ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COMPRESSED COURSES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS

A thesis presented
by

Laurie A. Boeding

to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of

Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
June 15, 2016

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore students' lived experiences in compressed courses. This study was launched because of a phenomenon that occurred at one community college; student success was higher in shorter courses, with the highest success rates realized in the shortest duration courses. The increase in success rates was unexplained previously.

Inputs-Environment-Outputs (I-E-O) conceptual theory framed this study. Nine students participated in the study. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology allowed the researcher to examine participants' experiences through individual interviews. Thorough data analysis, review, and interpretation led to the generation of common themes from the participants' stories. The central research question that guided this study was: How do students explain higher success rates in compressed, 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses?

Five common themes emerged from this study including time management, focus, motivation, knowledge retention, and instructional methods. The themes were consistent with current literature on the compressed course modality. The findings are relevant to community college administrators and faculty who may be considering a compressed course implementation or who already offer this format but do not fully understand whether student success is greater in shorter courses. Additional research is needed to explore the perspectives of faculty who teach compressed courses. Research could be expanded to examine students who experienced a decline in success rates under the compressed course format.

Keywords: student success, compressed courses, accelerated courses, community college, academic scheduling, course formats

Acknowledgements

I am truly blessed to have so many extraordinary people in my life who supported and inspired me through this journey. I could not have done this alone. First, and foremost, my family. Thank you to my husband, Lance, for your patience, understanding, and learning to cook while I worked late into the evenings. To my children, Dalton and Allison, you are amazing and there are no words strong enough to express how tremendously proud I am of you both. You personify the change that education makes in peoples' lives, particularly community colleges. To my father, Roland Cadieux, and my late mother, Shirley Cadieux, who taught me that I could be or do anything I desired, and who wouldn't let "not going to college" be an option.

I will be forever grateful to my dissertation committee. My advisor and committee chair, Dr. Carolyn Bair, provided insight, guidance, and encouragement during difficult times. She held me to high standards. She never criticized, but instead asked "I wonder if…", and made me think beyond levels I never knew existed. Dr. Leslie Hitch, my second reader, whose perception and thought provoking questions kept me grounded and focused while also reassuring me that I could persevere. Dr. Edna Boroski, my third reader, who freed me from the imposter syndrome and inspired me to recognize that I can make a difference in higher education.

I am also very appreciative of my colleagues and friends, who helped me through this process more than they will ever realize. To my lunch bunch, Bernie, Dawn, Edna, and Tom, for your support, praise, and laughter. To Dr. Patricia Robertson, whose support, mentorship, and encouragement are never-ending. To Connie Jolly, who recognized talents in me that I did not see in myself. To Sherri, who always lent an ear when I needed to vent. To my NEU CPS peers, I am honored to have gone through this journey with you. Through our residencies, group projects, and online discussions, we supported each other and became lifelong friends.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Community colleges are faced with many challenges in the 21st century: the recession and recovery caused fluctuating enrollment, state and federal funding continually declines, a majority of incoming students are unprepared for college level work, and the federal government is demanding increased accountability. Community colleges cannot shift completely away from access in order to improve success, and stakeholders struggle to distinguish between the two (Bragg & Durham, 2012). Innovative solutions must be implemented to meet 21st century educational challenges, particularly to improve student success while still embracing the open access mission for which the community college was created. Compressed course scheduling is an alternative approach to academic scheduling that has potential to improve student success rates and, ultimately, completion rates without altering the community college mission.

Background to the Study

Southern Community College (SCC), a pseudonym for a community college located in the southeastern United States, has undertaken several initiatives to improve student success. The institution defines student success as earning a grade of C or higher in a course. In 2013, the College began benchmarking against other community colleges of similar size and demographics in order to assess institutional effectiveness in comparison to similar institutions. Data from Fall 2012 revealed that the College had an enrollee success rate of only 63.8%, which was lower than the 10th percentile compared to national peers; the national median value was 74.43% (National Community College Benchmark Project, 2012). The institution was clearly below the average success rates of its national peers. Success for this measurement was student completion of courses with grades of A, B, or C.

Southern Community College committed to *A Call to Action*, in support of the national College Completion Challenge, which challenged higher education institutions to produce 50 percent more students with degrees and certificates by 2020 (McPhail, 2011). *A Call to Action* is a national initiative of six groups representing more than 1,200 community colleges. Some key initiatives of *A Call to Action* are:

- Increasing success rates for all students and closing achievement gaps.
- Changing institutional culture from emphasis on access to emphasis on success.
- Including completion in the institution's strategic plan.
- Enhancing student engagement.
- Redesigning curriculum and instruction to reflect contemporary pedagogy.

SCC experienced record enrollment over the past few years, largely due to displaced workers returning to college. The institution reported a total, unduplicated, 12-month headcount of 24,818 credit students for the 2012-13 academic year. Some additional facts about the college include:

- 57 percent of students attend part-time.
- Retention from Fall 2011 to fall 2012 at SCC was 51 percent of full-time students and 40 percent of part-time students.
- 1,648 students graduated with an Associate's degree during the 2012-13 academic year, and another 1,921 earned a certificate or diploma during that time.

Statement of Problem

Community College Student Success. Community college student success rates are low, a problem that has plagued these institutions for decades (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Schuetz, 2002). Community colleges are open-access institutions that serve unprepared, underserved,

non-traditional, and traditional student populations. Most community college students have limited options for obtaining higher education; for them, "the choice is not between the community college and a senior residential institution; it is between the community college and nothing" (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 53).

Almost half of community college students drop out of school within the first year of enrollment; this statistic has not changed in over 40 years (Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2008; Schuetz, 2002). Only 45 percent of community college students earn a degree, credential, or transfer to a four-year school within six years of enrollment; and only 10 percent of students remain enrolled after six years of initial enrollment (Karp et al., 2008). The national completion rate for students at two-year institutions who began in 2010 and graduated within 150 percent of the expected time to completion was only 29.4 percent (NCES, 2015).

The demographics of community college students must be taken into account when evaluating student success. Most community college students are non-traditional students and many are unprepared for college level work. Non-traditional students are identified as adult students over the age of 25, who may have children, may be single parents, work full or part-time in addition to attending school, and are often first-generation college students (Boggs, 2011). Boggs (2011) identified additional demographic statistics of community college students as:

- Average age is 28 years old.
- More than half (56 percent) of community college students are female.
- 36 percent of community college students are non-white.
- Representations of minority students are Hispanic (15 percent) and Black (14 percent).
- 42 percent of community college students are first-generation college students.

- 29.9 percent of community college students are unmarried with dependents (NCES, 2014).

Community college students often struggle with finances, either delayed college after high school graduation or did not complete high school, commute to school, and attend part-time due to family and work obligations (Burns, 2010). Approximately 70 percent of community college students face at least one of these issues and 50 percent face two or more (Burns, 2010).

Community colleges enroll a large number of first-generation students. First-generation students "are more likely to have a low family income; have lower degree aspirations; report less support and encouragement from family to attend college; and have more difficulty adjusting to school" (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015, p. 236). First-generation students have a higher risk of failure and experience more academic problems than non-first-generation students (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015). First-generation students are also at higher risk of dropping out of college before their second year (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015).

Community college students are often unprepared for college level work. McIntosh and Rouse (2009) claimed that 61 percent of students who begin at two-year institutions take at least one developmental course while in college and 25 percent require two or more developmental courses. In comparison, 70 percent of students who begin at public or private four-year colleges do not take any developmental courses during their college career (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009).

The aforementioned characteristics lead to high course failure and withdrawal rates in community colleges. Life problems contribute to low attendance, missed assignments, and poor academic performance. These factors lead to low success rates, and students who do not pass courses are less likely to re-enroll in subsequent courses than students who are successful. Cohen and Brawer (2008) reported that most community college students drop out due to

circumstances beyond the college's control such as changes in work schedule, lack of childcare, financial issues, and health problems. While colleges cannot control these issues, initiatives could be employed to facilitate student success and encourage students to stay enrolled in their courses while they work through their problems.

Significance of Problem. Student success must improve in order for college completion rates to improve. The United States ranks 16th in the world for college completion (OECD, 2009). The Obama Administration challenged the United States to have the highest number of citizens with degrees in the world by 2020 and 60 percent of all US citizens to have college degrees by 2025 (Price & Tovar, 2014). By 2018, almost two thirds of all jobs in the US will require a postsecondary degree or certificate (AACC, 2012). The number of jobs requiring an associate's degree is expected to grow twice as fast as the number of jobs requiring only high school completion (Boggs, 2011b). The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and Jobs for the Future (NCHEMS, 2007) reported that the United States is projected to have a shortage of 16 million workers with degrees required to meet workforce needs by 2025.

To meet these objectives, new student success initiatives must "be undertaken that are targeted directly at community colleges" (Wild & Ebbers, 2002, p. 504). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) recently challenged all community colleges to implement measures aimed at improving academic success. In a report titled "Reclaiming the American Dream," community college leaders were encouraged to "imagine a new future for themselves, to ensure the success of our students, our institutions, and our nature" (AACC, 2012, p. v). Success strategies must be innovative, must encompass the full construct of the institution, and should be tailored to individual institutions (Fike & Fike, 2008). Success includes academic performance (grades and GPA) and completion of a degree or other credential. Wood and

Turner (2011) defined academic success as "students' grade point averages and successful completion of classes towards their degree goals" (p. 136). For the remainder of this thesis, however, student success is defined as a grade of A, B, or C in an individual course.

Problem Statement. Low success rates clearly indicated an institutional level problem at SCC. As mentioned previously, NCCBP data revealed that the College had a student success rate of only 63.6% in 2012. Prior to Fall semester 2014, the College offered courses in multiple lengths including: 14-week full-semester, 9-week summer session, 7-week "fast-forward" sessions, which ran during fall and spring semesters, four week "fast-forward" sessions, which ran during summer, and a 3-week Maymester session. Contact hours remained at 47 hours regardless of the course length, and courses with shorter lengths had longer class meeting times. For example, a course scheduled during a 14-week full-semester may have met two days per week for 80 minutes while the same course scheduled during a 7-week fast-forward session met two days per week for three hours each day.

