

PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER BARRIERS AMONG LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY  
STUDENTS AT URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dissertation in Practice

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By

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PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER BARRIERS AMONG LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY  
STUDENTS AT URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER BARRIERS AMONG LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY  
STUDENTS AT URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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This study explored the perception of career barriers among low-income and minority students at Urban Community College by using career barrier inventory revised (CBI-R) instrument. Data analysis showed that students have perceived external career barriers, such as racial discrimination, and internal perceived career barriers, such as, inadequate preparation in their career field and dissatisfy with career they currently have. The results shows that they may have slight internal career barrier of lack of confidence, and external career barriers sex discrimination, multiple-role conflict which means someone who is working as well as taking care of children at home. To help students overcome their career barriers an action plan was designed for intervention, which included workshops, counseling services, and psychoeducation intervention. Assessment and evaluation plan was designed for the effectiveness and improvement of this program.

I dedicate this to my family, friends, teachers, colleagues, students, and all my well-wishers. Above all I dedicate this to all who believe in themselves and continuing their journey to achieve their goals despite the obstacles they face in their life. Thank you for not giving up.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATIONS

CBI-R	Career barrier inventory-revised
DiP	Dissertation in practice
UCC	Urban Community College

## **CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE**

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **Topic**

This study explores the perceptions of career barriers among low-income and minority students at Urban Community College (UCC) using social cognitive theory as a theoretical framework. The data collected will be used to develop a program designed to help students overcome the barriers they perceive in acquiring employment in their field of study.

#### **The Problem of Practice**

The number of college students from poverty-level families is on the rise (Long, 2013; Bidwell, 2019). In 1996, only 12% of overall students lived in poverty; however, the number increased to 20% in 2016. In public two-year institutions undergraduate students living in poverty increased from 13% to 27%, 14% to 25% in less selective four-year institutes, and 23% to 36% in for-profit institutes (Bidwell, 2019). Despite this increase in college access, job insecurity after graduating from college remains an issue that has been a focus of many studies (Begel, 2008; Jun, 2018; Melendez et.al, 2003; Owen, 2001; Pizzolato & Olson, 2016; Philips, 2012; Stewart, 2016). Many students of low socioeconomic status attend college with hopes of getting a better job after graduation to meet their basic needs. Many homeless students, while living in shelters, attend community colleges using government grants for tuition and using government aid for living expenses (AAC&U, 2019). They more likely come from racial and ethnic minority groups and are often academically underprepared. Because of their different socioeconomic, educational, familial, and cultural backgrounds, these students may be

impacted by many factors related to their academic performance, career choices, and possible opportunities they can visualize for themselves (Pulliam et al., 2017). These groups in particular face significant challenges in securing employment in their field of study upon graduation (Smithson & Lewis, 2000). UCC employees need to better understand student perceptions of the barriers they face in order to help them overcome these barriers.

### **Justification of the Problem**

Many homeless students, while living in shelters, attend community colleges using government grants for tuition. They also use government aid for living expenses (AAC&U, 2019). A survey of 86,000 students in 123 different colleges, two-year and four-year, found that 60 percent of students had experienced food insecurities in the past 30 days or housing insecurities including homelessness in the past year, with 70 percent of these students in two-year colleges (AAC&U, 2019). Certain “groups of students faced a higher risk of basic needs insecurity: students at two-year institutions, African Americans, LGBTQ students, students with prior military service, former foster youth, students with prior criminal convictions, and students listed as ‘independent from their parents or guardians for financial aid purposes’” (AAC&U, 2019).

The purpose of this action research study is to examine perceptions of the career barriers that low-income students face at UCC and design a program that helps students overcome their perceived career barriers and increase self-efficacy to secure jobs when they graduate from the community college. Increasing self-efficacy can increase a person’s confidence, thus it can help them overcome their perceived internal career barrier. Literature shows that many individuals face both internal and external career

barriers (Swanson et al. 1996). Examples of internal barriers are self-concept, motivation, or fear of failure, and external barriers are discrimination, stereotypes, or low wage (Swanson et al. 1996). Students who used the UCC campus food pantry services and other college students would be encouraged to participate in this program. I will collaborate with the career services department at UCC to implement this program.

### **Deficiencies in the Organizational Knowledge Record**

UCC currently does not publicly provide data regarding the percentage of graduates who either started a job related to the field in which they received their degree or how many students were accepted to a four-year program at another college. As an adjunct associate professor, I do not have access to student data. The career services department of UCC provides workshops and courses to students interested in using these services. Career services provides individual career counseling, group counseling sessions, free vocational testing and interpretation, and courses. These programs may help students to acquire some soft skills to overcome some of the career barrier they perceive related to preparation for applying for employment. However, they do not provide any education or training to students on how to overcome perceived career barriers that are more likely to be psychological in nature. Such as, these external barriers related to gender, race, ethnicity, barriers for women with family as well as internal career barriers, such as, low self-esteem. These may need psychological counseling services, or mentorship to overcome.

### **Audience**

Students of the college—particularly low income and minority students using the campus food pantry—are the main stakeholders; therefore, helping them achieve their

career goals is the main objective. The program designed in this action research will not only benefit the students but will also benefit the career services of this college and other colleges nationwide. The success of this program will benefit students by equipping them with skills to acquire jobs that will allow them to move out of poverty and live on their own income, thereby reducing the economic burden on the community.

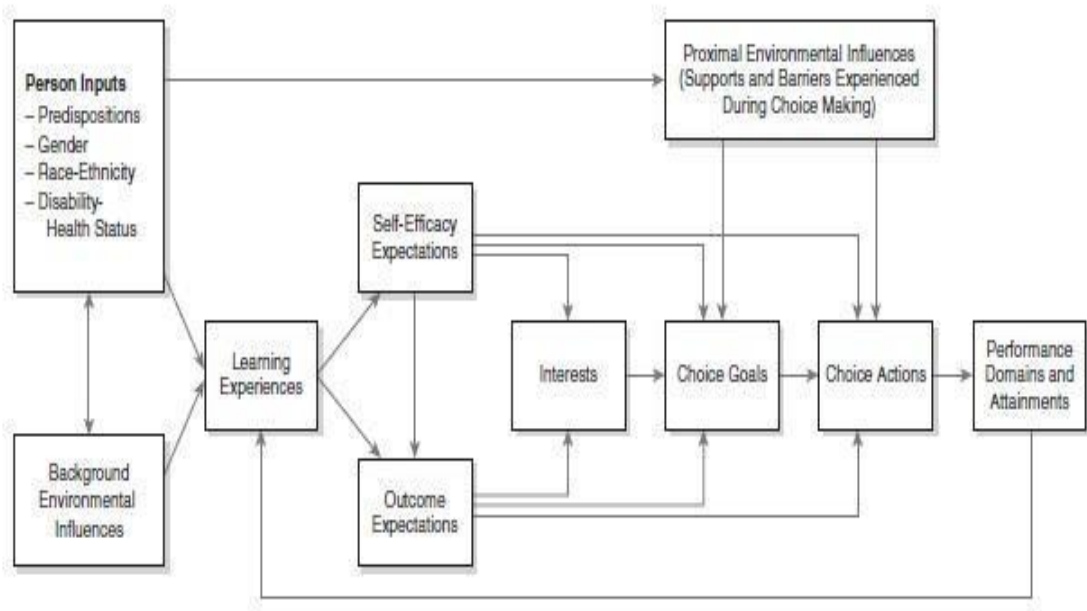
### **Overview of Theoretical Framework/Methods/Research Questions**

I used social cognitive career theory as the framework for this research because this helped explain the self-perception and career choice behaviors, and helped understand the internal and external barriers of individuals. Social cognitive career theory has been applied to understand the career related barriers (Lent et.al, 1994; Swanson et al., 1996). Lent et.al (1994) formulated social cognitive career theory from Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which was derived to understand basic career development processes. Social cognitive career theory framework outlines three aspects of career development interrelated to each other which are "(a) career and academic interest develop, (b) career-relevant choices are forged and enacted, and (c) performance outcomes are achieved" (Lent et al, 1994, p. 80). Self-efficacy beliefs, expectation of outcomes, and goals are three intricately related variables which serve as a fundamental of social cognitive career theory (Lent, 1994). The model designed by Lent et al (1994), (see figure 1), shows that self-efficacy of an individual is influenced by their environment they grew up in and are living in. Based on their self-efficacy, they build their career interest, which then proceeds to make career choices goals and career choice actions. These career choices and interests are influenced by their environment, as students may receive support or experience barriers at this point. The next path is the performance



domain and the attainment. This path is where individuals experience either success or failure, which then results in revision of their self-efficacy and outcome expectation. As figure 1 indicates this is a continuous cycle which individuals experience during their adolescence or early adulthood, or until their work or career is stabilized. However, an individual may go over this again when there are changes in their life, such as, career change, job lay off, accident, birth of a child, or technological innovations (Lent et al, 1994). Self-efficacy and outcome expectation change over time as an individual's knowledge and experience change (Wang et al., 2022). Traditional theories only used personal traits to match them with a career; however, they ignored the person's environmental influence. Social cognitive career theory puts emphasis on an individual's environmental changes and influences on their personality, and recognizes that career choice may change as time changes (Want et al., 2022).

