much harder. Constantly, when I'm with my friends and we're talking about teachers, everyone has something like that....where they have no idea what they are doing. It seems like people are here because they are known for this and this. It doesn't mean they are good professors. It just means that they know what they are talking about. Once that happens, and you can clearly find out within the first week or so, everyone just tunes out.

Lawrence: I've had the best of luck with a lot of the faculty. I'm not one of those students who comes at the end of the semester and says, I think I really did bad in that class, and ends up with an A. I'm always the opposite. I think...oh yeah, I did great, then check my grades, and I'm like, wow a C, that's not what I expected. Pretty much every semester that I've been here I've had to speak with professors regarding a grade I received, and more often than not, they don't have a lot of backing as to why I received this grade. Because a lot of the times, I'll actually be in the class with another person that I know personally, or I'll get the same grade, or higher grades than them throughout the class, and somehow end up with a grade different than they did. Luckily, I had that as a basis. So when I do go in to talk to these professors, which I didn't do as much as a freshman, because I was new, and I'm sure it would have changed my GPA greatly if I had because I didn't know what to do, and I didn't have the confidence or strength to handle it. Since then I've been getting a lot of grade changes just on the basis that the professor goes back and says, oh I made a mistake. The first couple times I was like ok they made a mistake. It's actually been going on until my last semester, during which I actually got a grade change from a C to an A, pretty much because the professor

decided that he didn't really want to look at the grade too closely and then he was like, oh I glanced at your paper and it looked like you did C work. And I said, I don't know what that means, what does glancing at a 12 page research paper mean? As a professor I thought it would be your responsibility to thoroughly read through assignment and give a deserving grade. I had actually gone into this particular professor's office and I had worked extremely hard in this class last semester, and it was a ridiculous amount of work and that's fine. Professors have the right to teach the way they want to, and in the end, the class was quite helpful if you want to go into a research direction.

Brandon: That was a very big challenge I noticed last year or junior year. I did not experience racism, I experienced racism but not as....The situation was that one of the teachers...I was the only Black person in the class....and while in the class, the teacher asked a question, and I would raise my hand. The teacher would look at me and go to someone else who wasn't raising their hand. I approached the teacher, and he said "oh, I didn't see your hand," and gave me a general excuse. I was like ok, whatever. But it didn't occur to me until I got my paper back, and I got an F, and I didn't understand why I got an F. I took it to the department, and they read it and said, this is not an F. From then on, they talked to the teacher, and I don't think he works here anymore. They were able to help me change my grade in the class from an F to a B...but it was just that...people say everyone experiences racism, you just don't see it. And I personally don't see it because I don't like to think that way. Everyone can't progress as a people....and that was the first time I was just shocked. And um...the department was able to help me get through that, and I could trust them, with whatever I need help with, as far as graduate schools, academics, or just to say "hi, how you doing?" They are very helpful now, they were always helpful, and it's just that racism threw me off.

When asked about their relationship with teaching assistants (TA's), 9 students were generally positive, but eight were either ambivalent or shared negative teaching and learning relationships or experiences with their TA's. Three students expressed concerns about English language barriers that hindered their learning opportunities. One student believed that a TA was exhibiting racist behavior.

David: You tend to have more one-on-one time with the TAs. That's where I only had a few small classes, where I was actually able to have the one-on-one time with a professor. But the TAs always seemed more approachable; maybe because they got to know my name a little better than the professor did.

Carl: Some TA's are very supportive. They give you their email address and their personal email address. Some TA's, if you've got concerns, and you can't reach them via e-mail, you can call them on their cell phones -- some of them, they're willing to help you. As you're willing to help them as well... If you're willing to work with them they'll work with you. Um, especially a TA I had when I took a foreign language core. Every TA I had for Spanish was always readily available and had a good ear for listening to what was on your mind regarding taking the course. Like the challenges, things you have trouble understanding or things that don't really work for you. I mean, TA's for the most part, are good too.

Brandon: The faculty and professors would teach a certain way and I wouldn't understand. We would tell the TA's, this is what she went over in class, and the TA would say there is a much easier way to do it, and she'll show us. That's how they were

more helpful than the teachers because they would show us an easier way....and even a smarter way than the teachers were showing us....which made my life a lot better when it was time to take the test. Even though the teacher wanted it a certain way I was able to understand what the teacher wanted, and what the TA showed me. Put those two together so that I could understand everything.

Brandon: Across any of the courses, math, science, history, whatever class I was in, I made sure if there was TA there, I was going to talk to that TA. They did help. That's what I don't like about UIC, the higher you go, there are no TA's. Then you're on your own, and you don't know what to do. You go to the learning center and there are people to tell you the same things in different ways. It's harder as you go higher. There's no one to sit and talk to about it.

George: TA's sometimes just don't want to help. They act like you're supposed to know everything. Especially in the science dept. They act like they don't have the time for you because they know everything and you should know it. I never got any help from a TA.

Quenton: I think the majority...ok I'm just going to come out and say the word racist. You have some TA's, and not only because I'm Black, and I purposefully did this. Me and another student get the same grades. We did the same lab report. I just paraphrased portions different, but the exact same thing. He got a 35 on it, and I got a 15. We have the exact same data, just different ways of paraphrasing. He couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand it. The professor couldn't understand it. Why take so many points off? I would go to her; she was very snotty. I asked her about it. She actually blew up in my face about it. I had a couple of Black friends who had her as a TA. There were more than ten of us.

Interviewer: What class was it? Chemistry.

Quenton: It was General Chemistry II. Don't get me wrong; you have some good TA's. My math TA was fine. Maybe it's just science TA's. No. I would probably say. This is another thing. When it comes to register for classes and I'm not trying to be rude. I kind of look for names that are in English, that I can understand, as opposed to foreign last names because. It's a language problem. I go to class and if I can't understand what the TA is saying, I really, really can't perform well on the lab. I can go to the professor, but the professor kind of doesn't want to step over the TA.... Maybe because UIC is a diverse college that's what you get. But you kind of have to deal with it.

Nelson: Some of the TA's are horrible. I had a math TA for pre-Calc.[Calculus]; he didn't know English at all. He couldn't tell us the answers because he didn't know how to pronounce them. Half of the class didn't care anymore. The other half were trying to think of ways we could get him kicked out. It's hard to learn math when you go to the TA and he can't explain it to you at all. It's kind of like, if I have questions, who is going to answer the questions....because you can't go to the professor.

Finally, when asked about the relationships with administrative staff, most students referred to experiences with various forms of academic advising roles. Of the 11 students who commented on administrative staff, only 5 shared positive interactions. The six students who did not comment received advising from faculty within their colleges.

George: I dealt with a couple probation situations; late registration and financial issues. I lost my financial aid a couple times. I had to pay for a semester or two. So when I tried to get it back, they rejected my initial appeal. So I rewrote another one and it was sent to

....someone here in SSB building – he really helped putting an extra word in for me. He watched my grades and things like that; sending me e-mails for support.....awesome, great guy, Dr. G.!

Marcus: Staff, like my counselors [in the College of Business Administration], and all of them; they have been very encouraging and forthcoming. They have suggested classes. Like after I found out about the Writing Center. Because like, I think it was one class, BA 100 they were originally...the staff; the counselors; were actually teaching the class. They were like, this is where you need to go; this is the Writing Center. Then they would give you assignments like go to this place and do this and that. Go out and see the campus. They would give you suggestions and instructions on how to be successful and that helped me find my way around and let me know where I could go get help.

Nelson: Let's see. I had the DARS reports, I asked about does this count for this, that, whatever? There was a section on there where it added up your numbers. It had your total. The numbers were off for some reason... I asked her why is this number off. She looked at it and said oh that actually does make sense. I asked why that is, she had no answer for me. Eventually I had to figure out myself that it was a calculation thing any case, I assumed that if I asked her questions about how the hours are calculated, she would have some type of answer. Instead of saying, I don't really know; that's just weird! It seems like it would be a lot better, it might be hard, but if it was geared towards your major. I was talking about double majoring, political science, criminal justice. I wanted to make sure everything was fine. People told me you had to do a writing and discipline thing that if I did if for one I wouldn't have to do it for the other. I was talking to her about it; she really didn't have an answer. She just said, that she does anthropology and sociology, she dint know about this. But this does happen. That's great and all I see you're trying to help. But I'm not in any of those. Eventually she gave me a number for someone in the political science dept and sent me to them. If I would have had their number from the beginning, I could have cut that time. I talked to him about it. He had the answers. I have friends who go in there too. You talk to them and it's just a nodding head. They don't give you feedback that you don't already know. It's like you're going to hear confirmation of yourself. I don't know what advising they really do. But they just kind of agree with you. I'm sure if I just went in there and told them that I was dropping out they would say that's a great idea. I mean they didn't ask anything at all but print out the DARS report.

Nelson: For academic advising....I've been given one for AAAN and the one in UH for LAS. I rarely use the one in AAAN. He was helpful when I needed him to be, but I just don't personally want to constantly come out here and talk to him about things. I've gone to the one in UH to talk about taking the right classes. About graduating, making sure I have everything covered. All they do is print out your DARS report and read it to you. That was absolutely no help at all. I was doing this to ask questions and straighten things out and all you were going to do is print out a DARS I wouldn't have waited in line to get in here.

Andre: Well financial aid, just has to do with you getting money to pay for school, so that's always important. The advising is important, too. If you don't either don't, or can't, enroll in any class for any reason....a lot of times it would be a class for my major; it would be major required; I would have all the prerequisites, but I just couldn't enroll on line. I don't know how the online system works. So I would always have to go to them and tell them and they would just put me in it. They would look at my DARS and they would say that I have to take so many classes. And another was like, I started in 2003;

they did all this restructuring. The class I needed wasn't available anymore. It was weird. Towards the last two years, that was a lot of the problem. That's why they helped.

Brandon: At the front saying that my DARS report says I shouldn't go to medical school. You should do this instead. Why not talk about what I want to do. And then...that's why students don't go to advising and that's why they get lost. Especially African American students, because they're offended, because advisors tell them that; then at the same time they here for five, six years and the school is still getting their money and they are stuck in debt. They didn't do what they wanted to do and they switched majors and they don't like what they're doing.