Data examined by the SCC Institutional Research Department revealed that SCC students were more successful in shorter courses than they were in full-semester courses. Data were disaggregated by age, race, ethnicity, college preparation, socioeconomic status, and gender. Figure 1 shows the success rates by course length for the Fall 2012 semester. Regardless of the demographic, grades were significantly and consistently higher in shorter courses; however, the reasons why were unclear.

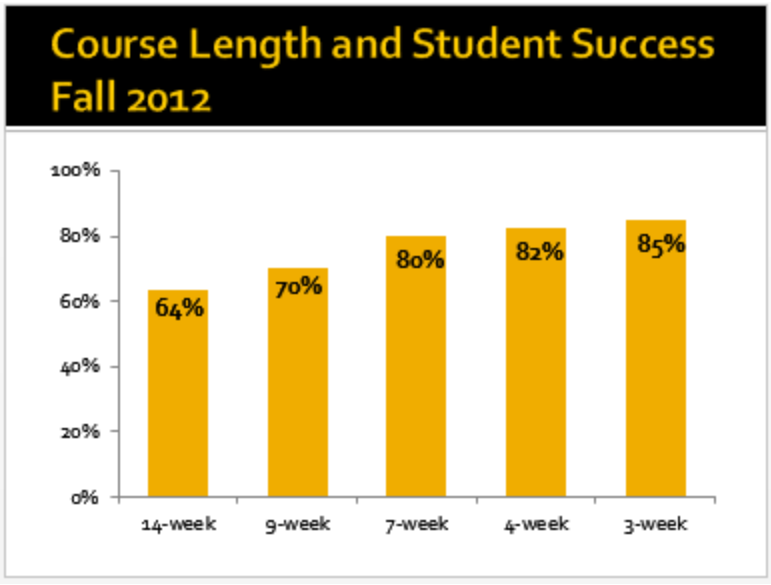

Figure 1

Student success cannot be left to chance. It is "the result of intentional, structured, and proactive actions and policies directed toward the success of all students" (Tinto, 2012, p. 117). Evidence suggests that some institutional best practices can influence students' experiences and behaviors as well as improve success rates (Schuetz, 2002). In an effort to improve student success, and based on the data presented, beginning in the Fall 2014 semester the College implemented a compressed, 7-week course schedule. Nearly every course offered at the institution was converted to the compressed format. The schedule conversion was an innovative and proactive approach to improving student success at the institution. Table 1 shows the improvement in student success rates from Fall 2012 to Fall 2014 (SCC Institutional Research, 2015). Success rates improved more than 12 percent under the fully implemented compressed schedule.

Success Rates from Fall 2012 to Fall 2014								
Fall 2012	Enrolled	Success rate	Fall 2013	Enrolled	Success rate	Fall 2014	Enrolled	Success rate
All courses	52,553	63.4%	All Courses	52,294	67.8%	All Courses	50,471	75.5%

Table 1

In addition to improved success rates under the compressed schedule, course withdrawal rates decreased. The withdrawal rate dropped from 16% in Fall 2011 to just 9% in Fall 2014. Table 2 shows the distribution of grades across all SCC courses from 2011 to 2014.

	A	B	C	D	F	W
2011 Fall	21%	23%	15%	4%	16%	16%
2012 Fall	22%	23%	15%	4%	15%	16%
2013 Fall	25%	24%	15%	4%	13%	14%
2014 Fall	29%	27%	15%	3%	10%	9%

Table 2

Statement of Purpose and Research Question

College administrators stumbled upon a phenomenon but did not fully understand the causes of improved student success in compressed courses, other than course length. Compressed courses show promise for being related to academic success; however, it must be understood why academic achievement was higher in the shorter course format. Were students more engaged in the longer class meetings? Did instructors teach differently in the compressed format? Did students avoid procrastinating because of frequent assignment deadlines? Did students have higher rates of attendance in the condensed courses? This study provided the researcher an opportunity to explore students' lived experiences in compressed courses in order to identify causes of improved academic performance in the shorter format.

This qualitative study employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology to investigate student success in compressed courses. The researcher sought to

understand students' perceived differences between compressed courses and full-semester length courses and to explore participants' sense-making of the phenomenon. The primary research question that guided this study was: How do students explain higher success rates in compressed, 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses?

Significance of this Study

While there is a substantial amount of literature available on compressed courses, a majority of the studies were conducted at four-year institutions. Most of the existing research on compressed courses was conducted using quantitative analyses (Aguilar, 2004; Anastasi, 2007; Austin & Gustafson, 2006; Birkholz, 2004; Furr, 2012; Kucsera & Zimmaro, 2010; Lutes & Davies, 2013; Van Scyoc & Gleason 1993). A qualitative comprehensive understanding of students' experiences in compressed courses will expand the literature on the topic and has the potential to encourage community college administrators to employ, with increased confidence, compressed course schedules in order to improve student success.

Early research on student success and attrition (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1975, 1982) suggested that student factors, such as student-institution fit and preparation, are primary reasons that students fail classes, withdraw from classes, and stop attending college. Student success efforts typically focus on strategies such as enhancements in remedial education, introduction to college studies and college preparation courses, counseling, and mentoring (Rankin, Katsinas, & Hardy, 2011). Other techniques that have shown improvement in student success rates include integration into the college environment, student involvement, and development of peer and faculty relationships (Cohen and Brawer, 2008; Rini, 2008).

As mentioned previously, SCC administrators completely overhauled the academic course schedule from 14-week fall and spring semesters to 7-week compressed terms in an effort

to improve academic success. The college still functions on a semester system with the fall and spring semesters divided into two 7-week terms. (Additionally, the college offers a 3-week Maymester session, a 10-week summer session, and two 4-week compressed summer terms). While there is substantial research available on short-term courses (Austin & Gustafson, 2006; Scott, 2003; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon, 2004; Sheldon & Durella, 2010; Wlodowski, 2003), the researcher found no existing research on an implementation of this scope and magnitude in community colleges.

This research provides a deeper understanding of why students performed better under the compressed course schedule at SCC and may aid administrators with future decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, course scheduling, and other student success initiatives. This research may also benefit administrators at other institutions who are considering a conversion to a compressed schedule as it shows how the scheduling format at SCC impacted student success. Additionally, this research may be beneficial to students who are hesitant to take compressed courses, as well as faculty who are concerned about teaching compressed courses.

Conceptual Framework

Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model, developed as a guide to assess educational activities, informed this study. The application of the model specific to this study can be seen in Figure 2. Educational practices, programs, and changes must be evaluated, or assessed, in order to determine effectiveness. Review of outcome data alone does not provide a sufficient measure of educational effectiveness (Astin & Antonio, 2012). Kelly (1996) suggested that the "I-E-O model captures the longitudinal nature of the process, highlights the interactivity between student background characteristics and the college environment, and

provides a broad context in which institution-specific investigations [of attrition] can be conducted."

Educational evaluation requires examination of the impact of environmental characteristics on outcomes; however, "the relationship between environments and student outcomes cannot be understood without also taking into account student inputs" (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 20). Inputs include personal qualities and characteristics that a student brings to the educational environment (Astin, 1993). According to Thurmond and Popkess-Vawter (2003), "inclusion of input data when using the I-E-O model is imperative because inputs directly influence both the environment and outputs, thus having a "double" influence on outputs—one that is direct and one that indirectly influences through environment" (p. 1).

Students enrolled in compressed courses at SCC were more successful than students enrolled in full-semester length courses; however the reasons why were unclear prior to this research. Examination of student inputs and ways in which the inputs affect the environment or vice-versa shed light on the reasons for improved success as well as how student characteristics affect students' perception of the compressed schedule. Inputs, or "I's", included in this study were students' prior educational experiences including experiences with full-semester length courses, demographic information, and non-school related responsibilities such as family and work obligations. The "E" or environment variable in this study was the compressed schedule, which was an intervention designed to improve student success. Finally, the output, or "O", was student success as measured by earning a grade of A, B, or C.

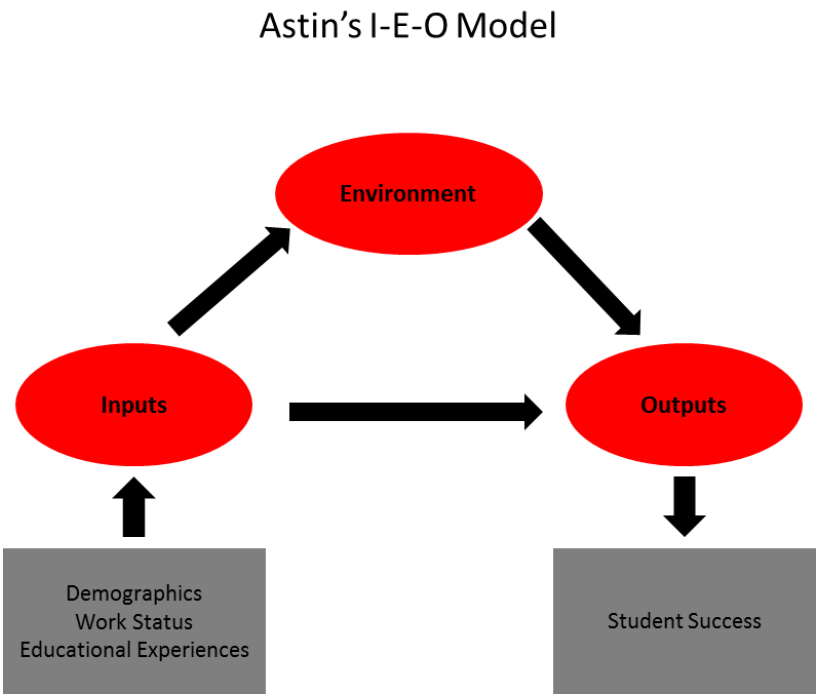

Figure 2

Summary

Community college student success rates are lower than student success rates at four-year institutions due to the open access admissions policies adopted by community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Student success, defined as earning a grade of A, B, or C in a course, was only 63.6% at SCC in 2012. Institutional data revealed that success rates were higher in courses that were shorter than full-semester length courses with the highest rates being observed in the shortest-term courses. Informed by Astin's I-E-O (1993) model of educational assessment, this qualitative study employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology to investigate student success in compressed courses. The researcher sought to understand participants' perceived differences between compressed courses and full-semester length courses, as well as participants' explanation of improved success in compressed courses.