**Figure 1:** Model shows how basic career interest according to social cognitive career theory develop over time (Lent, 1994; Psychology, 2023)



By employing social cognitive theory, the questions I seek to explore are:

1. What career barriers do students with low socioeconomic status perceive that they face in securing meaningful employment after graduation?
2. Do perceptions of career barriers differ among current students and alumni?

These questions will be addressed by conducting a survey of current students and alumni who use food pantry services at UCC. The survey will include a modified version of the perceived career barriers inventory revised (CBI-R) (Swanson et al., 1996). Once perceived career barriers are determined from the survey, then intervention is designed to overcome these perceived career barriers by increasing students' self-efficacy to help them achieve their career goals.

### **Limitations**

The most significant limitation of this study is that only guests who use the campus food pantry services are included in this research because this was a convenience sample to survey students and alumni of low socioeconomic status. A convenience sampling studies may not be generalized, such as, these perceived career barriers may not apply to other college students of UCC or other colleges and universities. My research is about perceived career barriers in students of low socioeconomic status, and the majority of these students at UCC use the pantry services. Some of the guests of the college pantry are also UCC alumni, who still use the pantry services. Since the college pantry is a separate entity, it was easier for me to get permission to carry out this research. Though this was a convenience sample, there was a heterogeneity in this sample as there is diversity in this sample, which included students of different ethnicity, gender, and their

current job status and household income may vary. To make it more generalized a large-scale survey from different colleges would be beneficial in future studies.

Second limitation of this study is that it was only done using survey questions. In the future, direct observation and student interviews may be conducted to further understand the barriers students of low socioeconomic status face when searching for jobs after graduation.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This literature review will provide information on career barriers among students of low socioeconomic status, who attend colleges expecting to secure a reasonable job after graduation to overcome insecurities and meet their basic needs. The first section of this literature review will provide information on poverty level in the United States, negative effects of poverty on people, and the relationship between low levels of education and poverty. The second section will provide information on underemployment or unemployment after graduation.

#### **Correlation Between Low Level of Education and Poverty**

In the United States, as of 2018, the official poverty rates for children under age 18, adults aged 18-64, and adults aged 65 and above are 16.2%, 10.7%, and 9.7% respectively (Census, 2020). Nearly 50 million people are below the poverty level (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). Living in poverty has many negative outcomes, such as lower levels of academic achievement, lower career and educational aspirations, negative self-concept, and slowed emotional development (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). Other negative aspects of living in poverty are enduring physical stressors, low quality housing, high traffic density, high rates of crime, fear of safety, coping with anxiety, social disorders,

and living with depression (Cutrona, et al. 2006). Research shows that poverty should not be considered as a demographic description but should be considered as a context of development (Philips, 2012). People living in persistent poverty and on welfare are often profoundly impacted by negative stereotypes or the stigma of being poor, which impacts their identity development (Philips, 2012). Banker et al. (2018) proposed that poverty identity is a crucially important identity which someone who is financially insecure might possess. When someone views themselves as impoverished, then this harms their self-efficacy which can prevent them from achieving positive outcome in the future. The consequence of having a poverty identity is that person will lose their willingness to compete, which is important in management practices, competing for promotion, applying for college or graduate schools to compete for jobs (Banker et al., 2018).

Young adults with a low level of education due to poverty tend to become parents while they are unmarried and in romantic relationships which often end after the birth of a child. Thus, children are then born into poverty (Lawrence, 2018). People with lower education experience employment challenges, such as, getting low-wage employment, which limits their ability to earn their way out of poverty (Lawrence, 2018). According to Pizzolato & Olson (2016), “Educational institutions play key roles in policies designed either to decrease the experience of poverty (e.g., free or reduced breakfast and lunch programs in k-12 schools), or to decrease poverty (e.g., adult education, job training)” (p. 572). Research shows that higher levels of education correlate with higher incomes (Bradbury, 2015). The income of families with higher education is three times more than the income of families with lower levels of education (Bradbury, 2015). Some studies have linked parental and children’s education, so programs have been developed to

provide education to both generations (Sommer, 2018). Many parents attend community colleges to start their education or to earn certificates to get jobs (Sommer, 2018). Quality education develops a person's social, emotional and cognitive skills (Seervas, 2008). According to UNESCO (Seervas, 2008) quality education can cut poverty in half worldwide by learning knowledge and skills.

### **Below Poverty Level Students Attend Community Colleges to Secure Jobs**

Community Colleges in the United States of America provide hope and opportunities to people born in poverty or to people with sudden loss of income (Williams & Nourie, 2018). Community colleges provide students with the support they need to get higher education and enhanced skill required to get employment (Williams & Nourie, 2018). Some community colleges provide state welfare-to-work programs, such as reduced fees or financial assistance to students especially women, provide childcare, as well as provide counseling and guidance on which career path to choose (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). The majority of community college students cannot afford to attend public four-year institutions or private colleges, and it may seem a long-time commitment for them if they are living on welfare (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). The majority of parents attending community colleges have young children, and about 15% of these parents are single parents (Sommer, 2018). Community colleges must help students overcome the stereotype of being poor, help them identify their goals and how to achieve them, and help them gain skills and confidence to use their credentials earned by acquiring a college education to secure a reasonable job after graduation (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016).

## **Skills and Experience as Barriers to Employment**

Toyokawa & DeWald (2019) discussed career barriers faced by first generation students compared to non-first generation students who have at least one parent with some college education or a bachelor's degree. First generation college students perceived external career barriers such as, lack of support from their families, faculty and mentors, unwelcoming environment of the campus, lack of financial and social support, and lack of knowledge and skills for networking to get job opportunities. All of these external career barriers affect the internal career barrier of these students, such as, low confidence and lack of abilities (Toyokawa & DeWald, 2019). According to Urbanaviciute (2016) internal perceived career barriers have more negative effects on students compared to external perceived career barriers. These studies indicate the importance of developing programming at higher education institutions that support students in navigating the barriers they face in transitioning to employment opportunities. Much of the research examining why college graduates do not find jobs in their field and are often underemployed, work for low-wage positions, work part-time, or are unemployed emphasizes the role of hard and soft skills in securing employment (Abel, 2016). Graduates with a bachelor's degree are often underemployed, as they find jobs that do not require a four-year degree (Abel, 2016). An analysis conducted on two decades of data by Abel (2016) revealed that unemployment rates among recent graduates has been on the rise since the Great Recession of 2007-2009; however, the underemployment or unemployment rates were similar to recent graduates of 2013 compared to the graduates of the 1990s. This is because it takes time for recent graduates to transition into the labor market (Abel, 2016). The unemployment rate of recent graduates in January 2016 was

about 4%, and in September of 2020, the unemployment rate of college graduates increased to 13.3%, however, it reduced to 4.1% by December 2022 (Statista, 2023)

Recent studies show that college graduates are often confident about their soft and hard skills when they graduate from colleges; however, employers usually have different perspectives and find that the skills of new graduates fall short of their expectations (Stewart, 2016). Soft skills are the interpersonal skills such as personality, attitudes, communication, and ability to work with others while hard skills are “technical, tangible, measurable competencies” (Stewart, 2016, p. 276). Soft skills are difficult to measure, and they are learned from work experience rather than from classroom lectures or reading books (Stewart, 2016). Hard skills are negotiable with some employers and job duties as they can be learned at work. What employers look mostly at are soft skills, which shows how a person would behave at the workplace, and if they are compatible in global market. When choosing between two equally qualified candidates, employers select ones with most soft skills (Deepa & Seth, 2013; Stewart, 2016). Studies conducted on eight new software design program graduates who were hired by Microsoft Corporation found that these new hires showed poor performances when their soft skills were observed (Begel, 2008). Employers preferred recent graduates with cooperative education experiences as these students graduated with some work experience in their field (Owen, 2001).