Interviewer: You're saying, and once again I don't want to put words in your mouth, what you're saying is, first of all, don't be discouraging. Don't say you can't do this or you won't do this. But the other piece that sounds really important is you're looking to the advisor to give you guidelines on how to get there rather than discouragement about not getting there at all. Is that...

Brandon: Exactly, yeah. My personal drive was to...I always envisioned that when I graduated I would look at advisors and say I made it and you told me I couldn't make it. You know. That's my personal drive. Someone who personally told me I couldn't do it. To like, I did it, this is my degree, and I did this by myself, regardless of what you told me I couldn't do.

Interviewer: I just think it's an important distinction. You're saying, set out the path to say, sounds like you really want to do this, if you want to do this, here are the things you have to do. You probably have to study 20 hours a week. To say...here's what a student who makes it is doing. Then you'd have a guideline. You have something to go by. Then it's your choice. I don't want to put words in your mouth. It's an important thing for us to understand.

Brandon: That's exactly what I'm saying....that's one thing I don't like about UIC, going to an academic advisor, they tell me, oh, your grade is what it is and you shouldn't do this...they tell you what you shouldn't do. Even though you want it...I said I want to go into medicine. Oh, you shouldn't do that because you won't make it. I don't think that's the good way to tell students. Even though it's the realistic way, and there is a way about approaching that. I would prefer that they say your grades are not where they need to be so you need to work harder if you do want to get to medical school. Not just say...you shouldn't do medicine.

Lawrence: I have had quite a few issues with the UIC advising. As far as telling me to take classes that I had no need to take. Telling me to take the same class again. Even though it was on my DARS report. Or telling me to take a class that already had a requirement fulfilled. It's really frustrating, because at the end of the day, it's a waste of my time. I mean, thankfully, I'm in a situation where I am a scholarship athlete and student...so it's not as much a financial factor as much as it is a time and effort factor that it's going into something that's totally unnecessary and basically no good. They have done that multiple times. I just don't view them as very helpful. Even when I, my first year when I did struggle in school because of some outside factors, the whole probation system was really poorly run. It didn't help me at all. You have the mandatory meeting to get your back on track and basically it was a run through with very little structure that I don't see many people getting any type of motivation to do any better. And from what I've seen, other than me, at least on my team, people that have been on probation have stayed on probation. Because I feel like there is not really enough of motivation and drive from the advisor to get off of that system. The worst threat I got was, oh, if you get another C, you'll drop another point in your overall [GPA], like I forgot

that the grade count is towards failing, not grade point. You get like plus one for B, plus two for A. and the other on the lower side. But they didn't really say if you do better here it will help you later. They never alluded to the fact that if you do well, it's going to have a great affect on your later things in life, but instead, they just simplified it to this number system. That I would think for most students means next to nothing. It's not even GPA, it's just a fictional number the university came up with in order to [make] a dismissal from school. You can stay at a negative two your entire college career, and it really won't have much of an effect; unless you think of it that way 'til you graduate. I guess that's been the advising.

Interviewer: You're in Liberal Arts. That was in the college framework?

Lawrence: Yeah. Yeah...actually, the way it works, is as an athlete they have a program called PORT, which is an academic study center which actually was in the ground level of the PEB building, and you actually have a required number of hours of study for each week, and do they do provide tutors and all that and it is...as much up to...well actually at the point...I don't know the best word for it...not liaison, I guess academic/athletic support person...at that time wasn't too much involved in the students and they pretty much waited for the students to come to them with help. And obviously with a lot of students that's not going to happen. They're just going to struggle until it's too late, and oh no, now I got an F...and that's pretty much what happened to me. Because I thought, oh, I will be fine; it will all work out. Since then, it got a lot better. The woman, her name is S.O., she is very helpful, and she does take an active role, and since then, it's gotten better....[Regarding probationary advising] I actually saw four advisors that year for probationary meetings; they were required. And out of four, there was one that was actually helpful, not only that she provided great insight as to why I should do better but pretty much she said something that I would basically never forget, as far as a college career goes. She saw my GPA, and she heard me talking, and I was very articulate. My demeanor spoke to something that was much greater than my GPA showed, and she basically guaranteed me that the following semester this wouldn't be the case again and that I would be on the deans list. And I was like, oh yeah, that's great. I'm sure I would go from a 1.6 to the deans list. But lo and behold, the next semester, I came back. I had decided to go a different path, because I had started out as pre-med, and then I had a lot of issues with the science department that I'll get to next, and I decided to pursue law. So I changed my major from biology to a double major in political science and communications. So I came back...and I am a pretty strong writer, which is kind of why I was almost an English major coming in....and I came back, and I got a 3.78, and I was on the deans list. And I'll always remember that. It was almost like...I'm trying to think. It was like prophecy. She was kind of like this will happen if you believe it will happen and I thought that was really cool and no one else ever did that. They just pretty much looked at you said, oh, wow you're doing pretty bad....and I know I'm doing bad, or I wouldn't be here. That was not constructive at all....The whole advising process I can see being a little bit better than to assist someone...I know they have to deal with students on a very large scale, but if you're going to bother taking on the title of advisor, you need to actively engage within advising on a good level. I have collectively heard students, even outside of the athletic department, have been very disappointed, and have been hurt more than helped by the advising system....which I really feel for them, in particular, because these are the students who are commuting for hours at a time to get here. They are taking out loans. They are working a full time job to pay for their own education, and their money and time is being wasted because an advisor isn't doing their job properly. I feel that it's really, really unfortunate.

Student Support Systems

While not included in the Guiffrida/Tinto model, the Student Support Systems variable domain was added because all students discussed the influence of various formal and informal campus level supports that influenced their success.

All 17 of students who were interviewed indicated that some form of campus level student support influenced their success at UIC. In almost all cases that support was considered a positive influence.

Twelve of the students mentioned the influence of financial aid, and of those, 11 indicated that financial was an important positive factor in their success. Four of the students emphasized the point by stating that the financial aid they received was critical to their being able to attend the university. Only one student indicated that financial aid would have been helpful, but due to his family's financial profile, he was not eligible.

The following two responses are representative of those who found financial aid a positive factor:

Carl: You know with financial aid, for the most part, financial aid covered most of the school -- but then I got scholarships too. Some semesters, if you don't get the scholarships you need, or if they don't come in at the time you need them, then you start to worry a little bit about tuition and cost each semester. Fortunately, for me, everything came through; whether it came through early, or a little later, it came through at some point to help me out....Oh, financial aid was a big help for college. Doing financial aid helped me take care of the expenses, you know, loans helped me. Truthfully, and in all honesty, if I didn't have financial aid, I probably wouldn't be able to be in college, or not be at an institution like this one. I grew up with only my mom, and she wouldn't be able to afford this type of school.

Perry:the people who I know, like my friends, and people who are trying to get into school -- they say financial aid is very critical for them to come to UIC. For a lot of people who I talked to, financial aid was a factor that determined whether they would go to school or not, because the tuition has risen over the years; not just for UIC, but other schools too. Financial aid is a critical factor.

Perry: Yeah finances. Um...even though my financial aid paid for tuition and the books there are still other expenses that you have to support yourself while you're here. You have to pay for meals while you're here during the day; maybe dinner. You have to buy clothes, supplies, and just have money so you can pay for...usually, if you don't have a part time job, you can apply for more financial aid which puts you more in debt -- or get a part time job. Over the years I borrowed one semester, and another semester I'd work. Get stable, and go back and forth with that. But um...overall it's kind of a challenging thing. One day you cannot have lunch, and another day you'll have some money so you can pay for things.

While the students appreciated the support of financial aid, it is important to note one recommendation for improvement:

Carl: Financial Aid, they're okay, but sometimes they don't have the direct answer for your questions, and that can mess you up.... Sometimes you have questions and they can't answer the question. Quite often, in my opinion, they can't answer your question up front. You usually have to set up an appointment with your financial aid counselor....and that usually takes an additional few days. So if you're trying to get something accomplished, it might slow you down a bit. But for the most part though, they're pretty adequate. For the most part, if you're just turning in paper work, or asking basic questions, FAQ's -- but anything above that, the people up front are not that effective. Sometimes I think they can be a little bit more knowledgeable.

Nine of the students mentioned the influence of the African American Academic Network (AAAN). Three of the students were positive about the support of the AAAN staff. Four indicated that while they were aware of the support, they did not use this campus level support office. Two students expressed concerns about the AAAN.

Two of the positive comments are as follows:

Hasan: You know what; I've seen the AAAN advisors a couple of times, and I know they have tutors there if you need help. The tutoring help was always there. When I was there they had a great tutor, V. She was a big help for African Americans. I used to get help in math and things like that. Yeah, V's great.

Hasan: As I leave this school, I reflect on what could have been done. Or I speak to other students that are struggling, and they can't get past these courses, and I think my AAAN advisor Mr. A., he's no longer with us here at UIC, but you know we'd have an informal advisor session. You know, they'll sit down and I guess they have criteria they work with, time management, yada, yada, yada, but that's if a student actually comes in and sets up an appointment to speak with a AAAN advisor. I don't think most students actually take the initiative, I mean, there are a lot of African American students who do not become involved with AAAN. If they're not involved with AAAN, then they're just out here by themselves, and it's just a huge transition -- and I think that's why a lot of them come [to UIC] and then you don't see them here anymore. So I've been here for five years, and I've seen a lot of people who have come and gone, but I think it is important for them to get the basics of transitioning into the university coursework.

Isaac: My advisor's name...J.(AAAN), from freshman year, he was my advisor and he was pretty much like family. I call him all him all the time. If I have a problem, I just look up to him. I was comfortable with him. If I need help, I call him up....and if it's something he thinks I should know, he will send me an e-mail or something like that. So pretty much like, if there is something he thinks I should know, he sends me an e-mail. I made a logical choice. Pretty much, administratively -- Joel is much help.