The next chapter of this study presents a review of literature on community colleges, student success, and compressed courses. Chapter 3 provides the research question as well as the

methodology and research design used to guide the study. An overview of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research is also be presented. Chapter 4 provides the findings and summary of five themes that emerged during the data analysis process. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings as related to the overarching research question, the conceptual framework, and the literature review.

Definition of Terms

Compressed courses: Courses that meet for eight or fewer weeks and provide the same number of contact hours as full-semester length courses. Course compression reduces the length, or number of weeks, of each course by "extending the duration of each lesson from one to three, four or more hours, and increasing the frequency of these lessons from one or two per week to three or four per week" (Serdukov, 2008, p. 44).

Drop: Unenrolling from a course prior to the course beginning or during the add/drop period. "Drop" does not appear on a student's transcript.

Student success: Grade of A, B, or C in an individual course. May also be measured by overall grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher.

Withdrawal: Dropping a course after the Add/Drop period but before the end of the term or semester, with no punitive grade. Students who are not performing well may withdraw from courses rather than receive an "F". Withdraw's appear on transcripts as a "W". While W's do not affect a student's academic standing, they are considered unsuccessful in SCC's measurement of student success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study employed an interpretative phenomenological research methodology to explore community college students' lived experiences in compressed courses (7 weeks). The researcher investigated academic success (grade of A, B, or C in a course) that was higher in compressed courses than in full-semester length courses at one community college. Qualitative research favors an on-going literature review (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) suggested that literature be reviewed as themes or concepts emerge during data analysis; therefore, the researcher utilized a constant comparative approach by examining scholarly evidence that informed the themes generated during data collection and review.

While the literature review was concurrent with data analysis, it was appropriate to begin this research with a review of literature on community colleges. Existing literature on compressed courses was also reviewed to explore evidence of student success in the shortened course modality. Compressed course success was reviewed in terms of academic discipline, learning, student engagement, and student-faculty and student-student interaction.

Overview of Community Colleges

Community colleges (also known as two-year, technical, and junior colleges) began in the early 1900s to educate and train workers for employment in expanding industries (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Industrial and societal development in the early 20th century was dependent on a greater number of students being educated in scientific principles. The existing universities were unable to meet the needs of the increased demand for education beyond secondary school so community colleges emerged as an extension of secondary school (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The community college mission, which has not deviated much over the past century, is simply: access to higher education. In 1925, the American Association of Junior Colleges

(AAJC) stated that "the junior college may, and is likely to, develop a different type of curriculum suited to the larger and ever-changing civic, social, religious, and vocational needs of the entire community in which the college is located" (Cohen and Brawer, 2008, p. 4). A college slogan from 1947 summarized the AAJC definition well, albeit 20 years later: "We will teach anyone, anywhere, anything, at any time whenever there are enough people interested in the program to justify its offering" (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 24). Twenty-first century community colleges remain open access institutions that serve their local communities and respond rapidly to the changing needs of society. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) describes community colleges as:

> …centers of educational opportunity. They are an American invention that put publicly funded higher education at close-to-home facilities, beginning nearly 100 years ago with Joliet Junior College. Since then, community colleges have been inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience. (About Community Colleges, Retrieved from: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/default.aspx).

Supporting an all-inclusive, open-access mission is challenging; however, a selective admissions policy is not an option for improving institutional student success rates at community colleges. According to Bailey and Morest (2006), "community colleges are expected to offer education for almost any student who comes in the door" (p. 3). Students are often unprepared for college level work, face economic difficulties, and often have social barriers or other obstacles in their way. Community colleges support these students with far fewer resources than four-year institutions (Bailey & Morest, 2006). In response to criticism of the community college mission, the AACC stated that:

> Community colleges do not narrowly tailor whom they admit, or strictly prescribe in what program and courses individuals may choose to enroll, a practice more common to selective institutions. They are aptly called ‘democracy's colleges’ where an egalitarian credo is fundamental to their open access mission. The provision of educational opportunity is critical in maintaining a postsecondary education system built to ‘promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life;’ a commitment state and land grant institutions are having difficulty keeping. Without the commitment community colleges have made to the community and its citizens, such a promise may likely go unfulfilled (AACC, 2009).

According to AACC (2016), community colleges enroll nearly half of all undergraduate students in the United States. Enrollment headcount for all US community colleges in Fall 2014 was 7.3 million credit students and 5 million noncredit students (AACC, 2016). Of the credit-seeking students, 4.5 million attended school part-time while 2.8 million were enrolled full-time (AACC, 2016). 62 percent of full-time students and 73 percent of part-time students were employed during the Fall 2014 semester (AACC, 2016). Other demographics from Fall 2014 include 57 percent female, 43 percent male, average age of 28, median age of 24, and 49 percent of students between the ages of 22-39.

More than 50 percent of community college students are minority or underserved students (AACC, 2016). The AACC (2016) reported that community colleges enroll 52 percent of all black undergraduates, 57 percent of Hispanic undergraduates, 62 percent Native Americans, and 43 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders. Forty-one percent of all first-time freshman undergraduate students in the United States are enrolled in community colleges. Many of these

students come from low-income and educationally disadvantaged families and would not have opportunities for higher education without community colleges (Shannon & Smith, 2006).

In addition to lenient admissions policies, many students are attracted to community colleges because of their low tuition rates. The average annual tuition and fee cost for public community colleges was $3,260 for the 2013-2014 school year, compared to $8,890 for public four-year schools (AACC, 2012). Despite the low tuition rates, 72 percent of community college students applied for some type of financial aid during the 2011-2012 school year; 58 percent received federal grants, 19 percent received federal loans, 12 percent received state aid, and 13 percent received institutional aid (AACC, 2014).

The open access mission lends itself to remedial education. A majority of community college students are unprepared for college-level work (Baily & Cho, 2010). Nearly 60 percent of students, including many recent high school graduates, are required to take at least one remedial or developmental course (Bailey & Cho, 2010). Attewell, Lavin, Domina and Levy (2006) found that 58 percent of students who attended community college required at least one remedial course, 44 percent took more than one remedial course, and 14 percent required more than three remedial courses.

Enrollment in community colleges has increased over the past several years and is likely to continue increasing due to an increase in the number of high school graduates. The number of high school graduates increased 28 percent between the 1996-1997 and 2008-2009 school years (Husser & Bailey, 2013). Husser & Bailey (2013) projected that there will be 3.5 million high school graduates during the 2021-22 school year. A significant number of high school graduates will likely be inadequately prepared for college and will need remediation (Shannon & Smith,

2006). The community college's open access mission and admissions policies will be essential to supporting the higher education needs of this population.

Compressed Courses

As mentioned in Chapter 1, community college student success is low compared to student success at four-year institutions. Fewer than 45 percent of students earn a degree or credential or transfer to a four-year school within six years of initial enrollment, and fewer than 10 percent of students remain enrolled after six years (Karp & Bork, 2014; Karp et al., 2008). Compressed courses show potential for improving student success as the courses often show improved grades and learning when compared to traditional semester-length courses (Anastasi, 2007; Daniel, 2000, Gamboa, 2013; Scott, 2009; Scott & Conrad, 1993; Tatum, 2010, Wlodowski, 2003). Compressed courses promote student productivity and provide opportunities for students to become immersed in activity during class periods (Tatum, 2010). Compressed courses are often restructured to accommodate the longer class sessions and often include pedagogy that promotes interaction and student engagement (Anastasi, 2007; Gamboa, 2013; Kretovics, Crowe, & Hyun, 2005; Lee & Horsfall, 2010; Tatum, 2010).

Shorter course formats are referred to by many titles including compressed, intensive, or accelerated courses (Gamboa, 2013; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon, 2004; Tatum, 2010; Wlodowski, 2003). The compressed scheduling format utilizes the description that Serdyukov (2008) called accelerated learning: "compression is achieved through extending the duration of each lesson from one to three, four or more hours, and increasing the frequency of these lessons from one or two per week to three or four per week. Thus the whole course becomes shorter in duration and is perceived by students as more doable and time-efficient" (p. 44). ~~.~~ Students enrolled in compressed courses typically take fewer courses at a time than they would in a

traditional semester. For example, during a traditional 14-week semester, a full-time student might take four courses. In a compressed environment, a full-time student might take two courses in term one and two courses in term two, resulting in the same number of courses being taken during the semester; however, the courses are taken just two at one time.

Compressed scheduling can be defined as education that "compresses the educational process beyond the traditional semester or quarter systems that are used in most colleges and universities" (Tatum, 2010, p. 35). Concentrated study, such as in compressed courses, may lead to increased creativity of faculty and student motivation (Tatum, 2010).

Success in Compressed Courses. Research suggests that student success, measured by grades, is higher in compressed courses than in full-semester length courses (Austin & Gustafson, 2006; Gamboa, 2013; Kretovics, et al., 2005; Logan & Geltner, 2000; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Seamon, 2004; Sheldon & Durella, 2009; Wlodowski, 2003). Martin and Culver (2009) reported that "most successful intensive courses can create focused, motivating, memorable and continuous learning" (p. 62).