Living and growing up in socially and economically disadvantaged area affect their social skills (Wadsworth, et al., 2018). Children growing up in the context of poverty are exposed to numerous stressors, such as family conflict and turmoil, changes in family composition, and violence in their homes and communities (Wadsworth, et al.,

2018, p. 1023). Their life experience can affect their soft skills, which are working in teams, and collaborating with others. United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Financial Markets International (FMI), Global Economic Education Alliance (GEEA), Indonesian Council on Economics and Financial Education (ICEFE) are all working towards developing programs to increasing soft skills in students of low socioeconomic status along with technical skills to fight poverty (Lopus, et al., 2018).

### **Issues with Successfully Providing Career Services to Community College Students**

It takes 30% of first-time, full-time students three years to earn a certificate or associate degree from a two-year college, and the graduation rate is lower for minority, economically disadvantaged, and non-traditional students (Aud et al., 2012; Karp, 2013). One of the reasons for taking a long time to graduate is taking remedial courses. Majority of students in remedial courses are Black and Hispanic, and students who are of low socioeconomic status (Hanford, 2016). Guidance counseling and advising is done for students to take classes or make career choices; however, in community colleges students usually see different advisors each semester/each time they register compared to a traditional four-year college, where students are assigned an advisor for their entire program (Karp, 2013). The majority of students do not understand most of the information given to them, and it is rather confusing to them instead of helpful (Karp et al., 2008; Nodine et al., 2012; Karp, 2013). Students must be given a proper advisement to understand how they can proceed with their career advancement (Karp, 2013).

Students are given choices of degree programs at community college, which can be general or broad in making career choices; however, students are unsure as to how



they can use their program and what is expected of them to enter the job market. This includes limited knowledge of what jobs they will be qualified for or whether the employment outlook in a particular field aligns with their personal goals (Grubb, 2006; Karp, 2013). Academic advising activities in colleges are mostly focused on academic planning. Other services such as career services are optional to students and are provided by departments other than Academic Advisement (Venezia et al., 2010). One of the challenges faced by career services in community colleges is the resource available to them. Most community colleges career services department are understaffed, and advisors are over worked (Moore, 2019-2020). Second challenge the career services department at community colleges face is providing services to diverse population of students attending colleges for different purposes, such as, taking English as a second language courses, taking courses to enhance their basic knowledge, transferring to a four-year program, taking recreational courses, or enrolled in vocational/job trainings (Moore, 2019-2020). An academic advisor may have a better idea of student's goals; therefore, advisement for academic goals and career goals would work best when given together (Karp, 2013; Moore, 2019-2020). Academic advisements provide guidance to students to acquire hard skills by taking certain courses. Career services should help students gain soft skill by providing them recourses and trainings. Career services can also help students find volunteer positions and internship related to their career field so they can gain hard skills as well as soft skills.

Perceived career barriers in recent college graduate students, especially ones of low socioeconomic status, are due to internal and external career barriers which can be measured by using the career barriers inventory revised questionnaire. Individuals'

perceptions may change at different points of their lives, such as individual perceptions of career barriers when they are students compared to when they have graduated and are looking for a job.

## **Action Research Design and Methods**

### **Setting**

This study included both recent graduates and current students attending UCC who use the campus food pantry. UCC is a member of the state higher education system and opened in 1960. It is one of the largest single-campus community colleges and spans 225 acres.

UCC currently supports enrollment of up to 30,000 students combining degree, non-degree, and continuing education courses. The average age of students is 27 years old with students over this age making up about one quarter of the student body. UCC is also one of the lowest cost community colleges in the state (CollegeCalc, 2020). The tuition rate for the academic year 2020-2021 is \$242 per credit and \$2900 for 12 or more credits (excluding other college or course specific fees). Student demographics shows that there are 48.5% female and 51.5% male; 33.3% of students are White, 31.1% students are Hispanic, 20.7% of students are Black, and 7.3% of students are Asian.

### **The College Food Pantry**

The food pantry at UCC has been in service since September 2015. It provides food to students, employees, alumni, and retirees without asking questions or making decisions based on their family income. It serves on an average family of 4.5 members. The food pantry is currently looking to extend other services, such as assisting guests

with finding reasonable employment. The target population for this study includes students who benefit from the food pantry.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were current college students and alumni who were still using the campus pantry services. A flyer with a link to a consent form and survey was given to all guests who came to the pantry for shopping. The survey included demographic questions for guests to indicate if they are current students or are alumni along with other relevant demographic information, such as, age, sex, race, and socioeconomic status, and current job status.

### **Methods**

#### **Data Collection**

This study was done using a quantitative method which included questionnaires. Students using the campus pantry services were selected to participate.

#### ***Questionnaire***

The career barriers inventory revised version was used with an addition of questions regarding student demographics (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of 70 questions with the Likert scale (see Appendix B) that scores on 13 different scales (see table 1) (Swanson et al., 1996).

**Table 1: 13 scales of CBI-R and their description**

	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Items scored</b>
1	The sex discrimination	Seven items for external barriers related to different pay scale was workplace discrimination between male and female employees, workplace climate
2	The lack of confidence	Four items for internal barriers related to confidence and self-esteem
3	The multiple-role conflict	Eight items of external barriers related to focusing on barriers in personal life interfering with work responsibilities
4	The conflict between children and career demand	Seven items reflecting barriers related to work and child-rearing responsibilities
5	The racial discrimination	Six items to reflect barriers which reflect racial discrimination with pay and promotion
6	The inadequate preparation	Five items that focus on internal barriers of not being prepared for work duties
7	The disapproval by significant others	Three items to reflect barriers placed by significant others and family member disapproving career choice
8	The decision-making difficulties	Eight items to reflect barriers of one's own indecisiveness
9	The dissatisfaction with career	Five items reflecting barriers of oneself being disappointed or bored with their career choice
10	The discouragement from choosing non-traditional careers	Five items reflecting barriers that score negative opinions of peers, or significant others for choosing non-traditional career
11	The disability/health concern	Three items focus on barriers that create career limitation due to disability
12	The job market constraints	Four items reflecting external barriers of tight job market
13	The difficulties with networking/socialization	Five items reflecting barriers created by issues related to networking and socialization.

## **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using SPSS to get descriptive statistics; mean of each scales were used to analyze perceived career barriers. Independent T-Test was performed to analyze perceived career barriers between alumni and current students, and between male and female students.

## **Researcher's Role**

I am an Adjunct Associate Professor at UCC, and Executive board member as well as Pantry Staff Coordinator at the UCC food pantry. My role at the food pantry gives me access to data of guests using the services. This data will give me access to contact current students and student alumni who used the food pantry services.

## **Ethical and Political Consideration**

Participants' data was anonymous, and names and other identifying factors of participants were not shared with anyone else. Anonymous data was collected through a survey and was used for statistical analysis. Participants clearly knew what this research was about and why I was doing this research. Everything was shared with them in the informed consent form.

## **Trustworthiness**

### ***Informed Consent***

A flier was created with informed consent and contained an invitation for students to participate in this research. Participants were asked to scan a QR code on the flier. The QR code contained the link to a survey on Qualtrics. The informed consent contained the information about the survey, and reason for this research. It also contained the contact information of the IRB committee at University of Dayton, mine and my DiP chair's

email address and my cell phone number. All participants completed an informed consent and answered yes or no for understanding what research was about before starting the survey, which will describe the purpose of the research and how the data will be used.