The two concerns expressed by students are as follows:

Andre: Yeah orientation, like, I thought it was fine, until they tell you, you have to go to the African American network advisee thing. I went and really <emphasis> didn't understand what I was doing there. I mean, I know I'm Black. They gave me this paper work. My mother went to a meeting, and they didn't show up. I went there for advising once and they didn't know my classes. They had a meeting for someone else, and I was

there. And they were confused. It never worked. I only did it once. I knew I wasn't going to do it again because it didn't help.

David: I tried AAAN, but I just felt they couldn't help me the way I needed to be helped, so stopped going there. I hadn't been to too many administrators for help....the only one that I can think of is AAAN, but I haven't been there since orientation.

Interviewer: So you just went to AAAN at orientation.

David: Yeah. And just off of that experience, that kind of keeps in with the non-supportive [category]. When I met with them, and I told them what my goals were....they were like, "our primary focus is trying to get you out of UIC."

Interviewer: To get you out of UIC?

David: Yeah, and I was kind of taken back. I was like, really? He told me that I would flourish more in a historically black college as opposed to UIC. I hadn't even started classes yet, and he's telling me I should go. And it also didn't help that first semester at UIC that I didn't want to be here. There was a power struggle between me and my mom that my dad didn't help with. I got into Morehouse, and I got in here. She said there is no family down there, if something happens, no one can go get you. UIC is close. It ended up being so late that I sent in my forms. I was forced into health and sciences and LAS. And that really didn't help.

Five students talked about the value of their positive residence life experience. A representative response is as follows:

Kendrick: Just because I stayed in the dorms, it was pretty much a whole little community already. I tried staying in the dorms every weekend. I live on the north side, so every weekend I could go and just see the family, but I just stayed after a while. So I just stayed with my roommate and other friend. We would try to go downtown. Most of them lived in the suburbs so we would go to the suburbs. Come up with things to do -- fishing, things like that. Pretty much, most of the [residence life] staff has been, like lenient. They're really relaxing. It's not too much of a challenge. Some of the RA's, they've been really nice, and I keep in touch with them. Some of the professors, they meet with you after class, they chit-chat about life -- you know. So that was really helpful. I guess the whole surrounding.

Three students mentioned the support of the orientation program and two mentioned the support of the staff of the Student Development Services office. One student had a good representative response:

Jamar:the orientation program was good. When they let you know that you have these advisors here. They let you know the resources that are available. And so I was able to connect with those resources, as I knew that they were available. You know, I made it a point to ask the questions, and get the issues that I had addressed. And luckily for me, everybody who I had questions for, had answers. But it's funny because, for the most part, I had the tools that I learned.... in the service and as a parent; time management and task management. You know, those things; those were the tools that I had. Um, but as a little side note, a lot of younger students don't have those skills, so maybe putting something in place that can kind of help students achieve those skills, learn those skills. For me the thing that was really the catalyst, you know that's just an ingredient. Like, for instance, I first M, through....he is a faculty advisor for the student organization that I'm in. That's how I connected with him. Actually, no no no. I first met him...K. recommended that I participate in the student government election planning

committee....and M. was the faculty connection for that. And so we connected through that. He recommended me toward the student organizations that I'm in.

Interviewer: Is that a fraternity?

Jamar: it's an offshoot of the BMI [Black Male Initiative]. You know, everyone is really helpful, supportive and encouraging....oh maybe you should look into this or look into that.

Three students mentioned the Writing Center as a source of support. A representative response is as follows:

Marcus: ...after I found out about the Writing Center...I think there was one class, BA 100, ...the staff, the counselors were actually teaching the class. They were like, this is where you need to go. This is the Writing Center. Then they would give you assignments like go to this place, and do this and that. Go out and see the campus. They would give you suggestions and instructions on how to be successful, and that helped me find my way around and let me know where I could go get help....The Writing Center was a big help. Going to the Writing Center every now and then; they'll help you out....

One student mentioned the role of the library as a place to concentrate on studies:

Ervan: When I was home, I lived with my uncle. I moved from my mom and my sister's place, but my uncle wouldn't be home until late because he'd be at work. It was me and the TV -- and we have regular TV, so there wasn't much on during the day. I found myself watching programs I didn't even like....anything to keep me from doing work. That's why I thought coming to UIC library would help. I figured I can just focus. Also you don't want to spend your time in school all day. Even when I would have my friends, you can study too. We would sit and chat together. It was better than hanging out, where I wouldn't study at all.

Other positive campus supports that were mentioned by students included the Black Student Union, TRIO, the Wellness Center, SEO Math Tutoring, the PORT program for athletes, and the GPPA program. These were all single mentions.

It is important to note that, while this is not a support, within the comments about financial aid, four students mentioned the challenges presented by the expense associates with required book purchases. The students also expressed concern about books and other materials that were never used for the course.

Extracurricular Activities and External Commitments

Fourteen of the students commented on extracurricular activities and external commitments experiences while in college, but it is important to mention that, in general, this group of students did not participate in multiple extracurricular activities. Only one student mentioned his involvement with two student organizations. One student indicated that he'd been involved in sports and clubs for a while. Two students were on UIC athletic teams; one gymnastics and the other track. One student was a member of the Black Student Union, and another was a member of a student organization in the College of Business. The primary extracurricular activity was employment – either on or off campus. Within their

comments, they discussed the benefits and challenges of extracurricular activities to their academic success. Generally, on-campus endeavors supported academic success, and off campus-activities posed more challenges -- particularly in relation to off-campus jobs.

Eleven of the students mentioned that, at some point, they held an on or off campus job. The following are representative descriptions of their experiences:

Quenton: As far as the job at Fedex, my academics had gone down hill....probably because of lack of sleep...two to three hours a night, for six days straight. I don't think that's healthy at all. I guess you're supposed to get 40 hours in five days. I didn't get that.

Interviewer: Do you feel the needed to work at Fedex?

Quenton: Yeah I need money. This is my normal schedule: wake up; go to work; pick up my daughter from my brother's house; drive all the way back south; go to my mom's house; get her [the daughter] ready; take her to day care; drive all the way back down here; go to class; do my studying; go all the way back south; pick her up from day care; back down here -- It's a lot. That alone, just having a baby, that's a lot. As far as daycare being \$196. a week; I need a job. Even though the state is helping is me, my co-pay is still \$180. Even having relationships. That's a lot too. That's its own...I guess in a way its kind of nice, time to go to the movies. I would say an outside commitment is trying to get in to med school. Trying to get professors to write recommendations. Doing volunteer work. Shadowing doctors. Lots of outside academic stuff.

Marcus: Well for the on campus job. I didn't want to take out too many student loans and everything. So I picked up an on campus job actually. At one point I was working two jobs and going to school full time. It was hard trying to focus. My on campus job, now that I'm towards the end, it's actually quite beneficial. I can go to work and leave from there and then go. It was sort of a challenge when I was working both those jobs.

David: Working in the writing center and having a break in between classes. Just to be able to go to work and get some extra money. I have a non-campus job too. The big difference is, the time it takes to do that one vs. being in the writing center and working in between classes, I am already here, the time would have been used here, might as well use it working. More on campus jobs would help. Unfortunately with the way things are right now that could be a big challenge.

The following are responses regarding involvement with student athletics and organizations:

Lawrence: The largest one would be my role on the UIC gymnastics team. As an extracurricular activity. On the off season, which for us, there is not really a quote unquote off season. You're just not competing, but your training schedule doesn't get any easier; it's not like other sports, like baseball and football, where you just kick it and don't do anything for three months. There is no such thing in gymnastics. There is no off time. But the off season you're still going to be working out during school or 20 plus hours a week, three hours a day every day except Sunday. So that is...its very demanding. But at the same time the coaching staff and the academic department reinforces the need to keep up with your studies. They have different programs like PORT and they have required advising to actually have grade report sheets that are like interim grade reports that show if you're doing okay. And if you're not, they make sure to

provide you with a tutor, or whatever help you need. They have been helpful. In my studies even though they are the reason my studies are more difficult than the next student. But then, in the off season, I'm in season now, and um, it's hard for a lot of professors to understand how long we're actually gone. This year in particular I didn't travel that much because I actually got mono in January. It wasn't the best thing for my senior season. But we travel literally almost every weekend. And we'll be gone the entire weekend. You have all those days of practice and then another 48 hours when you're just out of state. Much of which is either eating, or preparing for the competition. You don't have as much time as professors would like to think to do your studies.

Carl: One thing I got invited to was the Black Student Union meeting long before I came to Orientation. I went to those and they were helpful. They told you about financial aid, about prioritizing, about other student organizations -- everything to look out for going into your freshman year.

University Social Systems/ Peer Groups Interactions

When asked to rate the quality of relationships with faculty, teaching assistants, faculty, and staff, the survey results revealed that the students rated their relationships with their peers as most positive. The positive comments regarding peers were found in the interview responses as well, but overall, their comments fell into four categories: positive, negative, and two categories of responses in which student claimed they “never connected” with their peers, or “it depended on the friends.”

Responses representative of those students who found that their relationship with other students was positive are as follows:

Franklin: My sophomore year I lived in the dorms on the East side. I had a single, and I remember my first time being by myself -- that transition from my freshman year, when I had roommate in the dorms. That transition to being in the single was pretty tough for me. I got kind of depressed. I remember, I was in the library one day, and I tried to do some homework. I broke down and started crying. I called my dad. I told him...I'm alone; I'm lost. It was really traumatizing. He drove to see me to talk and to cheer me up, and he said, if you feel like you want to come home because it's too tough, you can. I was like, no, I don't want to come home. I remember thinking to myself; I wasn't alone, because my friends were in the same dorm building and stuff like that. It was just that going to a room, a single, was kind of hard. That made me think that I had to adapt to it by spending more time with my friends. I would study with them, and spend less time in my room by myself. I didn't tell my friends that I had a nervous breakdown. I just went to them for more social stuff. I chose how my dad helped me out. My family, my friends helped me out by being there and I just took it upon myself to go to them.

David: One thing that isn't big on the campus, by being a big commuter school, there isn't much of an influence among friends. Once you get here, you're here, that's it, and once you're gone you don't really talk too much. But when I met [names a student friend] there was a big difference. We hung out outside of school. Me and her, and other friends, we'd get together and study. Yeah, this is what was missing before. So, some way, try and create that community among UIC students, I think it's needed. It's not strong enough here.