Scott and Conrad (1992) performed one of the earliest studies on compressed courses. The researchers conducted an extensive analysis of existing research on compressed courses. The research revealed that compressed courses produce equal, and often exceptional, outcomes compared to traditional courses. The findings proved true regardless of academic discipline (Scott & Conrad, 1992). The same findings hold true today and other researchers (Daniel, 2000; Hicks, 2013; Kucsera & Zimmaro, 2010; Martin & Culver, 2009; Scott, 2003; Seamon, 2004; Serdyukov, 2008; Tatum, 2010; Wlodkowski, 2003) have frequently cited the study. Scott and Conrad (1992) noted that "the vast majority of research on intensive learning indicates equal if

not superior short-term results for intensive courses regardless of the discipline or field of study under investigation" (p. 429).

Austin and Gustafson (2006) studied records of more than 45,000 students at the University of West Georgia to determine if performance was higher in shorter courses. The students who were investigated took courses over a three-year time span. The researchers reported that "there is a significant improvement from taking shorter courses that cannot be explained solely by student characteristic" (Austin & Gustafson, 2006, p. 35). Wlodkowski, Iturralde-Albert, and Mauldin (2000) discovered substantial differences in academic performance among students enrolled in compressed courses, albeit students reported no difference in perception between compressed and full-length courses.

Since compressed courses finish in eight or fewer weeks, students see evidence of progress toward degree attainment sooner. Seamon (2004) suggested that this progress is beneficial and that "learners who believe they are making real progress toward worthy goals will enjoy learning more and be much more eager to stick with the task through difficulties such as the long, rigorous sessions of intensive courses" (p.857).

Success by Academic Discipline. A study conducted at Grafton Hills College revealed that success rates for average students enrolled in compressed courses were at least five points higher than success rates for average students taking full-semester courses, across all academic disciplines (Gamboa, 2013). The success rates in the study varied by academic discipline with arts and science success rates being 11 percent higher in compressed courses than other academic disciplines. A similar study led by Logan and Geltner (2000) at Santa Monica Community College demonstrated that student success is higher in compressed courses regardless of

discipline. The study included records of 450,000 students enrolled in compressed courses (Logan & Geltner, 2000).

Sheldon and Durella (2009) studied students enrolled in compressed English, math, and reading courses. Students in the compressed courses earned at least 30 percent higher success rates than students enrolled in full-semester courses. Grade point averages were higher among the students who took compressed courses than those in full-semester courses and course completion rates were higher in compressed courses (Sheldon & Durella, 2009). Tatum (2010) also supported the completion rate phenomenon. Tatum (2010) evaluated several studies on compressed courses and reported that compressed courses had lower withdrawal rates than longer courses; that is, fewer students withdrew from compressed courses than from full-semester length courses.

An investigation of several psychology courses for differences in student success rates between full-semester and short summer sessions revealed that students in the shorter sessions earned higher grades than did the full-semester students (Anastasi, 2007). Each course used the same instructor, teaching style and assignments, and each provided the same number of contact hours. The students enrolled in the full-semester courses were less successful than students enrolled in the short-session courses, even though the students in the full-semester courses had higher GPAs than the short-session students prior to beginning the courses (Anastasi, 2007).

Early research by Van Scyoc and Gleason (1993) revealed that student success was higher in compressed economics courses than in longer length economic courses. The researchers studied economics courses over two academic years at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Students enrolled in compressed course sections earned higher grades than students enrolled in full-semester sections. The study examined students in both beginning and

intermediate courses. The same instructors taught both 14-week course sections and compressed 3-week sections. The authors suggested that learning in compressed courses might be more efficient "given that the number of class contact hours is the same, but that study time is probably less" (Van Scyoc & Gleason, 1993, p. 21); however, they also argued that while grades were higher, there was no evidence of improved learning in the shorter courses (Van Scyoc & Gleason, 1993). Van Scyoc and Gleason (1993) also suggested that further research should be conducted in this area; however, the researcher found no other published studies on compressed economics courses.

Compressed Courses and Learning. In addition to success rates, improvements in learning and cognitive development have been demonstrated in compressed courses. Seamon (2004) asserted that compressed courses are superior to full-semester length courses in terms of learning outcomes. Students are challenged more by compressed course formats than by semester-length courses, having a positive effect on cognitive skills (Seamon, 2004). Rawls and Hammons (2012) suggested that students enrolled in accelerated courses or programs are more likely to demonstrate learning outcome achievement than are students in traditional courses. The learning outcomes described in the Rawls and Hammons (2012) study were critical thinking, communication, and global and cultural understanding.

Student participants in a study controlled by Kretovics et al. (2005) demonstrated learning as much or more than students in full-semester courses, based on student learning outcomes. Likewise, a study of adult learners enrolled in five-week compressed courses demonstrated higher levels of learning than students enrolled in 16-week courses (Wlodowski, 2003). Kasworm (2001) stressed that compressed courses are ideal for adult learners because adult learners "can learn and demonstrate proficiency in a shorter period of time" (p. 2). Most

community college students are nontraditional; that is, they are adult learners who work and have families in addition to attending school (Boggs, 2011; Hayward & Williams, 2015).

More than one-third of faculty surveyed at a single community college found students to be successful and less likely to withdraw from compressed courses versus regular length courses (Sheldon & Durella, 2010). A study conducted by Daniel (2000) showed that faculty found the compressed course experience to be positive. The study revealed that students enrolled in compressed sections of education courses performed better than those enrolled in traditional sections. Both formats were taught by the same instructor. Faculty reported more time for class discussions and learning activities in compressed courses than in longer courses (Daniel, 2000).

Time and Learning. As mentioned previously, compressed courses maintain the same number of contact hours as full-semester length courses. Maintaining the same number of contact hours over a shorter time frame results in equal academic rigor; however, courses and pedagogy are often restructured to accommodate the longer class sessions of compressed courses (Kretovics et al., 2005; Tatum, 2010; Gamboa, 2013).

Researchers have suggested a positive relationship between the amount of time students spend in learning activities and the amount of learning that occurs (Aguilar, 2006; Dills & Hernandez-Julian, 2008; Scott & Conrad, 1992). Aguilar (2006) proposed that "large learning effects could be expected when there were large increases in productive learning time if all other things were held constant" (p. 21). Instructors can incorporate active learning activities and provide students with more time on task during longer class sessions. Time on task is the amount of time that a student is actively engaged in instructor-directed activities or tasks (Aguilar, 2006, p. 24). Aguilar (2006) posited that more time is available for teaching and learning in classes that meet for longer duration as "longer blocks of continuous teaching cut

down on routine maintenance such as taking out and finding materials" (p. 26). Scott (1995) affirmed this in her qualitative research on accelerated summer session courses, noting that student participants reported having more time working on class activities in longer summer class meetings than in full-semester courses.

Dills and Hernandez-Julian (2008) reported higher grades in courses that meet for longer class sessions such as three hours as opposed to 90 minutes. An evaluation of grades and course schedules showed that grades were higher in courses that met two days per week for 80 minutes than in courses that met three days per week for only 50 minutes (Dills & Hernandez-Julian, 2008). This study was limited in that only full-semester courses were reviewed in the evaluation of time and learning. The study shows promise for compressed courses, however, as compressed courses meet longer per class session than traditional courses.

Interaction and Engagement

Evidence suggests that compressed or accelerated courses facilitate innovative teaching approaches (Kretovics et al., 2005; Lee & Horsfall, 2010; Scott, 2003). Compressed learning "can be conceptualized as an approach to education in which learning and teaching methods emphasize active, holistic experiences designed to increase the learning that can be achieved within any given timeframe" (Lee & Horsfall, 2010, p. 192). Such experiences include student-student and student-faculty interaction, collaboration and teamwork, and interactive activities (Lee & Horsfall, 2010). Specific teaching strategies and course design enhance the effectiveness of compressed courses (Davies, 2006). Scott (2003) reported that compressed courses often employ active learning activities such as group problem solving or hands-on activities rather than passive lectures.

Community colleges have a large population of working students. Forty percent of full-time community college students and 73 percent of part-time community college students work outside of the home in addition to attending college (Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, & Roth, 2012). Working students have less time to study and less time to meet with faculty and peers outside the classroom than students who do not work outside of the home. Therefore, the classroom, for most students (at both community colleges and four-year institutions), is the primary setting for student-faculty interaction, peer interaction, and other engagement activities (Laird, Chen, & Kuh, 2008).

In his research on college completion, which studied students from both two and four-year institutions, Tinto (2012) found that:

> The classroom is the one place, perhaps the only place, where students meet each other and the faculty and engage in formal learning activities. For the great majority of students, success in college is most directly shaped by their experiences in the classroom. Furthermore, for the many students who attend part-time or begin college academically unprepared, success in college is measured one course or even one class at a time (p. 115).

Many students withdraw from courses, and even from college, due to feelings of isolation or feeling less socially accepted, regardless of the institution type (Inman & Mayes, 1999; Maddox, 2013). Interaction and engagement behaviors promote students' sense of belonging (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Tinto (1993, 2006) contended that social involvement in an institution is a key factor to student success. Students who experience a sense of belonging are more likely to be successful and remain enrolled in their courses while they work through problems (Burns, 2010; Karp, Hughes, and O'Gara, 2008). Since community colleges and other commuter

institutions have fewer social activities than residential institutions, social and intellectual contact in the classroom is critical (Tinto, 1987, 1990, 2006). This type of engagement begins with communication between faculty and students.

Interaction. For more than three decades, researchers have shown that that student-faculty contact has the largest influence on grades and student cognitive factors (Astin, 1977; Bean, 1985; Kuh & Hu; 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Price & Baker, 2012; Tinto, 1987). More recent empirical research demonstrates that this is still true (Kuh et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rini, 2011). According to Rini (2011), students who form connections with peers and college staff, especially during the first few weeks of enrollment, are more likely to be successful.