### ***Anonymity***

This data was protected so no one has the students' information. Students were given the option to complete this survey anonymously. Students could opt to not enter any information that they are not comfortable with. It was explained to participants that their information was not given to anyone else or used in the publication with their names.

### **Credibility**

#### ***Validity and Reliability of CBI-R***

Career Barrier Inventory (CBI) has been revised four times to create a reliable psychometric analysis tool. It was initially created with 112 items using a 7-point Likert-type scale, and it consisted of 18 scales (Swanson et al., 1996). Internal reliability was tested for each scale. It was later reduced to 84 items with 16 scales to shorten the lengthy version of CBI; hence it was named CBI-S (Swanson et al., 1996). It was then further evaluated to add and remove items and scales. The current version CBI-Revised (CBI-R) consists of 70 items scored on 13 scales. The development of CBI thus had the goal of achieving internal consistency reliability (see table 2) (Swanson et al., 1996). These scales were validated by getting similar results from other studies. The original instrument items "were evaluated in terms of their convergent validity (i.e., item-scale correlation) and discriminant validity (i.e., the difference between an item's correlation

with its assigned scale and its correlation with other scales)” (Swanson & Tokar, 1991, p. 350). Items had highest correlations to which they were assigned, and mediated to low correlations with items of other scales (Swanson & Tokar, 1991).

**Table 2:** *The snap shot of the original table showing the characteristics of CBI-R and alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is the internal consistency reliability (Swanson et al. 1996).*

Scale	No. of Items	$\alpha^a$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlation between versions <sup>b</sup>
Sex Discrimination	7	.86	4.33	1.29	.96
Lack of Confidence	4	.77	4.02	1.34	.93
Multiple-Role Conflict	8	.78	4.20	1.02	.95
Conflict between Children and Career Demands	7	.75	3.67	1.03	.97
Racial Discrimination	6	.84	4.41	1.35	.84
Inadequate Preparation	5	.85	4.36	1.33	.72
Disapproval by Significant Others	3	.64	3.04	1.31	1.00
Decision-Making Difficulties	8	.83	4.25	1.15	.83
Dissatisfaction with Career	5	.79	4.49	1.22	.91
Discouraged from Choosing Nontraditional Careers	5	.75	3.03	1.16	.88
Disability/Health Concerns	3	.76	4.23	1.51	.95
Job Market Constraints	4	.68	4.38	1.18	(new scale)
Difficulties with Networking/Socialization	5	.64	4.37	1.06	(new scale)

<sup>a</sup>Means, standard deviations, and alpha coefficients were derived from a sample of 100 college students (Swanson & Daniels, 1995a). <sup>b</sup>Correlations were derived from the pooled data set ( $n = 1637$ ).

### Transferability

This research mainly focuses on community college students; however, findings of this action research are transferable to the career services department of all

community colleges in the United States, as well as other higher education institutions if their students are struggling with similar issues. Colleges can also use this information to help all students regardless of their gender, race, and ethnicity. Career services of the colleges can make their services better by giving students feedback and also informing students about how to prepare for each interview (please see conclusion on page 16 for a few suggestions)



## CHAPTER TWO: RESULTS OF RESEARCH

### **Results of Research from Chapter One Study Proposal**

This section will show the results and discussion of the results obtained from the CBI-R survey given to the pantry guests by using SPSS 28. A total of 56 guests were given the invitation flier which contained the informed consent form and a QR code which would direct guests to the Qualtrics survey. A total of 31 (55.35%) responses were received, and 23 responses were rejected due to incomplete survey, which gave me a response rate of 14.28%. There were 33.3% former students (alumni of UCC) and 66.7% current students, 22.2% male, and 88.8% female participant. The minimum yearly income reported was between 19,999, and the average income of all participants was \$61,110 (see Table 3). Survey results were organized by grouping items of each scale. The descriptive analysis showed the mean of 4.13 (somewhat hinder) for racial discrimination, mean of 3.88 for dissatisfied with career, and mean of 3.63 for inadequate preparation. There was also a mean of 3.75 for difficulty with networking/socializing but I am not using it because the Cronbach's alpha is less than 70. Descriptions of all scales and items contained in each scale with Cronbach's alpha were presented earlier in Chapter 1. Three scales were not considered for results analysis because the Cronbach's alpha was <0.70; these scales are disapproval of significant other, job market constraint, and difficulty with networking/socializing. The mean of scales lack of confidence, multiple-role conflict, decision making difficulties have a mean of between 3.0 to 3.5, which show there is slight to no hinderance. Scales conflict between children and career, discourage for choosing careers, disability/health concern had mean less than 3.0, showing no hinderance.

**Table 3:***Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Career Barriers*

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Household Income	8	\$80,000	\$19,999	\$99,999	\$49,999.00	\$25,634.798	657142857
Sex Discrimination	8	2	2	4	3.38	.916	.839
Lack of Confidence	8	2	2	4	3.13	.991	.982
Multiple-role Conflict	8	2	2	4	3.38	.744	.554
Conflict Between Children and Career	8	3	1	4	2.88	1.126	1.268
Racial Discrimination	8	5	1	6	4.13	1.553	2.411
Inadequate Preparation	8	3	2	5	3.63	1.408	1.982
Family Disapproval	8	4	1	5	2.38	1.598	2.554
Decision-making Difficulty	8	4	2	6	3.50	1.309	1.714
Dissatisfy with Career	8	5	2	7	3.88	1.642	2.696
Discourage for Chosing Careers	8	4	1	5	2.75	1.669	2.786
Disability/Health Concern	8	3	1	4	1.75	1.035	1.071
Job Market Constraint	8	4	1	5	3.38	1.188	1.411
Difficulty Networking	8	3	2	5	3.75	1.035	1.071
Valid N (listwise)	8						

Independent t-test analysis was done using demographic information to compare if there is any significant difference in perceived career barriers. Independent T-test for all scales of perceived career barriers between current students and alumni did not show significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) (see table 4). Independent one-sided P T-test between male and female ( $p < 0.05$ ) showed that there was a significant difference between male and female in the multiple-role conflict perceived career barrier (see table 5).

**Table 4***Independent Samples Test to Analyze Perceived Career Barriers Between Alumni and Current Students*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Significance	
		F	Sig.			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Sex Discrimination	Equal variances assumed	9.858	.016	1.012	7	.173	.345
	Equal variances not assumed			1.309	6.995	.116	.232
Lack of Confidence	Equal variances assumed	2.625	.149	.189	7	.428	.855
	Equal variances not assumed			.210	5.406	.421	.841
Multiple-role Conflict	Equal variances assumed	.117	.743	-.210	7	.420	.840
	Equal variances not assumed			-.222	4.775	.417	.833
Conflict Between Children and Career	Equal variances assumed	1.750	.227	.552	7	.299	.598
	Equal variances not assumed			.620	5.588	.280	.560
Racial Discrimination	Equal variances assumed	.732	.421	1.064	7	.161	.323
	Equal variances not assumed			1.145	4.977	.152	.304
Inadequate Preparation	Equal variances assumed	.922	.369	.424	7	.342	.685
	Equal variances not assumed			.443	4.606	.339	.678
Decision-making Difficulty	Equal variances assumed	2.046	.196	.611	7	.280	.561
	Equal variances not assumed			.830	6.586	.218	.435
Dissatisfy with Career	Equal variances assumed	1.216	.307	-.245	7	.407	.814
	Equal variances not assumed			-.302	6.798	.386	.772
Discourage for Chosing Careers	Equal variances assumed	.050	.830	.540	7	.303	.606
	Equal variances not assumed			.542	4.135	.308	.616
Disability/Health Concern	Equal variances assumed	1.037	.342	.000	7	.500	1.000
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	6.975	.500	1.000