Nelson: Like I said, they [student friends] really help to get you through those tougher times when you really need some kind of support. Um, even when there is no weight on you, it just makes things easier. Knowing that, you know, that I was going to go to class and come back and hang out with friends, even just for that day. As long as I knew that there was someone there I could hang out with from time to time, it makes it a lot better. Because you know they are going through the same things you are, even if it is with different majors or classes, whatever. You know you can go back there [residence hall] and talk to them about it, make jokes, laugh about it, and everything is fine. They're not going to be there and say well, blah, blah, blah, this is how UIC works; you have to get used to it. They'll say, yeah, that is a problem, I'm doing the same thing, and you can't do anything about it, but we'll just deal with it together; we'll just help each other out. Um, it's probably one of the few things that really motivates you; that you can get through the whole thing. When you have friends like that, especially really close friends, you know that they're never going to let you slip through the cracks. They are more than willing to say, hey, this is what you have to do. I'll help you out, no matter what. There were times where you could see, people who wouldn't normally study, were more than willing to come out and study with you, and it would push you too. Friends will easily make sacrifices to help you out with that, and you knew, even if it was tough, they would be there. So things like that made it to where, friends were driving to help you go further.Out of classroom, like I said, as a commuter school, it's hard to find extracurricular activities through the school. I never did any of that. There was always just...mainly because of the situation I was put in with those people on that floor, I had a social life. But I didn't have to do it through the school. Go to a club and try to meet people, or sit on campus and try to start conversations. I had a group of individuals, who we were on an extremely friendly basis... there was never any need to go out and forcibly do this. Through them, we went to the UIC theatre. Through the school, we went to see things like Wicked. You can do these projects and stuff. I didn't have to go with random people or join a group and go somewhere every Thursday or Friday or something. You could just go home do things within your group, and work around the system in a way. But it seems like it would have been extremely hard to meet people outside of the [residence hall] floor, or outside of the building, just because there is no way to find anyone; considering everyone is gone. When it hits Friday afternoon, don't expect to see anyone until Monday morning....The main thing I guess, just laughing about the situation, was the best way to deal with it. When you sit back and you're all just sitting there on a Thursday night and you start realizing that it doesn't make any sense, you laugh about it, because it makes it go a lot easier. Because the last thing you want to do is be sitting in your room by yourself, writing a huge paper, and thinking about how UIC is going to mess with you in another way. So by just talking to someone else and saying I can't wait 'til something bad happens again, you can just laugh about it, and say that eventually we'll get through the next four years somehow.

Brandon: Out of classroom, freshman year, I got involved...I lived on campus all five years. I got involved with the residence halls because I did want to make sure that I wasn't just hanging out with the African Americans on campus. I wanted to make sure I got a diverse group of friends. I feel like if you have a diverse group of friends, there can be different things to talk about; different things to do; different social backgrounds. So I got involved in the residence hall association.

Lawrence: The majority of my closer friends are members of my gymnastics team; a few of which I live with now. They have all been very supportive. Pretty much from the

beginning, both scholastically and athletically, they all do well in school as well. We all like to do well together. We would always have the running joke that we have the highest GPA of the men on the team. We just like to come off as the ones that do try and have something to show for it. It's just something at this point in your life that you should be doing the best that you can, and you should be proud of that. My friends have been a big part of that; they have pushed me to do better; and I have pushed them. We always make sure that we are on top of our studies, and on top of our training. It's a collective effort to be the best possible.

Otis: I think....a lot of freshman, particularly that come to UIC; they're not connected to the university. I would say the majority of UIC students are commuter students, and they have no sense of connection. They come to class during the day, and then they leave, they might grab a bite to eat, but that's it. There is no connection. We call them U-Pass students or Parking Lot students. That was a word we used for them during orientation. There is no sense of connection. No interest in what's going on campus. No interest in speakers. No interest in organization; just no connections. And I think your success rate automatically drops if you have no connection. You know, compared to other campuses which are resident halls oriented. People have a sense of community. People want to stay down there; they want to be involved in their campus. So I think that was my added bonus, I think that's the reason why I was able to be successful here at UIC. Just having that bond with UIC....First year was very huge. It was kind of awkward. I went to a predominantly Black high school; predominantly Black elementary school. So it was a big adjustment.... It wasn't as if I was oblivious to talking to a White person, or a White woman, or an Asian, or an Arab. I always had initial context here and there, but UIC allowed me to really challenge that interaction and really step out of my comfort zone and talk about theories, topics and issues. One of the things I really admired was finding a common denominator between...even if it was like basketball. Something we could talk about....Most of the friendships that I built were from study groups. And it's so funny because I would see a whole class who didn't know each other at the beginning of the semester; two, three hundred students, and at the end of the semester they all come together and build lasting relationships because, you know, when you're up one to two o'clock in the morning, studying, you probably have side conversations. You're talking. You have conversations about life. I think that's the beauty of UIC. You have this interaction of people of different races...different...we're all in the same boat. We're all trying to get through this class. We lean on each other for support. That's how I describe myself.

The three students who said that they “never connected” with other students were commuters. The following is a response of one of those students:

Hasan: More recently, I believe that at UIC you have to open up. They say that UIC is diverse, and it is, and I've experienced the benefits of diversity. I have Nigerian friends. bi-racial friends, friends from Malaysia. People you wouldn't normally have lunch with, study with, or pull all-nighters with. You would never do that type of stuff. You know Chicago is broken down into their own... You just have to connect. Some people will connect with you, and they're friendly. But I just think for the most part if you don't connect it's very difficult to connect here.

Interviewer: So you're saying that you have to put yourself out there, or its not going to happen.

Hasan: No, it's not going to happen. In my experience, and I'm pretty friendly, so I'm always looking to connect with someone, regardless of who they are, or what they look

like. But I think a lot of people, from where they come from, are hesitant to communicate with someone outside of where they come from; social class, ethnicity, etc.... and that's a huge part of diversity. Here they say...diversity, diversity; one of the most diverse. But you have to look at the downside of diversity at this campus as well.

The two students who believed that peers could be either a positive or negative influence, depending on the student, were commuters. One of the students replied as follows:

Ervan: I was thinking about what I said about friends as a challenge. You really have to pick your friends; who you hang out with. Some are more focused on studying and getting work done, but there are other people who want to have a social life outside of class as well. The ones who want to have a social life outside of school, they tend to not focus as much, and depending on the group, you don't want to feel left out, but you want to do the same things they do. And if the group doesn't do homework a lot, then you'll end up not doing homework. I try to hang out with people who are in the library studying all the time. I think it depends on how you pick your friends. It can be a great help if you have friends who really motivate you to learn. Because right now in chemical engineering, there are students who want to get their GPA's up before they leave, so now they are trying to study. There are people in our group, and we tell them, hey, where are you going? You're going home. You should stay, and try and get some work done. Stuff like that can really inspire someone and pull someone over. Even if they don't want to that type of encouragement....At the same time, it's a double edged sword, because if you have someone who is not interested in studying, they can encourage you to not study; it all depends on who you hang out with.

The lone student who thought that peers were a negative influence, was a commuter.

When the responses were further examined within the four categories, it became obvious that most the students who considered peer relationships as positive also mentioned that they lived in the residence halls. In fact, 9 of those 11 students lived in the residence halls for at least one year; 6 of the students lived in the residence halls for at least 3 years. One student spent one year living off campus, but within walking distance of the campus, and only one student was a commuter all four years.

The apparent relationship between positive perception of peers and experience in residence halls prompted us to take another look at the relationship between the survey items that asked the interviewees to rate the quality of relationships with various groups and resident status. We discovered the following:

Students who never lived in the residence halls:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Relationships with students (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 3.7 |
| Relationships with administrators (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 2.9 |
| Relationships with faculty (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 3.9 |

Students who lived in the residence halls (1 year or more):

| | |
|---|------------|
| Relationships with students (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 5.6 |
| Relationships with administrators (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 5.0 |
| Relationships with faculty (1 to 6, 6 is good) | 4.7 |

While our survey sample is too small to report the statistical significance of the responses, it is interesting to note that students with some experience in the residence halls perceive that their relationships with students, administrators, and faculty were generally better than their non-resident peers. This phenomenon should be investigated further. In addition to the relationship between positive perception of peers and experience in residence halls, it is important to note a few other themes related to the influence of peers:

Throughout the responses about peers, students consistently referred to themselves, and other students, as either “connected” or “not connected” to other students or to others on campus.

It is important to note that a number of the students described experience with depression or loneliness at some point while attending UIC. They explained that peers and family members helped them to overcome these feelings.

A number of students indicated that friends pushed, or motivated, each other academically.

A number of students also discussed the value of the diversity of students at UIC for their personal growth.

One student talked about the positive influence of his involvement with athletics and the students on his team.

Home Social Systems: Family and Friends

Earlier in this report, in the pre-college entry attributes section, the influence of family and friends from home was considered. As a final variable to consider during the college experience, we examine the influence of family and friends once again.

Of the 17 respondents, 14 discussed the positive influences of their parents on their academic success exclusively. In other words, their parents had no negative influence. The positive influences identified included encouragement, emotional support, financial support, serving as a role model, having expectations for academic success, providing advice about college, shielding from home responsibilities, and help with basic needs like food care packages, or a ride to the campus when they missed the train. Representative responses are as follows:

Brandon: My family was very helpful. They helped me every semester. Every semester I finished. There were times I did not so well and they always told me that, as long as I was determined to finish, I would finish.

Andre: My mother and father pretty much back me all the way. Other family I can't talk about. Most of them didn't go to college. I mean, I don't even know if they have a high school diploma. My father has some college. My mother has some college. So they can at least help me a little bit. You know, at least in telling me what happens. They have been pretty much, my two biggest supporters.

Hasan: Number one [support is] family, I'll be the first to graduate in my immediate family, from a post secondary institution, so, just encouragement, support, words of wisdom, advice, feedback on certain things that are actually taking place, involvement. Making sure my grades are up to par if I'm not doing too well, and things like that. I just have a great support system from my parents.