Compressed courses offer more opportunity for engaging students and developing relationships. Longer class meetings allow students to have more interaction and contact with faculty. Astin (1977) maintained, "students who interact frequently with faculty members are more likely than other students to express satisfaction with all aspects of their institutional experience" (p. 521). Faculty contact has a large influence on grades and cognitive factors, and students who form connections with peers and college staff are more likely to persist (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Rini, 2011). When students feel a connection to faculty, they may be more likely to ask for assistance before withdrawing from a course than if they do not feel that connection.

Research conducted by Anastasi (2007) demonstrated that students preferred compressed course formats and that the shorter courses resulted in focused learning and "fostered more classroom interactions and in-depth discussions than regular semester courses" (p. 19). Mandernach, Donnelli, and Dailey-Herbert (2006) argued that instructor communication and interaction is more important to students than any other course component including textbooks,

assignments, and lectures. Instructor-student communication provides students with direct, targeted feedback (Mandernach et al., 2006).

In compressed courses, instructors are likely to have more time to interact with students and to utilize engaging pedagogies. Scott (2003) noted that students had more time to interact with instructors during three-hour compressed courses and students felt there was less downtime than in traditional courses. Students noted that full-semester courses that only met for 80 minutes provided less interaction with the instructor because it took typically 15 minutes to get started at the beginning of class and 15 minutes to wrap up at the end of class (Scott, 2003). Sheldon and Durella (2010) asserted that instructors perceived greater effectiveness in compressed accounting courses than traditional length courses because they were able to establish rapport with students more quickly in compressed courses.

Engagement. Student engagement is an essential element of community college student success and facilitates positive academic and social learning outcomes (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007). Engagement encompasses several learning-related behaviors including attendance and participation, completing assignments and class activities, and building relationships with faculty and peers. Kuh et al. (2007) identified student-faculty contact, active learning, time on task, and peer cooperation as engagement tactics directly related to student success (Kuh et al., 2007). Student engagement is stronger in institutions that implement the aforementioned engagement practices (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) posited that students who are more actively engaged with their subject matter are "more likely to learn and achieve their academic goals" than are students who are not engaged (CCSSE 2015 Cohort Findings,

2016). The specific engagement practices that informed this research were study habits, motivation, student-faculty interaction, and instruction (Kuh et al., 2007).

Research suggests that students are more engaged in compressed courses than in traditional length courses (Rawls & Hammons, 2012; Scott, 2006). Compressed course schedules provide faculty with more time per class session to interact and engage with students. Relationship and skill building activities may be easier to implement in compressed courses due to the increase in class time, and students spend more time with the instructor and peers during each class meeting (Scott, 2006).

Community colleges should implement student engagement strategies in the classroom. Burns (2010) claimed that community college students spend most of their on-campus time in the classroom. Online processes such as admissions, financial aid, registration and other student services permit students to enter the college directly through the classroom. Therefore, the classroom is *the* place where commuter students are acclimated to the institution (Burns, 2010). Tinto (2012) postulated that the classroom is the center of the educational experience and the place to focus on success.

Online Courses

Compressed course scheduling is not limited to traditional face-to-face classes. Online and hybrid courses are also delivered in compressed formats. NCES (2014) reported that 1,856,935 students, or 27.1 percent of all undergraduate students, enrolled in one or more online courses at 2-year institutions during the fall 2012 semester, a number that has continued to grow. This presents another challenge for community colleges since student success, in general, is lower in online classes than in face-to-face classes (Harrell, 2008). Self-directed learning is critical in online courses, and students must be more disciplined in order to succeed in an online

course than in a face-to-face course (NCES, 2014). Engaging and interactive teaching methods are critical in compressed online courses since students have to spend more time per week in the online class environment in order to complete the course in fewer weeks than a traditional semester. Research suggests that learning communities, teacher communication, and social presence are important to online students and help engage students in the learning environment (Baker, 2010; Dixson, 2010; Leong, 2011). These components are even more essential in compressed online learning environments.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of community college student characteristics as well as a review of literature on compressed courses. Community colleges enroll 45 percent of all undergraduate students (AACC, 2012). A majority of students work full or part-time in addition to attending school, and numerous students are also parents providing day-to-day care for their children. Many community college students come from economically disadvantaged families, are first generation college students, and have limited opportunities for higher education other than community colleges (Shannon & Smith, 2006).

Student success in community colleges is low. A review of literature on compressed courses shows that success is improved in the shortened course format. This may be due to an increase in the amount of time per class session, which allows for active and engaging teaching methods as well as increased communication between students and faculty.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study was designed to examine the lived experiences of community college students enrolled in compressed, 7-week courses in order to understand why students were more successful in compressed courses than in 14-week, full-semester length courses at one institution. It was important for the researcher to understand the research participants' perspectives of the compressed course format and why they believe success is improved. Therefore, the primary question that this study aimed to answer was: How do students explain higher success rates in compressed, 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses?

After a thorough review of literature on compressed courses, it became evident that there is a lack of research that could explain higher academic success in the shortened course format. Existing research demonstrates improvement and suggests that the modality may provide more opportunity for student engagement, including student-faculty interaction, development of peer relationships, active learning, and increased time on task (Anastasi, 2007; Daniel, 2000; Gamboa, 2013; Kretovics, Crowe, & Hyun, 2005; Lee & Horsfall, 2010; Scott, 2003; Scott & Conrad, 1992; Tatum, 2010). However, *why* success was elevated across numerous academic disciplines regardless of student demographic or academic background has not been explained. In order to address this, it was important to examine the lived experiences of students enrolled in compressed courses; therefore, a phenomenological approach to inquiry was fitting for this study.

This study was designed under a constructivist paradigm of inquiry; a paradigm in which epistemology and ontology are influenced by the social worlds in which the researcher and participants live. Constructivists contend that individuals create reality and are not just mere observers of reality (Hansen, 2004). Constructivism, also referred to as interpretivism

(Ponterotto, 2005), is an alternative to positivism, which maintains that reality is objective and is external to the individual. Constructivists rely on hermeneutical methodologies such as interpretative phenomenology and grounded theory. Creswell (2013) stated, "we see the constructivist worldview manifest itself in phenomenological studies, in which individuals describe their experiences" (p. 25). Constructivist researchers consider their interaction with research participants to be part of the data collection process. Results from interviews, observations, focus groups or other means of data collection are interpreted and then refined through dialectical discourse (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Constructivism is based on a relativist ontology where "realities are perceived as a multiplicity of intangible mental constructs which are based in human experience" (Mittwede, 2012, p. 27). Realities are contingent upon the individuals or groups maintaining the constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructivism employs a transactional and subjective epistemological approach since discoveries and results are reported from participants' interpretations and recollections (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mittwede, 2012). Reality is not objective; rather "realities are social constructions of the mind, and there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared)" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 43). While some of the researcher's underlying assumptions about the world may be subconscious, the assumptions have a role in research nonetheless. The researcher and the individuals being studied are "interactively linked with the values of the investigator inevitably influencing the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 110).

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological method of inquiry was fitting for this study. Specifically, the researcher employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

methodology. Qualitative research is appropriate when a phenomenon or problem cannot be accurately described in a quantitative manner (Creswell, 2013; Ospina, 2004). Qualitative research allows for a thorough, detailed understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The goal of this research was to uncover issues and circumstances that would be difficult to measure through quantitative research. Since the purpose of this study was to discover causes of improved academic success in compressed courses through the lenses of participants, it was important to ask participants open-ended questions about their experiences.

Miles and Huberman (1994) identified several characteristics common to all qualitative research traditions:

- Qualitative research is reflective of participants' everyday lives.
- Researchers capture data on the perceptions of the participants.
- The purpose of the research is to explain how participants being investigated "come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations" (p. 7).
- Multiple interpretations are possible.
- Analysis is performed on words, by comparing and analyzing words for patterns.

The objective of this research was not to make generalizations about success in compressed courses at all community colleges, but to understand, specifically, how participants explained and made sense of the phenomenon under investigation; that is, the occurrence of grades that were higher in compressed courses than in traditional, semester-length courses at their community college. A qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to obtain detailed, narrative information from students at the institution about experiences in compressed courses and how those experiences differed from experiences in full-semester courses.

Phenomenology

Understanding students' explanations of improved academic success in compressed courses required participants to reflect on their personal experiences with those courses; therefore, a phenomenological research approach was appropriate for this study. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a methodology (Dowling, 2004; van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology became a key philosophy in the early 20th century, with focus on the foundation and nature of truth (Dowling, 2007). As a methodology, phenomenology is a process by which researchers reflect "in a phenomenological manner on the living meanings of everyday experiences, phenomena, and events" (van Manen, 2014, location 664).

Creswell (2013) posited that phenomenology requires a researcher to gather information from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon that is being studied and then create a "description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals" (p. 76). According to Creswell (2013), "phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 76). A phenomenological research method will allow the researcher of this study to identify experiences that students in compressed courses have in common in an effort to understand why academic success improved in compressed courses.

Original Phenomenological Methods

Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger began the phenomenological movement in the early 20th century (van Manen, 2014). Husserl (2012) described phenomenology as "a science of essential being; a science which aims exclusively at establishing 'knowledge of essences' and absolutely no 'facts'" (p. 3). Van Manen (2014) interpreted Husserl's view of phenomenology as a "descriptive philosophy of the essences of pure experiences" (van Manen, 2014, loc 2205).

Husserl (2012) believed that knowledge should originate from experience and empirical evidence, and his goal was to capture the "essence" of experience without interpretation.

Transcendental Phenomenology. Husserl's phenomenology later transformed into what is now known as transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Transcendental phenomenology focuses on the objective truth and does not rely on the researcher's interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Importance is placed on the essence of the experience, "on the world as lived by a person" (Laverty, 2003, p. 22). Laverty (2003) asserted that the experience is then "understood as what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization" (p. 22).

Husserl believed that in order to understand the true essence of an experience, a person had to "bracket out" bias and pre-conceived notions of the world (Laverty, 2003). Processes are ingrained in the methodology to ensure objectivity and reliability. Epoche, a key component of the methodology, ensures that the researcher excludes personal bias and remains objective. It is critical that the transcendental phenomenologist remain objective so that "every quality has equal value" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87).