**Table 5***Independent Samples Test to Analyze Perceived Career Barriers between Male and Female Students*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Significance	
		F	Sig.			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Sex Discrimination	Equal variances assumed	6.663	.036	-.823	7	.219	.438
	Equal variances not assumed			-.509	1.118	.346	.693
Lack of Confidence	Equal variances assumed	5.250	.056	-.509	7	.313	.626
	Equal variances not assumed			-.323	1.130	.398	.796
Multiple-role Conflict	Equal variances assumed	1.798	.222	-1.972	7	.045	.089
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.369	1.183	.187	.375
Conflict Between Children and Career	Equal variances assumed	.486	.508	-1.698	7	.067	.133
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.260	2.830	.057	.114
Racial Discrimination	Equal variances assumed	1.167	.316	-.674	7	.261	.522
	Equal variances not assumed			-.478	1.198	.353	.705
Inadequate Preparation	Equal variances assumed	5.374	.054	-.319	7	.380	.759
	Equal variances not assumed			-.207	1.143	.433	.867
Decision-making Difficulty	Equal variances assumed	31.457	<.001	.283	7	.393	.785
	Equal variances not assumed			.142	1.037	.455	.910
Dissatisfy with Career	Equal variances assumed	29.940	<.001	.372	7	.361	.721
	Equal variances not assumed			.189	1.041	.440	.880
Discourage for Chosing Careers	Equal variances assumed	1.857	.215	.405	7	.349	.698
	Equal variances not assumed			.275	1.169	.412	.824
Disability/Health Concern	Equal variances assumed	1.909	.210	-1.080	7	.158	.316
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.121	6.000	.039	.078

## **Action Plan**

The data analysis for the CBI-R survey shows that students have perceived external career barriers, such as racial discrimination, and internal perceived career barriers, such as, inadequate preparation in their career field and dissatisfy with career they currently have. The results shows that they may have slight internal career barrier of lack of confidence, and external career barriers sex discrimination, multiple-role conflict which means someone who is working as well as taking care of children at home. From the literature review it was understood that college can help students overcome some of these barriers by providing effective academic and career advice. The result show that students do have internal perceived career barrier of inadequate preparation and dissatisfaction with career choice. Career advisor should give career advice to new students and collaborate with the academic advisor so students can choose their academic program. These advisors should save student files with notes so even if they are busy during the advisement period, they can quickly review student cases. Students should see the same academic and career advisors every semester, so they can keep up with their progress and discuss any career related issues or concerns they may have.

The data analysis shows that there are perceived career barriers in students of low socioeconomic status, who are currently using the pantry services at UCC. The data showed that there was not any significant difference in perceived career barriers of alumni and current students. This means both current students and alumni have similar perceived career barriers. My reason for comparison was to rule out the assumption that when students are in college, they may not realize their career barriers until they graduate and begin looking for jobs.

My first objective for my action plan is to create a counseling program for the intervention, which would help students to overcome their perceived career barriers. In order to create this counseling program, I have to make arrangements with career services and psychological counselors in my college, who can help these students. All students get free counseling services in college, so I do not have to request funds. This program will encourage students participating in my action research program to attend a minimum of 4 counseling sessions. All counselors have their own offices in Urban Community College, so I do not have to request for a room for individual counseling. This will give students options to receive counseling services in private and convenient spaces. An option for group counseling will also be provided so students can form support groups. I will have to request a room from the college to organize group counseling. I have to make sure these counselors are aware of perceived career barriers the students are experiencing. Counselors can help students overcome their internal career barriers, such as being discouraged from choosing the career, how to handle situations where they feel they have been discriminated against, or they feel their family disapproves of their career choice. I will also work with directors of the career services and psychological counseling services to encourage their counselors to attend career development programs which can help them understand perceived career barriers. All college employees are part of the union, which provides grants and funds to attend conferences or career development programs. For this, I will have to make arrangements for funds either through the union or the college. This program will start in September 2023. All counselors must complete any training they may need during the Summer of 2023. This will be a continuous program, so there is no end date for it.

My second objective is to provide workshops to students, which can help them recognize their perceived career barriers and help them overcome these barriers. In order to provide workshops, I will have to request for volunteers who can come and give talks. UCC has about 3500 faculty including both full-time and adjunct. Faculty may have extensive experience and wide networks, so a request to faculty will be sent to support student workshops, and provide any help or guidance they can. UCC requires full-time faculty to provide services to community college. A letter, thank you note, or certificate of participation is given to faculty for their files, which they use for their promotions. This service will be an excellent opportunity for faculty to provide services to students and get a thank you letter to add it to their files for promotion review.

My plan for these workshops would be to have someone come and talk to students and share their career experiences. Someone who can share their own perceived career barriers and how they overcame these barriers. A book reading session will be beneficial in which students and faculty can choose an autobiography which can inspire students. Some of the workshops or seminars will also focus on build self-confidence, tips for effective networking, and tips to get adequate preparation in their career field. These workshops can be used as group counseling sessions as part of the first objective. For these workshops I will request a room from the college. This will also begin from September 2023, and there is no end date as it will be an ongoing program. Initially I will not need any funds, but I am planning to request for funds one year after the start of this program if I need to invite a paid guest. My reason for requesting in the second year is because I will have to provide some data to the college showing improvement in students' self-efficacy from these workshops. This data will be derived from the

evaluation and assessment of this program. I am planning to do the evaluation and assessment at the end of each academic semester. I will also use Career Talent Development Self-Efficacy Scale (CTD-SES) to evaluate students participating in an action research project.

### **Resource Development Project**

The resource development project helped me find some resources and methods for my action research. I am using Career Barrier Inventory-Revised (CBI-R) developed by Swanson, et al. (1996) to analyze perceived career barrier in racial minority and economically disadvantaged students participating in my study. I was not aware of the Career and Talent Development Self-Efficacy Scale (CTD-SES) developed by Yuen et al. (2010), which I will now use in my action research project. I was not aware of the importance of self-efficacy prior to the resource development project. It seems this is an extremely important ingredient to help students overcome their perceived career barriers. Self-efficacy can be increased by providing interventions, such as workshops, career development courses, internships, and counseling. According to data analysis, students believed they were not prepared to enter the job market. I can now use the CTD-SES tool to evaluate if my action research projects are successful or if they need improvements.

In my action research, I plan to provide career counseling to students as an intervention, which seems to be successful in studies done by Whiston et al. (2017) and by Brown & Ryan (2000). These studies are discussed in my resource development projects. The study done by Evans & Booth (2019) made me realize that it is important for me to make sure career counselors are well educated and aware of perceived career barriers experienced by students in our college. There are different types of counseling



services discussed by Brown & Ryan (2000), and Evans & Booth (2019), which are career counseling, counseling support, counselor dialog, and psychoeducation intervention. I learned about psychoeducation interventions during my resource development project. It first sounded extreme as it was to be used for psychological disability; however, further study showed that this is a type of counseling that helps students/clients who have experienced some of these perceived career barriers, and they may have some type of anxieties. The data analysis of the CBI-R showed that students needed help to be prepared to work in their desired career, and there was a correlation with inadequate preparation and self-confidence. Psychoeducation interventions were provided to individuals to attain their goals via counselors, computers, or some educational program (Brown & Ryan, 2000). From my resource development project, I also learned that it is important to have at least 4-5 counseling sessions to see some improvements (Brown & Ryan, 2000). This will also help me to limit the number of counseling session students participating in my action research must attend. I will also have to make sure that my counselors are aware of this, so they too make sure students are encouraged to attend a minimum of 4 sessions and attend even more if they do not see any improvements. By improvements, I mean that students feel confident enough to know how to overcome their perceived career barriers by either getting more confidence in themselves or figuring out how to get more training or find more resources to increase their self-efficacy.

Finally, I learned from my resource development project that intervention given to students prior to the start of college did not help them overcome their perceived career barriers (Pulliam, et al., 2017). I believe this is probably because they still have not

learned anything that would prepare them for the jobs they are planning to get after graduation. This type of intervention would be helpful for students prior to their graduation because by then they have completed their required coursework in their field, and they have gained knowledge of the field they are interested in; for instance, nursing major students may not feel confident applying to nursing jobs before they start their nursing program. A study done by Hashish (2019) showed improvement in nursing students' self-efficacy when they were given additional career development courses and training.

## CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/INTERVENTION/CHANGE PROCESS

### **Description of the Program and Evaluation**

#### ***Evaluation framework***

This evaluation will be an embedded evaluation, so it can be continuously improved to better fit students' needs (Udayton, 2021). This program will evaluate the current program in practice by the career services, and then it will be further improved by using evaluations and assessment methods. First is the planning step, where the goals are set for this program, and then using the logic models we will set input and outputs, and outcomes of activities. These will then be evaluated using surveys, or evaluation tools, and then after data analysis of this evaluation changes will be implemented, which again will begin from the first step. This cycle will be continuous (Udayton, 2021).

#### **Description of the Stakeholder Engagement**

Throughout this evaluation program, I will engage with internal stakeholders, who are teachers and program directors, and external stakeholders, who are students, Board of Trustees, and administration. Internal stakeholders, teachers and program directors will inform the program design, and teachers will implement the program's strategies. Students will participate in these programs and the evaluation process. The data and finding of this program will be shared with internal stakeholders and with administration.

#### ***Stakeholder matrix***

Below is the stakeholder matrix, in which each stakeholder's interest is related to evaluation and outcome, their power and ability to impact the evaluation plan and implementation, and type and frequency of communication used.

Stakeholder # 1 is students, who have a vested interest in the program because they desire the outcome of this program. They have a high power because this program's success depends on them. Their engagement strategy is continuous and direct communication.

Stakeholder # 2 is faculty, who have a vested interest because they are implementing this program. Their power and ability to impact this program is low power because they can only provide information and help students. The engagement strategy is continuous and direct communication.

Stakeholder # 3 is the program directors, who have a vested interest because they are creating this program. They have a high power because they are the ones requesting the grants, offering courses, and recruiting instructors. Their engagement strategy is formal communication.

Stakeholder # 4 is college higher administration, who have moderate interest just to know the program is working, and it is worth allocating grants and use for marketing. They have high power because they approve the program and provide the budget, and their engagement strategy is indirect communication.

### **Description of the program**

My program will add more resources and activities in programs provided by the career services department of the college, such as more workshop sessions offered at different times so evening and weekend students can participate in them. I will inform students about this program via college wide email and through their professors by having them add these services in their syllabus. This program will be offered at UCC, and a room will be requested from the college. This program will serve students of the

college, who are the major stakeholders. The plan is to serve all college students every semester; however, it will be an optional program for students to sign up. One way to increase student participation is to ask professors to give an extra credit to students if they attend these workshops.

### **Analysis of Implementation to Date and/or Future Implementation**

#### **Logic Model**

Logic model (see appendix 1) will be used initially for the program design. In this section I will describe the logic model I have created.

#### ***Inputs***

College Board of Trustees will allocate the budget for this program, the college President and Vice-President will approve the program, and the Dean of student services will provide the budget for the program.

The career services director and the program designer will design the curriculum of this program. Faculty of the career services department will implement this program. Administrative staff will help by performing administrative duties, such as, ordering, providing media, guiding students. Students will take part in this program.

The career services department will offer various workshops during different times of the day, so that all students can take advantage of these programs.

Final input will be having students gain work experience by getting employment, internship, or volunteer positions on campus or off campus.

#### ***Outputs activities***

Output activities will include informing students about the career service department during the new student orientation. These activities will include taking a career

assessment survey, or personal development survey. These activities will help students choose a career path.

Other activities will include teaching students soft-skills required for employment. These skills will be taught in detail in one of the career services courses, or a mini workshop will be offered to students who cannot take this course.

Career service department will then help students find employment, internship or volunteer positions on campus or off campus to gain work experience.

### ***Outputs participation***

Student participation will include taking a career plan assessment during the new student orientation. This assessment will help them decide the career path they can choose which is related to their career goals. Students will participate in activities that will teach them how to search for jobs using different search engines, preparing resumes or curriculum vitae. Some activities will help students improve their interview skills and etiquette by using videos, expert advice, and one-on-one or group mock interviews.

This program will include getting work experience, which would help students learn soft-skills as well as hard skills required for a job. Their employment supervisors will then complete an employee evaluation form, which will assess their soft-skill and work ethics. This evaluation will help them know their strengths and weaknesses, so they can work on their weaknesses and use their strengths to help them find reasonable employment.

### ***Short outcome impacts***

The short outcome impact is that all students are informed about the career services programs. This will increase the awareness of the program.

### ***Medium outcome impacts***

The desired medium outcome impact is that more students will be aware of this program, and the participation rate will increase in the future terms. This awareness can increase when students refer the program to other students and/or provide their feedback on this program.

### ***Long outcome impacts***

The desired long outcome impact is that participation in this program will increase the post-graduate employment rate. Positive impact and feedback may also encourage other institutions to adapt this program.

### ***Assumptions***

It is assumed that students are interested in learning skills to find jobs after graduation. Some students may not know what career paths to choose. It is also assumed that some students may not find out about the career services during their course of study at the college. It is assumed that some students may need help and guidance to learn soft skills and interview etiquettes.

## **Analysis of Organizational Change & Leadership Practice**

### **Organizational Change Theories and Concept**

Organizations make changes in order to comply with both internal and external factors, to keep up with new technology, consumer needs, current laws and regulations, economy, demographics, competition, and employee needs (Anyieni, et al., 2016). The change in organization pertains to redesign the structure, culture, or procedures (Fløvik, et al., 2019). The change in organization implies a shift in organization aiming to either gain or lose a feature (Fløvik, et al., 2019). If the change is excessive, then many parts of

the organizations are affected. The organizational change can disrupt existing structures and processes, therefore, there is as an opportunity to gain something during the change, or it is possible that there could be some risks which can result in a loss, for instance loss of an employee or employees due to psychological effects (Fløvik, et al., 2019). These psychological effects can be avoided when organizations choose predefined procedures and ethical guidelines when making changes (Fløvik, et al., 2019).

Organizations must make changes for continuous growth and development, and to survive in the turbulent market (Sartori, et al., 2018). Anyieni et al. (2016) review of early theorists concluded two types of approaches and organizations can take, one is the organizations fail to see the change around them and resist to take actions to make changes, or second is organizations take action and adapt to new changes through a strategic process. One way to successfully make changes in the organization is to unfreeze the current behavior, then move to the new behavior, and then freeze the new behavior (Anyieni, et al., 2016). The key point is that an organization has to make changes in both its internal and external environment, which can be done by life-long learning with education and training (Sartori, et al., 2018). The system and organizational development theories find the need of change in the organization, and then implement changes assuming that change is made from one point to more developed point (Rhydderch, et al., 2004). System theories suggest that changes made are clear, specific, and have measurable goals. Goals can be measured by using the assessments results and feedback for continuous improvements (Rhydderch, et al., 2004).

In my action research I am taking a postmodern approach to help these students. In a postmodern deconstruction of the structure of the organization, the postmodernist



perspective produces spaces for more ideas and more opportunities (Hatch, 2018). My action research will implement some change in the organization; therefore, I am expecting some external factors, oppositions and barriers. These changes are important because I see the need to help students and make improvement in current career services provided to students.

### **External factors**

Students may have other personal responsibilities that may keep them from taking advantage of the career services department. Students may not be able to attend limited workshops due to their work and study schedules. Students may not be able to afford extra career services classes if they are not part of their curriculum.

### **Oppositions**

Some faculty/staff from career and counseling service may oppose it as this may increase workload for them. College administration may oppose it, so they do not have to allocate a budget for this program. In order to overcome these oppositions I will work with an ally who supports my cause, and help me get approval from the administration. My strategy is to convince the administration by providing them the results of similar programs implemented in other institutes, which I have discussed in my dissertation. Even though this is a public institution, there is a financial and business perspective to it. I will present to the administration that this program will be beneficial for the organization when the positive results are achieved and advertised. This will help college recruit more students.

My plan B is to carry out a pilot project at the pantry, collect the data, and if the program is successful, then present it to the college administration. My plan C is to

introduce this concept in the basic orientation to college course, which is required and offered to all UCC students. It would help if the administration would make this part of the college program instead of calling it the pantry program. We can share our reason for helping students and make them believe in this cause by providing statistics and literature. Administration can also help by opening more counselors or faculty lines in the future if the number of students taking advantage of these services increase. Other Faculty/staff of the college can volunteer to help if they are qualified; such as psychology professors. This will also reduce the burden on the career and counseling services department.