Isaac: Family for me...sometimes I'm down...like in my English class....if I get a D or something, I just call my parents, and they cheer me up.... If I need money, I call them up. Like last week, Saturday, I was just sitting in my room....My mom called, and I told her I was hungry, and she said, don't worry I'll bring you food. So she actually bought me food....it's like a 45 minute drive. Family, my dad, and my mom, and my brother have pretty much supported me. I have a brother and two sisters. One older, and two younger ones. Everyone is in college right now. So pretty much everyone supports us when it comes to school.

Carl: My mother as far as college goes, would always try to do things for me; she would always try to do anything she can for me so I wouldn't have certain worries. Like my mom still, if I come home, she still washes my clothes. Or if she goes grocery shopping, she still buys things that I like to eat and drink. Little things like that. If I was living on campus or if I lived in my own apartment I would have to worry about doing little things like that, chores around the house, paying bills and things like that. Bills I take care of myself. I have my own cell phone payment and my own car payment. I always pay my own bills. She'll do little things to help me out. My grandmother, she is the same way, if I come around, she'll do things to help me out. Or do things she thinks will help in the long run. One thing that my mom was always worried about, me coming here, is just being distracted; but it worked out.

Otis: In a sense, I had to decide, should I stay living at home or make the transition of living on campus? So then I finally moved on campus, a lot of my family, (not to say problems), but issues were eliminated. Because my mother, she worked real well with me, she was like you know what?...any little thing that happens in the family, I'm not going to call Otis because I know you have things you have to worry about on campus, so I can call you time to time to check in. Which was great, because you know, it helped me focus on classes, and on my college career, and also stay connected to my family.

Interviewer: So they made that adjustment with you when you moved on campus.

Otis: Yeah. And that is the support structure with my family. My mother recognized that I was dealing with, I would come home and then I got to deal with this. She recognized that and she worked with me during that transition.

Otis: I think, financially they were very supportive. My father, he was the breadwinner. He was the provider. He works in the area. He actually works at the South Water Market and Produce Company. He would always call me to ask, do you need any money? He always asks me if I need money. He's always been supportive. He always motivated me to get an education. He only did some college. He always wanted one of his sons to go on to college and get an education. He was proud that. There was a little story that UIC pushed the produce company backwards. He was mad that UIC moved his company. But now he's proud, because, now my son attends there. He has a new affection, a new connection to the university. He has no bad blood with UIC. My mother has always been supportive. She's always championed education ever since I was in kindergarten. She was always there to help.

Jamar: My dad, he's a teacher....I can talk to him whenever I need to about whatever. He's definitely one of my biggest role models and examples. He went back to school when he was thirty. I was like 8 or 9...years old at the time. He got his degree...he was done after five or six years. Been teaching since; and got his masters. He has been there as an example, and we have good conversations....Growing up my daddy was the closest thing to a working professional I had in my circle --in my immediate vision....and he didn't start teaching 'til I was 14 or 15 years old. Three and a half years later, I went away to the Marine Corps. My grandfather was a mechanic for Commonwealth Edison for thirty five years. My uncle was a factory worker, with several lay-offs. So it's like not these are more well-off people -- your Oak Park's and your Evanston's -- these families who grow up with degree holding professionals. It's common place. It's nothing abnormal. They get these images...with their mothers...they already believe that...you know, if I do decide to go to school, I'm going to end up getting my degree and I'm going to get a good job and so on and so forth. They don't have to overcome a mental reorganization. That's step one. When you already know that doing the degree work and getting the degree is important, and it's going to make a difference, it's easier to do what it takes. But when you're not sure...I bet there are plenty of people who if you ask them...what are you doing?...they'll say, I don't know, I'm just here. They have an inkling that it's a good thing...they just don't know. They don't have the examples. My dad went to school, got his degree. His two sons....I'll be a degree holder in August, and my younger brother has had his degree for two years....and that's no accident. And we're also...as we got older, we've been introduced to people; other African Americans who are accomplished. It adds to your sense of okay...there is some method to the madness.

Five of the 17 students mentioned the influence of their brothers. In three cases, their brothers helped them with college advice. In one case, the student's younger brother was "his Zen," and in one case, the student felt he needed to succeed to be a role model for his younger brothers.

Brandon: Whenever I need to get away from this place, I would go home. The minute I would go home, I would forget about everything I had to do. Someone is in the house, enjoying themselves and having a good time, or my brother, who I've gotten close with since I came to college; we'd just relax, and enjoy each others company. He's in high school and I'm in college. We don't have time to hang out. He was like my Zen. I needed that, to [re]connect on Sunday night or Monday morning, and hit it again....And I do that once a month or twice...once a month usually. Of course it's a lot less now because its time for me to get older and you know and heal my self. Every now and then, I'm going to go home.

Marcus: My brother, he made sure I knew the material he gave me suggestions like if this is class is hard, you need to make sure you go to this class every day, or whatever, whether you feel that you know the material or not. They might like, allude to a certain point, and that might be on the test. Just having a person that went through, my brother was sort of like my mentor....like he went through it and he gave me tips on how to be successful at UIC and how to do well in classes.

Hasan: I have had a real difficult life. I'm the type of person who's able to accept what I've actually been through, and actually make the necessary changes so I can move forward. So I am able to take the negative and make it positive. For instance, two summers ago, my oldest brother was shot three times in an alley. So...you have to take that, how do you continue to go to school and you know...yada yada yada. Who wants

to go to school...and be shot three times for nothing? You know what I'm saying? My father, you know, he has a drug problem. Just getting past all of the things, the problems that people have in their family....you have to take that in, and once they see that you want to do better than that makes them, say okay...well my brother he's actually pursuing education. Once I leave here, I am actually going to become a teacher....My youngest brother...I have to be that model for him.

One student talked about challenges that family posed, and that this situation motivated him to “want to do more.”

David: I'm just saying what they have not done. I actually wrote about this in the paper. When I talked about my family, as far as, selling drugs, going to jail, and not actually achieving much outside of high school....and just knowing that I wanted to go above and beyond that. I want to see the world and go past the four corners of Adams and Kostner.... and maybe take a trip to Italy one day....or Paris -- just go above and beyond. They don't quite grasp that concept, its more, lets kick it at home, watch TV, drink, smoke, and um, we have that constant battle. But I hear, you know, you're kind of boring, because you don't want to do the things we want to do. And I'm like, no I just want to do more than what you want to do.

One student discussed the challenges of child rearing.

Jamar: I'm sure you can imagine....going to school and taking care of a toddler. When you get done with school, it requires so much attention. I could never really get started with school work 'til after the kids go to bed. Half the time I'm taking care of one child and half of the other time I'm taking care of two kids....and the one, the mother works in the evenings. So I get the kids to bed. By the time that's done its like 9:30 or 10. I've got my own evening things to do. That is difficult I guess.

Friends from home seemed to have almost no influence on the participants. Only two students discussed a minimal role of friends from home.

Ervan: I had friends who were UIC students. They were the ones I was with at the library. Outside of campus life, my best friends from high school....we'd hang out every now and then. Every now and then I go play ball if we had a day off. I'd see them every now and then....only occasionally.

Marcus: I actually spent a lot of time off campus. A lot of my friends they were actually going to Columbia, Columbia is on Roosevelt. They are doing animation....so I would sometimes go out there and hang with them. They would sometimes come here and get guest passes for the recreation center and we would sometimes play basketball -- every now and then. Off campus life was interesting. We would go see movies and stuff...

Conclusions and Implications

The African American male students who generously shared their experiences through their survey and interview responses were aware that they would not be the main beneficiaries of this research. They all expressed an interest in informing UIC, and more important, in improving the “pathway” for future African American male students. Whether administrator, faculty, staff, parent, sibling or peer, those involved in the academic lives of the African American males in this study interacted with the students at various points along the pathway to their success. Some interactions facilitated their progress, and others presented obstacles. The study findings reveal that there are numerous factors that influenced the success of each student. Each actor in the life of a future student may find the recommendations of this report useful, but we would propose that a broader awareness of the full complement of factors that contribute to the path to success may improve the effectiveness of each individual actor. While each actor performs a unique and important role, the awareness of the network of support may improve the advice and support that the students need to succeed. To that end, it may be useful to gather key actors representing each factor together on an annual or semi-annual basis to discuss the role and function of each, to plan support activities and communication, and to learn about gaps and redundancies.

For each major actor, we have developed a list of recommendations. While it was a challenging task, we have attempted to list the recommendations, in priority order, based on the interview responses of the students. There is no environment in which it would be easy to address every recommendation immediately. The current fiscal environment presents even greater challenges. At the same time, the priority listing helps us to begin our efforts with the recommendations students have told us are most important for their success, and to make sure that we are not cutting the supports that are most critical. It also helps us to stage, or phase, our response over some reasonable timeframe. In addition, there may be recommendations that have less to do with additional resources than a change in the way we do what we do.

The recommendations are presented with four audiences in mind: UIC leadership and staff; UIC faculty; UIC students, particularly African American male students; and the parents of the students. Each set of conclusions and recommendations are informed in two ways; through the themes drawn from the survey and interview responses of the students, and through the responses from three direct questions asked of students at the end of each interview: If you were to give advice to an African American male freshmen about how to succeed at UIC, what would you say?; If you were to give advice to UIC about what could be done differently to help UIC students to succeed, what would you say?; and What should UIC be sure not to change?

The responses drawn directly from the answers to these questions are listed in italics.

Advice to UIC Leadership and UIC Staff

Address the Critical Need for Financial Aid

- Maintain levels of financial aid, and continue to search for new sources of financial assistance.
- Continue to offer financial aid information sessions to students and their parents.
- Ensure that communications with students and their parents regarding financial aid and other forms of financial assistance are communicated effectively.
- *Ensure that front-line financial aid counselors are well informed, and are regularly receiving professional development, so that they have the most updated and accurate information.*
- *Offer financial aid for summer session.*
- Maintain a commitment to provide on-campus jobs for students.