Hermeneutical or Interpretative Phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology stems from the work of Heidegger and Hans-Georgi Gadamer (van Manen, 2014). Unlike the epistemological approach of Husserl, Heidegger's phenomenological approach was ontological, focusing on the meaning of being or experience rather than the pre-reflective description of everyday experience (van Manen, 2014). Experience is the starting point for inquiry, which then requires reflection and interpretation (van Manen, 2014). Heidegger considered interpretation as a necessary component to studying life experiences. Interpretation of language or text is required in order to find hidden meanings (Dowling, 2004). Van Manen (2014) stated that

"phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be essentially interpretive and primarily oriented to the explication of texts (rather than directly oriented to lived experience)" (Van Manen, 2014, Chapter 5, Section 5, Paragraph 1).

According to Dowling (2004), neither Heidegger nor Gadamer advocated bracketing. Both philosophers believed that preconceptions and prejudices are important components of understanding (Dowling, 2004). Dowling (2004) affirmed, "pre-judgements or prejudices have a special importance in interpretation, and are not something that should be or can be disposed of" (p. 35). Furthermore, the author reported that the persons providing the stories and the researcher, or the person who forms an understanding of the stories, are "connected by human consciousness, which makes understanding possible" (Dowling, 2004, p. 35).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is grounded in both phenomenology and hermeneutics (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). According to Smith et al., (2009) IPA is "an interpretative endeavor and is therefore informed by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation" (Kindle edition, Chapter 1, Section 1, Paragraph 8). Like phenomenology, IPA relies on the descriptive accounts of the individuals who experienced a phenomenon; however, IPA also requires the interpretation of the researcher. The researcher is limited to the parts or description of an experience that the participant chooses to share and, therefore, must interpret the accounts provided by the participant. IPA requires the researcher to engage in double hermeneutics by "trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (Smith et al., 2009, Kindle edition, Chapter 1, Section 1, Paragraph 9).

IPA data analysis requires a thorough evaluation of interview transcripts, the identification of themes, the researcher's interpretative account of the information, relationships

between themes, and a narration of the themes (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher must thoroughly examine each case before moving on to general claims and themes. Smith et al. (2009) posited that IPA always requires interpretation of the researcher. Regarding interpretation, the researchers stated that "there is a phenomenon ready to shine forth, but detective work is required by the researcher to facilitate the coming forth, and then to make sense of it once it has happened" (Kindle edition, Chapter 2, Section 5, Paragraph 12).

Research Site

The research site is a community college located in the southeastern United States. The college had an unduplicated enrollment of 16,136 in fall 2014. Southern Community College (SCC) defines student success as a grade of C or higher in each course that a student completes. Benchmarking data from fall 2012 revealed that the institution had an enrollee success rate of only 63.6%. In an effort to improve student success, SCC administrators implemented a 7-week compressed course schedule beginning with the fall 2014 semester. More than 1,000 courses at the institution were converted to a 7-week format. Only 95 courses, such as nursing clinical experience and internships, remained in the 14-week format. The conversion was based on data that demonstrated improved student success in shorter courses. The occurrence of higher grades was observed regardless of student demographic or academic discipline. Additional information about the research site is available in Chapter 1.

Research Method

Using a phenomenological research methodology, researchers are able to find hidden meanings within a phenomenon being studied, which often requires interpretation by the researcher (Shinebourne, 2011). As stated previously, this study utilized an IPA methodology. A qualitative, interpretative phenomenological approach allowed the researcher and participants

to collaboratively describe participants' experiences in compressed courses. IPA is best suited to a data collection method, "which will invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1). The researcher collected data in multiple steps including face-to-face interviews and follow-up interviews. Details about data collection are presented in the Data Collection and Analysis section of this chapter.

Participants

According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is intended "not to generalize a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon" (p. 206). Research participants and sites must be purposefully selected to allow the researcher to explore the phenomenon in depth. For this study, the researcher purposefully selected participants who were best suited to answer questions about compressed courses and who could make comparisons between compressed courses and full-semester length courses.

This study employed a convenience sampling strategy. The researcher selected a sample of participants from varying demographic backgrounds since community colleges students vary widely in demographic characteristics. This strategy provided the researcher with varying perspectives of the complexity of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). It is essential that participants be selected based on their ability to represent a perspective rather than a population or other characteristic (Smith et al., 2009). A participant's experience with the phenomenon and ability to share the story was more important in selection than were demographic factors.

The researcher selected participants from multiple academic majors. Academic records of students who were enrolled in the institution in Fall 2013 or earlier and were enrolled in either Microeconomics (ECO211) or Macroeconomics (ECO210) courses during the Fall 1 2015 term

were reviewed. A sample of students who showed an increase in GPA from Fall 2013 to the first term of Spring 2015 was selected from those records. Spring 2014 was the last semester that the majority of SCC courses were offered in the full-semester length format. This ensured that participants experienced at least two semesters of full-semester length courses (Fall 2013 and Spring 2014) and two semesters of compressed courses (Fall 2014 and Spring 2015). Dual credit students and students with undeclared majors were excluded from the selection pool. ECO210 and ECO211 were chosen due to convenience and because the courses are general education requirements that have high enrollment. This provided the researcher with access to students with varying demographics and academic majors.

Recruitment and Access

After obtaining written approvals from the study site and the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A), email invitations were sent to students enrolled in Macroeconomics and Microeconomics (Appendix B). Students were provided with a description of the study, the inclusion criteria, and the amount of time that their participation was expected to take. Students were also notified that, if selected, they would receive a $20 gift card as compensation for their time. Nine participants, out of fourteen responses, were selected for the study. Respondents who did not meet the selection criteria described previously did not participate.

Protection of Human Subjects. All research poses some level of risk to participants, even if it is minimal. Therefore, research must be designed and conducted within ethical guidelines to minimize risk to participants. Prior to selecting participants, the researcher received IRB approval from Northeastern University (the research institution) as well as from the research site. Northeastern University requires that all research be approved by the Office of

Human Subject Research Protection (HSRP) and the IRB. This was a critical step as it ensured that the study was compliant with federal, state, and other regulatory guidelines related to human subject research. The mission of the Northeastern University IRB is to ensure that all human subject research "follows the basic ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as set forth in the Belmont Report" (Northeastern University, 2014).

Informed consent documentation was provided to all research participants (Appendix D). The informed consent explained the purpose of the study and notified participants of any risk associated with participation. Participants were assured that their identities will be kept confidential. Risk was expected to be minimal; however, participants shared personal stories such as struggles with courses, financial information, family issues, and other factors that caused difficulty in courses. It was important for participants to be assured that personal information would not be shared with anyone. Participants were also informed that involvement in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time. A description of the interview process and interview protocol was provided to participants so that they would know what to expect. Participants were asked to sign the informed consent document.

Ethical Considerations. As an employee of the research site, the researcher used utmost caution during the recruitment and interview processes to represent herself as a Northeastern University graduate student, not an employee of the research institution. This step was taken to avoid a perceived power imbalance by the participants. The researcher ensured that undue influence was not enforced upon participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

Phenomenological research requires that data be collected from multiple individuals who experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). Interviews, focus groups,

and observations are common methods of data collection in any type of phenomenological research, including IPA (Creswell, 2013). Interviews and diaries are the best means of accessing participants' detailed stories in IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009). Data for this study were collected in multiple steps. Collection began by conducting in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with nine participants. The interviews provided the researcher with an understanding of the participants' *lived* experiences in compressed length courses and how the participants made sense of improved success. Interview questions were designed to elicit participants' personal stories about compressed courses. This approach was appropriate since a research interview is "an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics, and which will allow the research question to be answered subsequently, via analysis" (Smith et al., 2009, location 1127). Each interview lasted between 60 – 90 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, with permission of the participant, and were transcribed by a professional transcription service. The interviews were conducted at mutually agreed-upon locations, typically at or near the research site. The interview protocol and questions are contained in Appendix C.

Follow-up interviews and clarification questions were conducted after transcription review. These were typically conducted via phone or email, but participants had the option to meet in person. Participants were allowed to review transcripts for accuracy and provide additional information if needed.

Charmaz (2014) suggested that researchers develop an interview guide to help cross-examine the questions being asked and evaluate the research process. An interview guide helps a researcher identify areas where follow-up questions need to be asked or topics need to be revisited. The guide is a tool to keep the researcher and participant on topic (Charmaz, 2014). The interviews in this study were semi-structured. The interview guide contained an initial set of

open-ended questions that all participants were asked; however, clarifying questions were also asked and dialog between the researcher and participants emerged as the participants' shared their experiences with compressed courses.

Charmaz (2014) offered seven principles to follow when developing questions and conducting an interview:

1. Give the participant's comfort level higher priority than obtaining juicy data.
2. Frame questions to understand the experience from the participant's view.
3. Affirm that the participant's views and experiences are important.
4. Be aware of questions that could elicit the participant's distress about an experience or incident.
5. Construct follow-up questions that encourage elaboration.
6. Slant ending questions toward positive responses to bring the interview to closure at a positive level.
7. Re-evaluate, revise, and add questions throughout the research process (p. 65).

Data analysis occurred in in multiple steps: preparing data, coding data, and discussion of data (Creswell, 2013). After preliminary interviews, data were transcribed and analyzed to identify themes or concepts. Member checking was employed during the follow-up interviews. Participants had the opportunity to review transcripts and add or correct information that was misinterpreted.

Data Storage

To protect the integrity of the research and the privacy of the participants, personally identifiable information (PII) was not recorded or stored. The researcher used pseudonyms to identify participant responses. Interview data, including recordings, transcripts, and memos,

were encrypted and stored on a secure computer in a locked room. Records will be kept for the length of time required by the IRB and will be destroyed according to IRB procedures.