### **Barriers**

Some opposition could be the barriers; however, my main concern is students not taking advantage of these services. Many students do not feel comfortable coming forward to say they have this problem. Many students may not have time to attend these services. In order to overcome these barriers, my plan is to inform students of the need and benefits of these services during new student orientation, and through making this part of the syllabus and having teachers talk about it in their classes. It will help when teachers can set some time aside to bring their classroom to workshops and for seminars; or provide some sort of extra credit if students come to these programs. This has been successful in the past for encouraging students to attend important meetings, seminars, or workshops. We can also provide these services during club hours and offer refreshments and certificates for joining. UCC requires faculty to collect certificates of attendance for their files which are used for promotion decisions. This is to encourage faculty/staff to create support for their community.

## **Implications for Practice & Future Research**

### **Detail of the Evaluation Design**

This evaluation program is a non-experimental single group. The target group for the program is students from low-income families and of minority group, and students who use pantry services.

#### ***Evaluation matrix***

I have created some key questions using an evaluation matrix (see appendix 2). The evaluation questions for strategies, activities, and implementations are below, with their indicators and targets.

- How much budget would college provide for this program? The indicator for this question is the amount of budget required for this program, and the target is at the beginning of the academic year.
- How many workshops and courses will college offer? The indicator for this question is the number of classes and workshops offered, as well as number of students enrolled in workshops and courses. The target for knowing how many workshops are offered is set a few months before the new semester starts, and the target for knowing student enrollment is at the beginning of the semester, as some students enroll during the first week.
- How would they decide what times they would choose for the workshops and classes so all students can take advantage of it? The indicator for this would be when students visit the career services office for advice, as they can provide a few of their available times. The target is that it has to be done at the end of every semester to decide for the new semester.

- How will career services provide guidance and assistance to students in finding employment or internship or a volunteer position to gain soft skills? The indicator for this is the number of students accepted for jobs, internships, and volunteer positions. Records will be kept when services will successfully place a student in one of these positions. The target is for juniors who are in their third semester of college.

The evaluation questions for the short and intermediate objective is; how would all students be informed about these services? The indicator for this is the number of students aware about the career services department and program, and the target is to know this at the beginning for the semester.

The evaluation questions for the long term goals is; how would program evaluation make the program better for students in the future? The indicator for this is the success of the program over the years, and the target for this evaluation is every two years for the next 10 years.

### ***Evaluation design***

I will administer a pre- and post-assessment. It is necessary to administer pre- and post-assessments in a single-group design to compare if the program was effective. I will have identical assessments for pre- and post-assessment. The threat to validity is that participants probably know about the assessment, and may prepare for the post assessment. If I use a different assessment, then it may validate the assessment since I am using a different measure to assess the program. Program implementation data will be collected to strengthen the attribution of my single-group evaluation design. This data will be collecting students' information and soft skills information before the program, and comparing it after

the program. This data will show the number of students aware about the career services department and program.

***Key questions for implementation***

How much budget would college provide for this program?

How many workshops will college offer?

How would they decide what times they would choose for the workshops so all students can take advantage of it?

How many career development courses would they offer?

How will they choose faculty to teach these courses?

Will these courses be part of the curriculum as electives?

What type of assistance would be provided to students during the workshop offered at the time of the new student orientation?

How will career services provide guidance, and assistance to students in finding employment or internship or a volunteer position to gain soft skills?

***Key questions for effectiveness***

How many students were able to find a career path during the mini workshop offered during the new student orientation?

How many students decided to complete this program after attending the mini workshop offered during the new student orientation?

Was the student enrollment increased for the career development courses?

Did the number of attendances for career development workshops increase?

### **Description of evidence and data sources**

Data will be collected using surveys with Likert Scale. There are reliable and validated survey instruments which will be used. Over the years I will continue to search for reliable tools to include in my program.

#### ***Program enrollment data***

The program enrollment data will help us analyze if the number of students in this program are increasing or decreasing. One of our goals is to create awareness of this program, and for this purpose enrollment data is necessary. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics.

#### ***Survey data (pre and post assessment of students')***

Pre- and post-assessments will be done for students' knowledge of soft skill and self-efficacy. These assessments will be compared at the end of the program to analyze if any improvement was made in students when they successfully completed this program.

#### ***Data from students finding employment after graduation***

Students will be asked to inform us when they find employment after graduation. This would be helpful to keep track of how many students successfully found a reasonable job, job in their field of study, getting a job after graduation, and how long it took them to find an employment.

#### ***Faculty and course assessment***

During the semester, faculty assessment and the course assessment will be done. This is to analyze what changes should be made to the course outline and if the faculty is providing the knowledge they are expected to provide.

### ***Program evaluation data***

All of the above data will be used to evaluate this program. Statistical analysis will be done to analyze the data, and data will be compared with the previous semester or year data.

### ***Anticipated finding***

I am anticipating that this program will have a positive outcome on student career advancements. My anticipation is inspired by a similar program that was done for a research experiment by Seker & Capri (2022). In their study, they used a quasi-experimental model in which they gave pretest, posttest, and follow up surveys to experimental groups and control groups. Experimental groups received 12 weeks of intervention. The result of the study showed significant differences in the self-efficacy of experimental and control groups.

## **Communication Plan**

### **Description of Communication Plan**

My communication plan with each stakeholder is below.

#### ***Students***

My plan is to communicate with students about the program to increase awareness of this program using a direct communication approval. I will be providing a presentation and infographics. The presentation will be done in person. The infographics will be mailed to students in their admission packages as well as they will be posted throughout the campus. They will be also available to be picked up at career services offices and student union building. The frequency of communicating will be every semester and multiple times during the semester.

### ***Faculty/staff***

I will communicate with faculty/staff to train them about this program. My approach will be via formal meeting. The format will be providing them interim/final reports. This will be in-person communication. The frequency will be once for new faculty, and reports will be given to them during departmental meetings.

### ***Administration***

My communication with the administration will be regarding the progress of the program. My communication approach will be formal meeting/ and indirect communication. The format of communicating will be interim and final reports, which will be provided to them electronically and in person. I will do this every semester.

### **Communication Plan to Share my DiP**

After completing my Dissertation in Practice project, I have to create my scholarly identity. For this I am planning to create a website, which would contain all my research work and updates on my action research. I will also post my research findings on social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, where I am a member of many organizations in my field. I will also share my findings with all faculty of my community college via email. This is one way we all share our research or studies. The majority of faculty are adjunct in this college, or work full-time here and adjunct somewhere else. This creates an opportunity for spreading the word to other colleges.

My initial research and action research will be designed to help students who are using the college pantry services. I volunteer as an executive board member and pantry staff coordinator. Volunteering with other staff/faculty gives me an opportunity to connect with other staff in their department and share my research findings with them.



The college pantry has its own newsletter, which is shared with the entire college community and is posted on the pantry website. I will be publishing my action research updates on this newsletter. One of our board members is also a college board of trustee, and he supports any new program we start to help students. Some members of the board of trustees are local entrepreneurs, and I am hoping this would help me connect with them for more opportunities. I also have a good relationship with our official county clerk, who used to be a volunteer at the pantry. She has helped us by providing us information about various state grant opportunities. The County Clerk will be a great resource to share my research findings with and find opportunities for research grants. State funded grant recipients are mentioned in their newsletters, which can help me get my research known to others.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides an action research model by combining models used in other studies done on perceived career barriers and self-efficacy of students in college. This study uses multiple interventions, such as counseling services, workshops, and employment experiences to help students overcome their perceived career barriers. Having multiple methods for intervention will increase the effectiveness of this program because if one method does not help a certain student, then the other method will. This will be an ongoing program, and would need continuous support of administration and faculty. The success of this action research will help spread words to other colleges and universities, so they can also adapt a similar model to help their students.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Demographic Information

**1. Are you a**

Current Student Expected Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Former Student Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Are you currently studying**

Part-Time

Full-Time

Not currently studying

**3. Gender:**

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

**4. Sexual Orientation**

Straight/Heterosexual

Asexual

Gay or Lesbian

Bisexual

Queer

Prefer not to say

**5. Do you identify yourself as a person with disability?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**6. What is your current employment status? Check ALL that apply.**

Working full time for pay → number of hours per week \_\_\_\_\_

Working part time for pay → number of hours per week \_\_\_\_\_

Not currently employed, looking for work

Retired

Homemaker

Disabled (not working because of permanent or temporary disability)

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Current household income**

Less than \$5,000

\$5,000 - \$9,999

\$10,000 - \$14,999

\$15,000 - \$19,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 - \$39,999

\$40,000 - \$49,999

\$50,000 - \$59,999

\$60,000 - \$74,999

\$75,000 - \$99,999

\$100,000 - \$124,999

\$125,000 - \$149,999

\$150,000 or more

**Appendix B: Career Barrier Inventory-Revised (CBI-R) Instrument**

**CAREER BARRIERS INVENTORY-REVISED (CBI-R)**

A barrier is a factor, event or condition, either within a person (internal) or in his/her environment (external), which interferes with their career plans or job.