Improve College and Campus Level Advising

- Advisors should have adequate training to interpret the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) report.
- Advisors should have ongoing training regarding the programs of the students whom they are advising.
- Whatever the source of advising (campus, college or department level), students should be informed of the scope and limitations of the advising they will receive from the advisor.
- Advisor guidance should generally be informative, positive and encouraging when working with students. (e.g. Advisors should say, “your grades are not where they need to be, so you need to work harder if you do want to get to medical school, not ...you shouldn’t do medicine.”)
- Advisors should provide specific guidelines. (e.g. “Successful students typically study 20 hours a week.”)
- Advisors should be aware of all of the academic support units on campus (i.e. the UIC Writing Center and the Math Learning Center).
- Take a closer look at ways AAAN might provide support for a larger proportion of African American male students.

Ensure that Departments Continue to do a Good Job Advising their Students (distinguished from college or campus based advising)

- *Help undeclared students find a major sooner, (by sophomore year), because the best advising is in the departments.*
- If it becomes obvious that a student has chosen the wrong major, advisors should help the student transition to a major of interest.

Consider What May be Learned about the Benefits of Residence Life

- *Students indicated that living in the residence halls is a great experience; be mindful of helpful linkages between academic life and residence hall life.*
- Seek out ways to help commuting students build social and academic connections with their peers on campus.

- *Continue the helpful peer [and faculty] mentoring that has taken place in the residence halls.*

Create a Better Transition, Particularly for Students from CPS

- *Better define expectations for new students.*
- *Ensure that students know what they must do (particularly CPS students) to be well-prepared for college.*
- *Create structure for freshmen so that they stay focused.*
- *Improve the advising structure.*
- *Improve mentoring programs, particularly for first generation students who don't know "how to do college."*
- *Ensure that UIC's New Student Orientation continues to offer opportunities for students to meet other students and develop longer-term connections to other students.*
- *Ensure that UIC continues to do a good job showing students resources to help them.*
- *Continue to offer supplemental instruction of the type offered by Minority Engineering Recruitment and Retention Program (Engineering).*
- *Partner with CPS, regarding math and science preparation in particular, to ensure that students enter UIC prepared to succeed.*

Maintain and Further Develop Academic Support Offered through the UIC Writing Center, the Math Learning Center, and the Library

- *A number of students spoke of the benefit they derived from the Writing Center and the Math Learning Center.*
- *For some students, the only place where they have access to a study environment is the UIC Library.*
- *Ensure that incoming students are aware of the Writing and Math Centers and the Library as supports for classroom learning.*
- *Ensure that the Math and Writing Centers and the Library have the resources to accommodate all students needing math, writing, and library support.*

Hold Faculty More Accountable for the Improvement of Teaching and Student Learning

- *Create opportunities for faculty to take lessons from the great instructors [several were named].*
- *Use fewer adjunct instructors.*
- *Where small class size is not possible, reinforce faculty efforts to create small class type experiences (e.g. work in small break-out groups, small group help sessions with teaching assistants)*

Provide Teaching Assistant (TA) Training and Development that Supports Effective Learning for All Students

- *A number of students mentioned barriers to learning due to a TA's racist behavior*

- A number of students mentioned barriers to learning due to a TA's racist behavior
- Ensure that teaching assistants are good facilitators of learning.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are able to communicate effectively with students.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are able to work effectively with students of all cultures.

Create Opportunities for Freshmen to Talk to Each Other

- New Student Orientation was identified as a mechanism for early engagement that, in some cases, led to long term friendships.
- *Encourage students to engage in the campus.*
- *Promote school spirit.*
- *Create more opportunities for weekend socializing*

Be Mindful of Campus and College Level Policy that May Undermine Student Learning

- Be careful about the temptation to create large class sections exclusively; particularly for freshmen.
- Give serious consideration to any changes to transfer policy that would cut off possibilities for students to articulate coursework that supplements UIC courses, or that would hinder student progress during the summer.

Market UIC's Strengths to Students

- *Acknowledge and promote the benefit of the location of UIC for student personal and professional growth.*
- *Acknowledge and promote the diversity of the students as a critical positive factor student personal and professional growth.*

Identify Ways to Inspire Students to Succeed

- One student mentioned that the Guaranteed Professional Program Admission (GPPA) program would have "given [him] that extra push" to do well in high school.

Find Ways to Reach Out to Students Experiencing Depression

- It is important to note that a number of the students described experience with depression or loneliness at some point while attending UIC. We should consider mechanisms to connect them to on campus supports.

Advice to UIC Faculty

Don't Underestimate the Inspirational Importance of Your Encouragement

- Assume that your students will do well.
- Don't set the bar low; create appropriate challenges.
- When they succeed, give them a word of acknowledgement.
- When they face challenges, encourage them.
- Recognize that you are an influential mentor.

Use Every Opportunity to Engage Students in Academics

- Emphasize the importance of class attendance and study sessions.
- Hold regular office hours, and welcome students to seek assistance.
- Welcome students to seek help from teaching assistants.

Hire TA's Who Support Effective Learning for All Students and Provide Training that Develops their Ability to Teach Effectively

- Ensure that teaching assistants are good facilitators of learning.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are able to communicate effectively with students.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are able to work effectively with students of all cultures.

Use Group Projects and Study Groups to Help Students Build Academic and Social Linkages on Campus

- When asking students to form assignment work groups, be mindful that some students may not be comfortable approaching others, especially if new to UIC.
- If employing group projects, help students to manage group process and organization (i.e. identify a group leader, project timeline, and a meeting place).
- Be clear about the final product and assignment goal, and the benefit of group work in achieving that goal.

Appeal to Students' Intrinsic Motivation for Learning

- Whenever possible, make links between course content and the interests and values of students (i.e. their professional goals and aspirations).
- Appeal to their interest in the subject matter.
- Help to make them aware of the relationship between what they are learning and skills they are building.

Recognize that Students Approach Course Content from Varied Perspectives

- Students indicated that they are more likely to engage in class discussion if it is evident that they can approach the material with different ideas about how to look at questions raised in class.
- Students prefer an open and friendly classroom environment.
- Students like to be informed about the material being covered, and then challenged to come to their own conclusions.
- Remember that they are undergraduates, and cover material at an appropriate level.

Be Prepared and Organized to Teach Each Class

- Students expressed that it is difficult to understand material when it is not presented in an organized and thoughtful manner.

Be Careful in Your Grading Practices

- Be sure that students know what is expected (e.g. clear statement in syllabus).
- Be sure to carefully examine the relationship between the students work and the grade they are receiving; especially when teaching assistants are involved in the grading process.

Be Attentive to the Cost of Required Books

- Ensure that books that students must purchase are truly required.
- When possible, offer students alternatives to book purchase.

Take Advantage of Opportunities to Learn Lessons from the Great Instructors [several were named]

- *Engage in peer classroom observation of accomplished professors.*
- *Attend department, college, or campus sponsored faculty lectures.*

Advice to UIC Students

Of the three questions, the first, pertaining to advice to a new freshman, generated the most response and reflection from the students. Most were adamant and passionate about the strategies to succeed. Some of their responses were true to their own strategies for success, and other comments were more a recommendation from the “if I could do it all over, I would have done these things” perspective. The list below delineates distinct themes that emerged within their responses.

Be Confident

- *College is totally doable, as long as you don't get in the way of yourself. First believe that you can do it. Know that you can do it.*
- *Don't let the concept of college overwhelm you... It is just another project to do ... with new people, and a new teacher. You will make it through this just like you made it through anything else.*

Financial Aid is Critical

- Become familiar with sources and processes to secure financial aid.
- Be sure to attend to financial aid application requirements each year in attendance at UIC.
- Be mindful of communications regarding financial aid requirements.

Establish a Relationship with Instructors to Gain Needed Assistance and Guidance.

- *Make sure your professor knows your name.*
- *Get to class on time -- that is very important.*
- *Visit your professors and your TA's during office hours.*
- *Seek your professor's help.*

Don't Underestimate the Importance of Academic Advising

- Pay attention to the results of your placement tests, and the courses you are being advised to take.
- Make sure that you understand the proper sequencing of the courses you are taking.
- Make sure that you understand the options available to you as you consider taking challenging required courses (e.g. taking a statistics rather than a math class in certain majors).
- Ask your advisor (and others) for advice about opportunities to take small section classes.

Find Like-Minded Study Partners

- Although you may be accustomed to studying and working on assignments on your own, give serious consideration to the occasions when working with others would be of benefit. Working with others may help to provide moral support, and may better prepare you for group work in your post-graduate professional career.

- Learn the circumstances when you learn best by working alone (e.g. what subjects?), and when you learn best by working with others.
- *If you can find someone, or some group of friends, who can help out, it makes it a lot easier.*
- *Find a group of friends you want to study with, and make sure they have the same goal.*
- *Find other people who you can be friends with, who are relatively intelligent or find the material kind of easy. Stick with them.*
- *It's not about sticking together because you're a minority. It doesn't matter what race you are; it's about getting it done and surviving your classes. And that is the unifying thing. -- We're all trying to study and pass our classes.*

Maintain Academic Focus

- *Don't get distracted; especially during the first semester.*
- Think about the connection between the time and money you are investing, your ultimate goal, and doing well in the courses you are taking in order to meet your goal.
- *Stay focused! You are here to get a diploma. If you are not here for your degree, you are wasting your time.*
- *Stay focused on classes, first and foremost.*
- *Pay attention to what is expected of you!*
- *Go to class no matter what. Attendance may not be required, but even if you think it's pointless, if you go to class, at least you hear what the teacher is talking about.*
- *Students who feel that the lack of an attendance requirement is permission to not attend are often the students who do not persist.*
- *Get your books.*
- *You have to study. Take time to study for your courses, especially during your freshman year.*
- *School is the priority.*

Find Opportunities to Build Your Math and Writing Skills

- If your math skills are strong, don't let time lapse between math courses, or courses that require math.
- If you need to strengthen your math skills, don't hesitate to take a course that will get you up to speed, even if you need to take that course at a community college.
- Make sure that you are aware of the math requirements for your major.
- If you need to strengthen your writing skills, don't hesitate to get assistance from the UIC Writing Center.
- If possible, find a student who will read your work and give you advice about your writing.