Trustworthiness and Validation

The trustworthiness of a study is dependent upon the accurate depiction of meanings as described by participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Researchers must understand their personal values, assumptions, and biases related to the research (Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Validity in this study refers to the researcher's confidence that the data are accurate (Angen, 2000). The researcher employed verification and quality checking to ensure the data and findings were valid. The researcher sent interview transcripts to participants to verify validity of the transcripts. Participants could make corrections to any errors encountered. Only three participants responded, none of whom noted any errors.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative analysis was performed throughout this study. Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended that researchers begin coding as soon as possible after the first interview is complete "because the first data serve as a foundation for further data collection and analysis" (p. 163). Therefore, coding began immediately after the first interview was transcribed. Questions were then adjusted as necessary. This process continued until all interviews were completed, transcribed, and coded. During transcript review, the researcher coded the data and wrote analytic memos. Memo writing is often used in qualitative research to help make further analysis more theoretical and stronger (Charmaz, 2014). Data coding and memo writing enabled the researcher to identify patterns or categories from the data.

As concepts and categories emerged, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews, which involved collecting more information from participants about the categories that emerged

as well as clarification of responses that were needed. Follow-up interviews helped the researcher identify relationships among categories, determine category properties, and broaden the overall analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher wrote memos or took notes about the data and categories as they emerged and determined additional information that might be needed. During the memo writing process, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the interview data, asking questions and making comparisons (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Throughout the coding process, the researcher conducted a constant comparison to determine if categories could be combined or broken down further.

The researcher used Qualitative Research Software (QRS) to manage the coding and memo writing. This enabled the researcher to search on specific categories. The QRS software was able to quickly find connections among data which aided with the comparative analysis. Numeration of themes was also simplified using QRS software.

Positionality

Positionality is based on the researcher's perception of reality (Carleton Parsons, 2008). Reality is an individual's understanding of the world around her/him and how the individual perceives her/himself in that world (Carleton Parsons, 2008). Moore (2012) asserted that researchers are either considered inside or outside of a social group and that it is common for qualitative researchers to study social groups of which they are a member. Social groups may share realities.

Research participants in this study belonged to the social group of community college students. Based on the researcher's educational background and work experience, she was not part of the social group studied. The researcher had a traditional four-year, residential college undergraduate experience where academics were the top priority in her life. Her experience as a

teacher, academic advisor, and administrator of community college students taught her that community college students have many challenges in their lives in addition to academics. Personal bias, which included the assumption that students often prioritized academics lower than work or family obligations, and that struggles outside of school would interfere with coursework, had to be taken into account.

The researcher commonly dealt with students who had problems or issues causing them to struggle in one or more courses, or who did not turn in work and wanted to file a complaint that an instructor would not accept late work. In addition, the researcher had a son enrolled at the research site and heard about his experiences first hand. The researcher had to be mindful that these situations are not the case with all students. She had to ensure that her personal opinions and bias were not disclosed during interviews and that she did not influence the answers by persuading participants toward a particular answer. She remained mindful every student has experiences unique to him or her.

While the researcher did not allow her bias to influence the interviews, her bias assisted with interpretation and data analysis. Heidegger considered interpretation as a necessary component to studying life experiences (van Manen, 2014). The researcher's personal understanding of challenges and problems that community college students face aided her in the interpretation and analysis process.

Summary

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was an appropriate research methodology for studying students' perceptions of improved success in compressed-length courses. It was already known, quantitatively, that success improved in the compressed course modality at SCC; however, the reasons surrounding the phenomenon were unclear prior to this

study. Qualitative research allowed for a detailed investigation into the phenomenon from the students' perspectives. Allowing participants to share their detailed accounts of experiences with compressed courses provided insight into factors that enhanced student success in the compressed format as well as difficulties that participants experienced.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was to examine the lived experiences of community college students enrolled in compressed, 7-week courses in order to understand why success was higher in 7-week courses than in 14-week, full-semester length courses. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do students explain higher success rates in compressed, 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses? This chapter begins with participant demographic information. The chapter then presents participant profiles and interview summaries. Data analysis and coding methods are described next, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings and themes that emerged.

Participant Demographic Information

Nine community college students participated in this study. Participants were recruited from economics courses (ECO210 Macroeconomics and ECO211 Microeconomics). The ECO210 and ECO211 courses are general education electives that any students at the institution may select. The courses are required for business majors. Recruiting from these courses provided a variety of participants from various academic majors. Participants were selected from each course modality: three participants were enrolled in online course sections, three participants were enrolled in mixed-mode sections, and three participants were enrolled in traditional face-to-face sections. Only students who demonstrated academic success under the compressed schedule were selected to participate. Table 4.1 provides an overview of participant demographic information.

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Children/ Dependents	Employment Status	Economics Course Format	Major
David	23	Male	Caucasian	None	Full-time	Online	Network Systems Management
Rick	36	Male	Caucasian	One	Full-time	Online	Computer Programming
Cathy	20	Female	African-American	None	Full-time	Face-to-Face	Associate of Science
Jonathan	34	Male	African-American	One	Full-time	Face-to-Face	Engineering & Media Arts
Josh	37	Male	Caucasian	Two	Part-time	Mixed-Mode	Computer Information Systems
Keith	40	Male	Caucasian	Three	Part-time	Mixed-Mode	Associate of Science
Kristen	38	Female	Caucasian	Two	Unemployed	Face-to-Face	Film, Media, and Visual Arts
Jeff	60	Male	Caucasian	None	Part-time	Online	Network Systems Management
Leslie	42	Female	Caucasian	Two	Volunteer	Mixed-Mode	Business & Accounting

Table 4.1

Participant Profiles

This section provides a biographic and demographic description of each research participant and a summary of each participant's interview. The interview summaries highlight the key points of each interview. More detail from each participant will be provided in the description of the themes that emerged during data analysis.

Participant 1: David. *David* is a 23-year-old Caucasian male, enrolled full-time and majoring in network systems management. He is currently single and does not have any dependents; however, his fiancé is expecting their first child in four months. Community college was the only higher education option open to David because he dropped out of high school when he was 17. He completed his GED when he was 19-years-old and was the only participant to

receive a GED in lieu of a high school diploma. Working as a food sever at night, he initially was only able to attend school part-time.

David's Interview Summary. David enrolled at SCC because he "had no other options and it's a good starting point." Post-secondary education options were limited for David because he did not have a high school diploma. His first few semesters at SCC were tough. He did not have a strong academic work ethic and was unsure about what he wanted to do for a career. He came to SCC because he was "tired of working as a waiter, barely making minimum wage."

After exploring several academic majors, David decided on the Network Systems Management program. In addition to the Network Systems Management degree, he also enrolled in several certificate programs. After completing one of the certificates and an internship, he was offered full-time employment in the information technology field. He continued to take courses while working full-time.

David had to adjust his course schedule to accommodate his full-time job. Under the 14-week schedule, David preferred face-to-face or mixed-mode classes because he liked the interaction with faculty and classmates. However, he found it challenging to sit through a three-hour class after working all day and decided that online courses worked best for him under the compressed schedule. In addition, he noted that evening courses began at 6:00 and 7:30 under the 14-week schedule, allowing him to attend 7:30 classes with his job. The 7:30 timeframe was eliminated under the compressed schedule and it was very difficult for him to make it to class by 6:00 PM. He described his preference for online compressed courses, explaining that while he prefers face-to-face or mixed mode courses, it was difficult to accommodate a three-hour course with his work schedule. He stated, "Online classes let me work when I can. I can do a little each day as long as I make the due dates."

David was initially indifferent about the conversion to a compressed schedule; however, he now prefers 7-week terms. He described what he likes most about compressed courses: "I like that they're over quickly. Sometimes I found myself getting bored with 14-weeks' worth of classes. It can get redundant, and sometimes teachers are just filling in the time. There's no time for that now." He also noted that the compressed format was best for getting through courses that were uninteresting to him. He stated, "It's kind of grueling to go through a subject that you don't like for 14-weeks. If you're taking something that you're not interested in but you have to have it, taking it in 7-weeks you know that you just have to grind it out for the 7-weeks and then you're done."

Participant 2: Rick. *Rick* is a 36-year-old Caucasian male, enrolled part-time in the computer programming major. He is married, has one child and works full-time in addition to attending school. Prior to enrolling at SCC, Rick earned a bachelor's degree in exercise physiology and worked as a sports conditioner for major league baseball. The desire for a career change, need for training, and low tuition cost brought Rick to SCC. After completing a few courses and obtaining skills in computer programming, he became employed full-time in the computer-programming field, in addition to attending SCC part-time.

Rick's Interview Summary. Rick worked as a professional baseball strength coach for 11 years. He loved the job, but it required a lot of travel, which was not conducive to his family life. As he described the experience, "it is the greatest job in the world while you're single. When you're running all around the country when you're married with a child it gets a little rougher, and not very stable. I gave it a good shot, and did well, it was just time to do something else, start looking around at options."

Rick was interested in computer programming and decided to take a few online courses at SCC while still working as a strength coach. When asked why he selected SCC to learn new career skills he stated "I could take classes online while I was still working, while still traveling around the country, so that was the main benefit for me. That, and the cost, and everything else, it just worked out kind of perfect from there." Rick later left his job and enrolled at SCC full-time until he got his computer-programming job. He then continued his coursework part-time.

Rick's initial opinion of compressed courses was negative; however, his opinion changed and he now prefers 7-week courses. When asked to describe his initial experience with compressed courses, Rick expressed frustration. He commented, "I don't think the courses necessarily adjusted their workload to the 7-weeks, especially with programming classes." He explained that he needed more time between assignment deadlines, which he did not have under the compressed schedule, so that he could "make mistakes and try to figure your way through those mistakes, and with the compressed schedule, and you're still building the same amount of programs, you don't necessarily have time to recover from mistakes."