For each item or question listed below, rate the potential difficulty or extent to which the particular barrier would hinder/has hindered your career development if it should occur, currently exists or have been encountered in the past. In other words, the question is: How much effect do you think each of the following things will have in keeping you from reaching your future career goals?

Mark your answer using the following 7-point Likert scale.

would not hinder at all				would hinder somewhat			would completely hinder
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

1. Unsure of my career goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Needing to take time off work when children are sick or on school breaks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Experiencing racial discrimination in hiring for a job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Needing to relocate because of my spouse's/partner's job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Changing my mind again and again about my career plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Having a disability which limits my choice of careers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Discrimination by employer because I have, or plan to have, children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Unsure of how to “sell myself” to an employer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Becoming bored with my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Being discouraged from pursuing fields which are non-traditional for my sex (e.g., engineering for women).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Feeling a conflict between my job and my family (spouse and/or children).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Having a boss or supervisor who is biased against people of my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Experiencing problems with my health that interfere with my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Unsure of my work-related values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Allowing my spouse’s desire for children to take precedence over my career goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Difficulty in finding a job due to a tight job market.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Feeling pressure to “do it all” – expected to do well as parent, spouse, career person, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Not feeling confident about my ability on the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Not being able to find good day-care services for my children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. My spouse/partner doesn’t approve of my choice of job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Not feeling confident about myself in general.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Not wanting to relocate for my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Feeling guilty about working while my children are young.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Experiencing racial harassment on the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. Experiencing discrimination in hiring for a job because I have a disability.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Not being paid as much as co-workers of the opposite sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Being undecided about what job/career I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Stress at home (spouse or children) affecting my performance at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Lacking the required personality traits for my job (e.g., assertiveness).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Disappointed in my career progress (e.g., not receiving promotions as often as I would like).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Other people's belief that certain careers are not appropriate for people of my sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Losing interest in my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Difficulty in re-entering job market after taking time off to care for my children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Difficulty in planning my career due to changes in the economy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Lacking the required skills for my job (e.g., communication, leadership, decision-making).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Experiencing racial discrimination in promotions in my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Difficulty in maintaining the ground gained at my job after having children.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Not being sure how to choose a career direction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Unsure of what my career alternatives are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Conflict between marriage/family plans and my career plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Lack of maturity interferes with my career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Not having a role model or mentor at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

43. Experiencing sex discrimination in hiring for a job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Not receiving support from my spouse/partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Having low self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Discrimination due to my marital status.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47. My parents/family don't approve of my choice of job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Having a boss or supervisor who is biased against people of my sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. People of the opposite sex receive promotions more often than people of my sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. No opportunities for advancement in my career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Not being paid as much as co-workers of another racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52. My belief that certain careers are not appropriate for me because of my sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. Having children at a "bad time" in my career plans.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. People of other racial/ethnic groups receive promotions more often than people of my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55. Lacking information about possible jobs/careers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. The outlook for future employment in my field is not promising.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. Being dissatisfied with my job/career.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. Unable to deal with physical or emotional demands of my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. Unsure of what I want out of life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. Having an inflexible work schedule that interferes with my family responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



61. Unsure of how to advance in my career.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
62. Lacking the necessary educational background for the job I want.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
63. Experiencing sexual harassment on the job.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
64. Fear that people will consider me “unfeminine” or “unmasculine” because my job/career is non-traditional for my sex.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
65. Not knowing the “right people” to get ahead in my career.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
66. Lacking the necessary hands-on experience for the job I want.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
67. Lack of opportunities for people of my sex in non-traditional fields.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
68. No demand for my area of training/education.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
69. Stress at work affecting my life at home.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
70. My friends don’t approve of my choice of job/career.	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr></table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

(The Career Barriers Inventory-Revised developed by Professor Jane L. Swanson).

## Appendix C: Logic Model

**Program: Helping Students to Choose Career Plan and Prepare Them for Employment After Graduation Logic Model**

**Situation:** Career Services department at Nassau Community College has many valuable resources and programs to help students with their career goals; however, not many students are participating in these programs due to conflict in their work/study schedule, or they do not know about it. Getting employment after graduation is one of the problems many new graduates face.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes – Impact		
	Activities	Participation	Short	Medium	Long
Board of Trustees College President College Vice President Provide approval for the program Dean Provide budget for the program.  Career Services Director Program designer Design curriculum  Faculty Implement program  Staff Perform administrative duties  Students Take part in this program.  Career Services Workshops  Career Services courses  Work Experience (employment, internship, or a volunteer position on campus or off campus to gain work experience)	Informing students about career service department during the new student orientation.  Helping students choose career path during the new student orientation workshop.  Teach soft skill in career services courses    Help students find employment, internship, or a volunteer position on campus or off campus to gain work experience.	Student taken career plan assessment during the new student orientation.     Learning how to search jobs, preparing resumes, interview skills and etiquette.   Experience will help students practice their soft skills.    Supervisors will assess students' soft skill	Student will be informed about the career services programs. This will increase the awareness of this program.	More students will be aware of this program and participation rate will increase in future terms. Awareness can increase when student refer other students, and/or provide their feedback on this program.	Participation in this program will increase the post graduate employment rate. Positive impact can increase participation of students in this program.  Positive impact and feedback may also encourage other institutes to adapt this program.



### Assumptions

Students are interested in learning skill to find jobs after graduation.  
 Some students may not know what career paths to choose  
 Some students may not find out about the career services during their course of study  
 Some students may need help and guidance to learn soft skill and interview etiquettes.

### External Factors

Students may have other personal responsibilities that may keep them from taking advantage of career services department.  
 Students may not be able to attend limited workshops due to their work and study schedules  
 Students may not be able to afford extra career services classes if they are not part of their curriculum.

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## Appendix D: Evaluation Matrix

Logic Model Component	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Targets	Data Source	Data Collection	Data Analysis
<b>Strategies/Activities and Implementation</b>	How much budget would college provide for this program? How many workshops and courses will college offers? How would they decide what times they would <u>chase</u> for the workshops and classes so all students can take advantage of it? How will career services provide guidance, and assistance to students in finding employment or internship or a volunteer position to gain soft skills?	Amount of budget required for this program  Number of classes and workshops offered. Number of students enrolled in workshops and curses  Number of students visiting career services offices for advice.  Number of students accepted for jobs, internships, and volunteer positions	Beginning of academic year  A few months before the start of new semester  At the beginning for the semester  By the end of the semester  During their third semester in college.	Student logistics, evaluative results, post program surveys	Beginning and end of the semester	Using statistical analysis for data analysis
<b>Short- and Intermediate-term Objectives</b>	How would all students be informed about these services?	Number of students aware about career services department and program.	At the beginning of the semester	Student surveys	Collection at the beginning of the semester	SPSS for data analysis
<b>Long Term Goals</b>	How would program evaluation will make the program better for students in the future?	Is the program successful over the years, or there is not any change.	Every two years for the next 10 years.	Evaluation using surveys, forms, records	Collecting every two years	SPSS