Get Involved on Campus (with Some Warnings)

Advice about social engagement was offered as a double-edged sword. While students offered that engaging in campus co-curricular and social life is important in becoming fully immersed in UIC life, they also indicated that it is important to

distinguish between beneficial social life and that which can hurt chances for success. Thus, this advice came with both recommendations and warnings:

- *Join groups to become busy with campus life; it puts structure into your life.*
- *It is important to do sports. It's a great de-stressor. It clears your mind.*
- *It's college; freshman year; you're going to have fun and you're going to drink and everything, but after a while, people flunk out easily.*
- *Some friends just wanted to party; that's pretty much all they did; these people didn't come back the second semester.*
- *Don't get caught up in the hype of things -- the excessive partying and things like that. If you come to college with that mentality, you don't need to be here.*
- *I didn't do a lot of (social) things like basketball games, I kind of wish I had.*
- *Live on campus if you can afford to. It makes the transition from high school friends to college friends much easier. Join student organizations. That will help (the transition) as well.*

In summary, students seemed to be saying, get involved with the campus social life in moderation, particularly your first semester of freshman year.

Manage Your Time

- *Within the first semester, find balance (in your schedule).*
- *Manage your time well. Make smart choices about how you manage your time throughout the semester.*
- *Time management is vital throughout your whole academic course of study.*
- *Stay on top of things.*

Make Use of Support Systems

- *Use the academic support facilities more than I did. The first three years here, I didn't use advisors.*
- *Use advisors; particularly departmental advisors.*
- *Use the Writing Center*
- *Use the Math Learning Center*
- *Use the Library – it's a good place to study as an alternative to other places where there are distractions.*
- *Use the academic help offered by professors, teaching assistants, Honors College tutors, and study groups.*
- *Seek help. You have to find time to get the help regardless of the obstacles.*
- *UIC is a very friendly school ... there are plenty of places to go to help you academically ... that helps us get through the challenging courses. ... I am stubborn and scared to ask for help, but I would be quick to tell anyone to get the help when you need it.*

Advice to Parents

Be Attentive to Financial Aid Deadlines

- Become familiar with sources and processes to secure financial aid.
- Be sure to attend to financial aid application requirements each year in attendance at UIC.
- Be mindful of communications regarding financial aid requirements.

Don't Underestimate Moral Support from Family

- Don't underestimate the importance of your support when he succeeds, your encouragement when he is challenged, and your high expectations that he will be a success.
- The support of his siblings, especially his brothers, whether older or younger, is important.
- Let him know that his goals are important to you.

Academic Support Can Come in a Variety of Ways

- Direct academic support (ie. help with subject matter) or indirect academic support (purchasing a laptop computer) are appreciated and contribute to academic success.

Understand that Campus Life Plays a Role in Academic Success

- Living on campus can be a benefit to student success, but even a commuting student can benefit from involvement in more campus life.
- It is important to students for you to help minimize distractions from their studies.
- Encourage him to seek out academic support units on campus like the Writing Center; the Math Learning Center; Campus, College and Departmental Advising; and the Library.

Sometimes a Successful Student Just Needed a Home Cooked Meal

- A number of successful students expressed deep appreciation for the everyday ways in which their parents supported them. A number of students mentioned special dinners or food care packages from mom. Some mentioned help from dad – like a ride to the campus when he missed a train.

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APPENDIX A: Pathways Targeted Sample Academic Progress Grid

The academic progress and entry origins of the Spring 2009 cohort of senior African American males who entered UIC as freshmen is graphical displayed on the following page. It offers a visual representation of how the population (sorted by *Pathways* participants and non-participants).

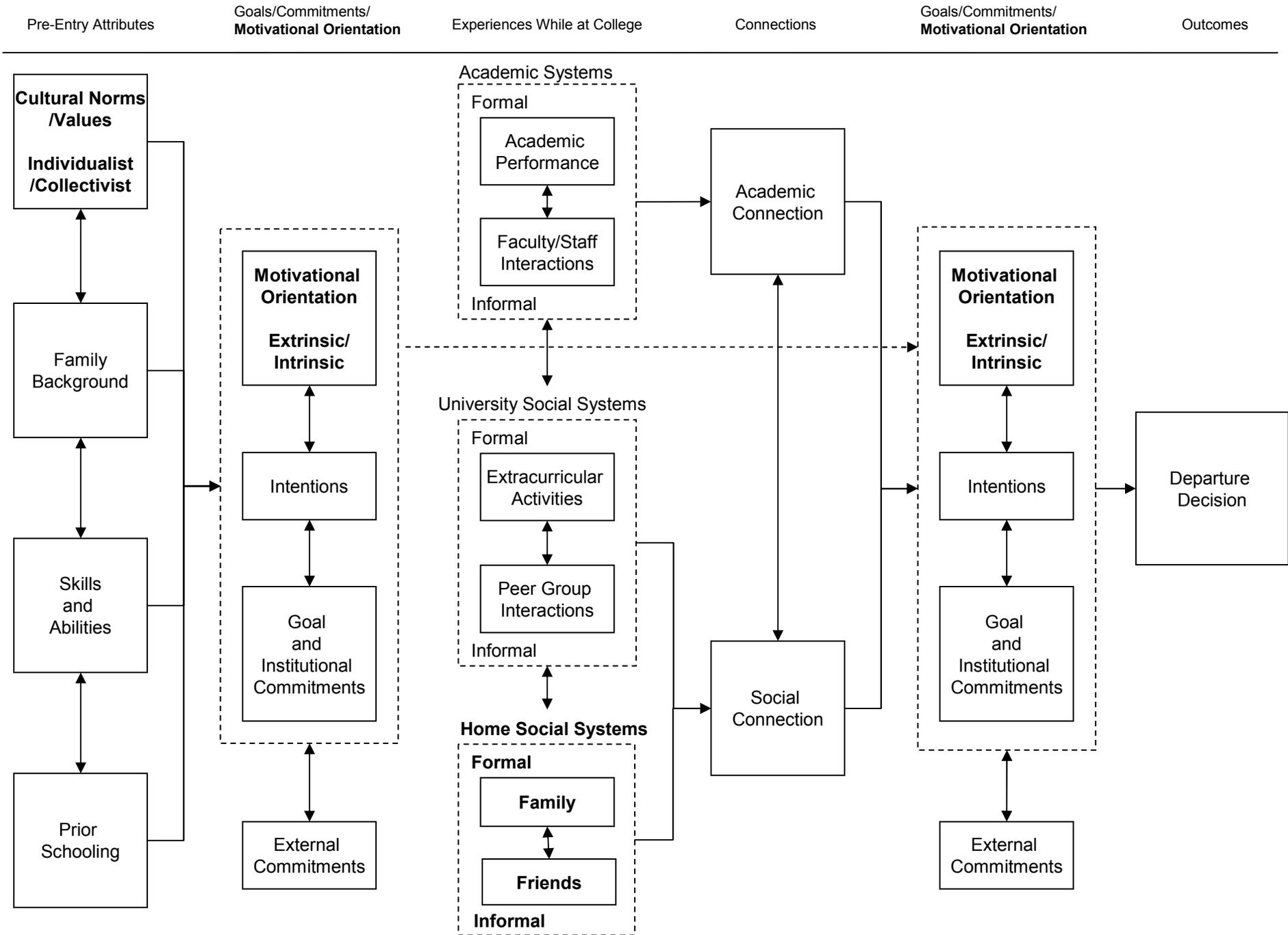
The total population represented here is 42 students. Twenty students participated in the Pathways survey are and represented above the dark line.

| Legend for Pathways Progress Grid | |
|--|---|
| Entry | Year of entry to UIC as a freshman |
| ACT | Composite ACT score |
| PE | Pre enrollment credits earned (e.g., AP credit) |
| Blue cells | Enrollment at UIC; number within the cell denotes class level; 1=Freshman, etc. |
| Green cells | End of Term status is "Good Standing" |
| Yellow cells | End of Term status is "Academic Probation" |
| Red cells | End of Term status is "Academic Drop- Readmit" |
| Salmon cells | Enrollment at another institution with transfer credits applied to UIC transcript |
| Cum GPA | Overall cumulative GPA |

Academic Progress and Origins of the Spring 2009 African American Male Seniors Who Entered UIC as Freshmen

| Entry | ACT | PE | Academic 2003-2004 | | | Academic 2004-2005 | | | Academic 2005-2006 | | | Academic 2006-2007 | | | Academic 2007-2008 | | | Fall 08 | Cum GPA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|----|--------------------|-----|----|--------------------|-----|----|--------------------|-----|----|--------------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|----|---------|---------|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------|---|---|------|------|------|------|
| | | | Fall | Spr | Su | Fall | Spr | Su | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2003 | 19 | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 3.17 | | | |
| 2003 | 20 | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | | | | 3 | | 3 | | | | 4 | | 4 | | | | 4 | | 4 | | 2.38 | | |
| 2004 | 20 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.20 | | |
| 2004 | 20 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.30 | | |
| 2004 | 20 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | Wright | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.47 | |
| 2004 | 21 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 2 | | 2 | | | | Wright | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 3.56 | |
| 2004 | 23 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.51 | |
| 2004 | 24 | 3 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.08 | |
| 2004 | 23 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | Prairie St | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 2.60 | |
| 2004 | 21 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 3.08 | |
| 2005 | 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.13 |
| 2005 | 18 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | Truman | | 1 | | 2 | | 2.74 |
| 2005 | 26 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2.79 | |
| 2005 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2.42 | |
| 2005 | 25 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3.06 | |
| 2005 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3.15 | |
| 2005 | 23 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3.47 | |
| 2005 | 26 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2.81 | |
| 2005 | 27 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 2.70 |
| 2005 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 2 | | 2.49 | |
| 2003 | 24 | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | 2 | | 3 | | | | | | 3 | | | | | 3 | | 4 | | 4 | | 2.45 |
| 2003 | 18 | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.15 |
| 2004 | 25 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 2 | | 2 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | | 2.50 |
| 2004 | 21 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 2.39 |
| 2004 | 18 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 2.34 |
| 2004 | 21 | | CLC | | | | CLC | | 1 | | 1 | | | CLC | | 2 | | 2 | | | | 3 | | 3 | | | 3 | | 4 | | 4 | | 2.06 |
| 2004 | 19 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | Prairie St | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.08 |
| 2004 | 22 | 3 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.74 |
| 2004 | 25 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.45 |
| 2004 | 22 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.61 |
| 2004 | 18 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.00 |
| 2004 | 19 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | | 3 | | 3 | | 4 | | 2.08 |
| 2005 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.40 |
| 2005 | 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | Truman | | 1 | | 2 | | 2.60 |
| 2005 | 20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.63 |
| 2005 | 16 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.67 |
| 2005 | 28 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.56 |
| 2005 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.03 |
| 2005 | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | Prairie St | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.01 |
| 2005 | 30 | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.77 |
| 2005 | 24 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 3.07 |
| 2005 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | | 2.20 |

Appendix B: Guiffrida's Recommendations To Tinto's Model (In Bold)



**Pathways to Success
Student Survey**

Your response in this survey will assist us in learning about the pathways to success for African American male students at UIC who have moved through the academic and social systems and are approaching graduation. Through this study, we hope to better understand the institutional, social and personal facilitators and challenges for students.

There are no wrong or right responses to the questions in this survey. All responses are strictly confidential and no person will be individually identified with responses to any question.

What year did you first enroll at UIC? _____

For each of the school years that you have been a student at UIC, indicate the housing option that best represents your residence. (Mark one option for each year that you have attended UIC)

| | <i>Current Year</i> | <i>2007-08</i> | <i>2006-07</i> | <i>2005-06</i> | <i>2004-05</i> | <i>2003-04</i> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| In a UIC residence hall | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In an apartment or house, within walking distance to campus (not with parents) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In an apartment or house, within driving/commuting distance (not with parents) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| With parents or relatives | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not applicable for this year | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What is the highest level of education earned by each of your parents?

| | <i>Mother</i> | <i>Father</i> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Less than high school graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High school graduate/GED | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some college | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| College graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

How do you meet your college expense? Fill in the response that best approximates the amount of support from each of the various sources.

| | <i>None</i> | <i>Very Little</i> | <i>Less than half</i> | <i>About half</i> | <i>All or nearly all</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Self (job, savings, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parents or other family | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Financial Aid | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loans | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other sources | <input type="checkbox"/> |

When you first enrolled at UIC, indicate how prepared you felt in each of the following areas:

| | <i>Very Prepared</i> | <i>Somewhat prepared</i> | <i>Not Prepared</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| College level Math | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| College level Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| College level Science | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

During the school year, about how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following activities?

| | 0 hours | 1 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 - 15 | 16 - 20 | 21 - 30 | More than 30 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, rehearsing, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity, etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participating in intramural or intercollegiate sports | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Relaxing and socializing (e.g., watching TV, partying) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working on-campus for pay | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working off-campus for pay | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volunteering | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participating in community activities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Religious and spiritual activities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Personal prayer or meditation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online networks (e.g., MySpace, Facebook) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Texting or Instant messaging | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taking care of family members | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Mark the box that best indicates your level of agreement with each statement

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A family member has been important in achieving success at UIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My family is supportive of my education. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My friends from my home community have been important in achieving success at UIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Advisors or mentors from my high school have been important in achieving success at UIC. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My family has high expectations for my success. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A friend(s) at UIC has been important to my success. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A UIC faculty member has been important in my success at UIC. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A UIC staff member (not an instructor) has been important in my success at UIC. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

| | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Attended a study session | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Attended class without completing readings or assignments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Skipped class | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Worked with other students on projects during class | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Talked to instructor outside of class | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Talked about career plans with faculty member or advisor | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age

| | Highest 10% | Above Average | Average | Below Average | Lowest 10% |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Academic Ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Competitiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cooperativeness | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Drive to achieve | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leadership ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mathematical ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Intellectual self confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social self confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spirituality | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Writing ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following. (Mark one response for each row).

| | Extremely Important | Important | Moderately Important | A little Important | Unimportant |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Influencing the political structure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Influencing social values | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Being very well off financially | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Helping others who are in difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Developing a meaningful philosophy of life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participating in a community action program | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Becoming a community leader | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Mark the box that best indicates your level of agreement with each statement

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I am motivated to learn because I want to challenge myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The subjects discussed in my classes motivate me to learn more about the topic. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I work hard to get a good grade even if I don't like the class | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I am motivated to learn to get a well-paying job someday. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I chose my major or field of study primarily based on my ability to get a job upon graduation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Compared to when you first enrolled at UIC, how would you now describe your:

| | Much stronger | Stronger | No change | Weaker | Much weaker |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| General Knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Analytical and problem-solving skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ability to think critically | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leadership ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ability to manage time effectively | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Independence | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Writing ability | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Math skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interpersonal skills | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ability to get along with people of different races/cultures | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Understanding of the problems facing our communities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Understanding of social problems facing our nation | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The next four ratings refer to relations with people at UIC. During your experience at UIC, rate the quality of these relationships on each of the following scales.

Relationships with faculty members

Unsupportive Supportive

Relationships with teaching assistants

Unsupportive; not helpful Supportive; helpful

Relationships with administrative personnel and offices

Unhelpful Helpful

Relationships with other students

Sense of alienation Sense of belonging

During your college career, there are many factors that may help you succeed in college or, on the other hand, challenge your success. Consider the following list of factors below. In the space indicated, list the top 3 positive supports to your college success in order of most important to least important and the second column indicate the 3 greatest challenges to your college success.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Finances B. Financial aid C. Family D. Health E. Pre-college academic preparation F. Social transition from high school G. Challenging academic program H. College or department academic support services I. Campus academic support services J. Faculty K. Administrative staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L. Friends on campus M. College advising N. Tutoring O. On campus job P. Off campus job Q. Co-curricular student organizations/activities R. Off campus commitments S. Campus environment T. Sense of campus community U. Other (Please Specify) _____ |
|--|---|

Top 3 positive supports

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Top 3 challenges to college success

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Satisfaction with UIC

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>Excellent</i> | <i>Good</i> | <i>Fair</i> | <i>Poor</i> |
| Rate your overall educational experience at UIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rate your overall satisfaction with UIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX D: Student Interview Protocol

Pathways code # _____

Pathways to Success Student Interview

Your responses in this interview will assist us in learning about the pathways to success for African American male students at UIC, who have moved through the academic and social systems, and are approaching graduation. Through this study, we hope to better understand the institutional, social and personal facilitators and challenges for students.

There are no wrong or right responses to the interview questions. All responses are strictly confidential. While your participation is important, at any time, if you don't feel comfortable responding to a question, or wish to stop the interview, please feel free to do so. [Provide a written statement regarding consent to each participant.]

We will begin this interview where the survey left off.

- 1, For the survey, you listed your top 3 positive supports to your college success, and the top 3 challenges to your college success.

[Below, list participant's top 3 supports and top 3 challenges before the interview.]

Top 3 Supports _____

Top 3 Challenges _____

Tell me more about the supports.

How were they helpful?

[If appropriate, follow-up with questions that consider who was supportive, and when the support occurred.]

Are any of the supports you named critical for UIC to continue or strengthen?

Tell me more about the challenges.

How were they challenging?

[If appropriate, follow-up with questions that consider who was challenging, and when the challenges occurred.]

How might UIC assist in overcoming challenges?

How did you overcome the challenges?

How did your own sense of drive fit in overcoming the challenges?

2. Tell me about your academic adjustment to UIC.

Specifically in: Math

Writing

Science

Computing

3. Tell me about your out of classroom life as you made the transition to UIC.
4. What was the role of family in your success at UIC?
5. As a UIC student, would you describe yourself as someone who mainly works individually
OR
someone who mainly works with a study partner(s) and/or study groups
6. Tell us about your commitments outside of academics.
Did these commitments affect your academics?
If so, how?
7. Describe the role of UIC faculty or staff in your success.
8. Describe the role of students in your success at UIC.
9. Describe the role of family and friends in your success at UIC.
10. If you were to give advice to an African American male freshman about how to succeed at UIC, what would you say?
11. If you were to give advice to UIC about what could be done differently to help students succeed, what would you say?
Is there something UIC should be sure not to change?

Appendix E: Variable Domains and Definitions

| Variable Domain | Definition |
|--|--|
| I. Individualist-Collectivist | <u>Individualist</u> - values independence, competition, emotional detachment from the in-group, and places personal goals over goals of the group <u>Collectivist</u> - values interdependence, group harmony, emotional attachment with in-group, and subordinates to the goals of the collective |
| II. Family Background | Socio-economic factors (e.g. family finances, educational background) |
| III. Skills and Abilities | Includes ACT scores, AP courses, High School Percentile Rank, academic preparation, self-perception of skills and abilities, self confidence |
| IV. Prior Schooling | High School and other pre-college educational experiences |
| V. Goals Commitments and Motivational Orientation (Intrinsic/Extrinsic) | <u>Intrinsic</u> - values learning because content is interesting or satisfies the need to be effective in interactions with the environment <u>Extrinsic</u> - values learning as a means to an end (e.g. grades, praise, pay) |
| Intentions | Intended academic major and career goals |
| Goals and Institutional Commitments | Stated major, post-graduate and career goals |
| VI. External Commitments | Off campus jobs, clubs, civics, or community, religious, family, and other relationship involvement |
| VII. Academic Systems (Formal) Academic Performance | Grades and perception of academic performance |
| Academic Systems (Informal) Faculty/Staff Interactions | Engagement with faculty, teaching assistants, academic advisors and staff at the college level |
| VIII. University Social Systems (Formal) Extracurricular Activities | Engagement with activities outside of class, but on campus. Includes involvement with student organizations, athletics and on campus jobs |
| University Social Systems (Informal) Peer Group Interactions | Engagement with students on campus; Cultural competency |
| IX. Home Social Systems (Formal) Family | Support from family or challenges from family |
| Home Social Systems (Informal) Friends | Support/challenges from home community friends or other important community members (e.g. religious) |
| | |

Domain definitions developed from Guiffrida, D.A. (2006) Toward a Cultural Advancement of Tinto's Theory.