Participant 3: Cathy. *Cathy* is a 20-year-old African-American, single female who lives with her parents. She works full-time and attends SCC full-time as an Associate of Science major. Cathy began her college career at a four-year private institution but transferred to SCC because she wanted a major that was not offered at the four-year school. Low tuition was the primary reason that Cathy selected a community college rather than transferring to another four-year school. In addition to low tuition, SCC students receive lottery-funded tuition assistance provided by the state … to students enrolled in a technical college. Lottery assistance was very helpful to Cathy as she was not eligible for Pell grants and did not want to take student loans.

Cathy's Interview Summary. Cathy started her college career at a four-year school, but quickly discovered that she was uncertain as to what she wanted to do for a career. Rather than waste money at the four-year school, she transferred to SCC. The Associate of Science program at SCC is transferable and will allow Cathy to continue her education if she so chooses. Cathy also takes classes in the visual arts program. In addition to attending college full-time, Cathy works two part-time jobs, which total more than 40 hours per week.

During the interview, Cathy explained that she prefers face-to-face courses and she was initially concerned about the long class meeting times required under the compressed schedule. She thought that it would be difficult for her to sit through three or four hour courses, most of which have labs in addition to lecture. However, she was pleasantly surprised during the first compressed term. The time passed quickly because most of her instructors added hands-on activities to their course content to break up the lecture time.

Most of the research participants indicated not having much free time between work and school; however, Cathy believed that she had much more time available because she only took two courses at a time rather than four or five. Under the 14-week semester Cathy was on campus almost every day from early morning to late afternoon to accommodate a full-time course load. She commented on this:

> I think it [the compressed schedule] gives us more time to do other things as well because you're not taking as many classes at one time. I have more time during the day. If my class is later, I can do something in the morning or if my class is in the morning, I can do something in the afternoon and not sit in class from 8-4, 8-5, all day long. It offers more time to do things.

Participant 4: Jonathan. *Jonathan* is a 34-year-old African-American male, enrolled at SCC full-time as a dual engineering and media-arts major. He is a veteran, works part-time, and is a single parent of a young child. SCC was not Jonathan's first college experience. He previously attended a four-year for-profit institution but transferred to SCC because he did not like his experience with the other school. SCC accepted the Post-911 GI Bill education benefits that Jonathan receives and was much more cost-effective than the for-profit institution.

Jonathan's Interview Summary. SCC is Jonathan's first college campus experience. He previously attended a for-profit institution while enlisted as an active duty service member. His courses were either completed online or in a classroom at the military base where he was stationed. After Jonathan separated from the military, he enrolled at SCC to continue his education.

Jonathan claimed that his personal success under the compressed course schedule was a combination of more focused studying, immersion in subject matter, more attention from instructors, and the motivation he felt when he finished a course and saw final grades. He also sensed that he was finishing his degree program faster than he was under the 14-week schedule. He described how his opinion changed from disliking 7-week courses to actually enjoying the new schedule: "Actually I began enjoying the compressed schedule for the simple fact that I'm able to complete more in a shorter period of time." Like most of the participants, Jonathan took the same number of courses in a compressed semester as he did in a full semester.

Jonathan provided a unique perspective to this study. He indicated that success improved under the compressed schedule because students who were not serious about their education stopped attending. Jonathan stated, "I noticed the enrollment started getting a lot smaller. I wasn't noticing as many people around campus. I came to the conclusion that because it is a lot

more work within those shorter weeks that sort of weeds out the individuals that are not serious about school. Of course, I can see the grades being higher or the graduation rates probably increase because of that." When asked if he thought this was positive he commented, "Yeah, I do think that's very important. That's a good thing, to weed out individuals who are not serious about it, about going to school. That sort of makes me feel like a lot more is available to the individuals that are serious about it."

Jonathan also relied heavily on academic advising, which he claimed was more important under the compressed schedule. When asked if he scheduled his courses differently, he said, "I never just schedule my own classes. I get the advice of instructors or someone, because I really don't know what I'm walking into whenever I schedule my own courses. They will have more experience as far as what they feel would go better together, especially now."

Participant 5: Josh. *Josh* is a 37-year-old Caucasian male. He is married, has two children, and works part-time, in addition to majoring in computer information systems. SCC is Josh's first college experience; however, he began at SCC shortly after high school and quit because of low grades and being unsure of what he wanted to do. Nearly twenty years of full-time employment as an auto mechanic prompted him to return to college. College was the only path to increased earnings and professional growth because he was at the ceiling of earning and growth potential in his career. Like most of the participants described previously, Josh selected the community college because of low tuition and convenience.

Josh's Interview Summary. Josh was one of few participants who embraced the compressed schedule immediately. SCC offered 7-week courses prior to the compressed-schedule conversion; however, full-semester length courses were also offered, and the number of 7-week courses was limited. Josh stated that he "looked for short classes before they were

compressed. I looked for the class that let me get in and get out. I could do twice as much work in a semester and graduate faster. That was my mindset".

Josh preferred face-to-face courses so that he could have more time with his instructors than he had with mixed-mode or online classes. He indicated that he built better relationships with instructors and classmates in compressed courses than he did in full-semester length courses. In Josh's experience with full-semester courses, it took several weeks for him and other students to feel comfortable with each other and to participate in class discussions. He said, "A lot of people don't start being involved in class discussions and stuff, until week two or week three normally [in full-semester courses]. It speeds up that process [in compressed courses]." When asked why he believed peer relationships were stronger, Josh stated, "Any time you sit beside somebody for three hours straight, you are going to get to know them."

Participant 6: Keith. *Keith* is a 40-year-old Caucasian male. He is married, has three children, and works-part time as a math tutor at the College. His wife also attends SCC, which makes life challenging. They have to arrange after-school transportation and childcare for their children around their SCC class schedules. They typically schedule courses at opposite times so at least one parent can be home with the children.

Keith is a veteran of the US Marine Corp and uses his Post-911 GI Bill education benefits to attend school. Several years ago, Keith completed an associate's degree in Network Systems Management and is now enrolled full-time in the Associate of Science program. He elected to stay in school, in the science program, so that he can transfer to a baccalaureate program. SCC was his school of choice after leaving the military because of the convenient location, low tuition, and variety of academic programs offered. Prior to joining the military, he enrolled in a four-year public institution. Being a first generation college student, he found navigating the

enrollment, financial aid, and scheduling processes extremely difficult and left the institution to join the Marine Corps.

Keith's Interview Summary. With the exception of a calculus course, Keith enjoyed compressed courses from the beginning. He liked being able to concentrate on fewer subjects at one time and enjoyed the fast pace of the course. The researcher asked him to talk about his calculus course. He noted that the course met for four hours, two nights per week. He added that:

> I was pretty well burnt out by the time hour two was finished. By the time hour three was finished, I was trying to write down as fast as I could what my instructor was putting on the board. It wasn't the instructor, he could break things down into phenomenally easier than what you think they should be, but that course at that level, that fast, my brain could not process the information fast enough. Even as good as he is at breaking things down, by the time the third hour was over, all I was trying to do was copy the work down because I was literally incapable of processing it. I think the major component on that though was the length of the single class, where if we had had it two hours a night, four nights a week, there would have been a break for absorbing what we've gotten in class prior to the next two hours. I will never try a 2x4 math class again.

Keith discussed the importance of the instructor's caring demeanor in that particular class, and indicated that all of his instructors seemed very understanding of the transitions students had to make to the compressed schedule. Faculty members were willing to provide extra help to students who were challenged by the new course format. He noted that instructors had to adjust to the new scheduling format just like students did. He described an experience from one of his classes: "I had one instructor who flat out told us we all needed to adjust to it

because it was the new norm. He told us 'I'm going to teach this class as well as I can. I want all of you to try and study the material as well as you can. Together, we can get through it.' Even instructors who had a negative attitude toward it [compressed schedule] had a positive attitude towards what we, in the classroom, could do about it. I think that was helpful."

Participant 7: Jeff. *Jeff* is a 60-year-old Caucasian male. He is single with no dependents, is a retired veteran student, and is enrolled full-time in the Network Systems Management degree program. He also works part-time at the college. Prior to the compressed schedule, Jeff was enrolled part-time taking only two classes per semester. After the conversion to the compressed schedule he began taking two classes per term which enables him to complete four courses per semester. Jeff attended a four-year public liberal arts college prior to enrolling at SCC. He left the institution because he did not like the program in which he was enrolled. SCC offered more "skill-based" education. He indicated that the four-year program was "too theoretical" and that he liked the "hands-on" education provided in the SCC technology programs.

Jeff's Interview Summary. Jeff retired from active duty military service more than ten years ago. After he retired he completed several continuing education courses at SCC, earned vendor technical certifications in the information technology field, and obtained employment in the field. His desire to expand his knowledge of the field inspired him to leave his job and pursue a college degree full-time. Jeff was not in a rush to finish his degree, nor did he have an immediate need to be employed since he earned enough income from his retirement and Post-911 GI Bill benefits. Prior to the compressed schedule, Jeff was enrolled part-time taking only two classes per semester. He preferred to take only two courses so that he could concentrate on only two subjects at a time. After the conversion to the compressed schedule he began taking

two classes per term or four courses per semester. When asked why he increased his course load he responded, "I didn't, really. I always take two courses at a time." However, prior to the compression Jeff completed six credits per semester and he now completes twelve.

Jeff described his experience with compressed courses as "busy but manageable", which is understandable considering he had actually doubled his course load. He credited several factors for improved student success under the compressed schedule including time management, focus, faster course completion, and instruction. For Jeff, success improved because he saw faster progress toward completion, which motivated him to work harder. He also planned and managed his time every day to study and complete assignments.

Participant 8: Kristen. *Kristen* is a 38-year-old Caucasian female. She is a single parent of two teenage children. Kristen does not have a paid work position; however, she volunteers part-time, holds an officer position in the Phi Theta Kappa honors society, and tutors other students free of charge. SCC is her second experience with higher education. Prior to enrolling at SCC, Kristen attended a public university but did not finish her degree because she did not feel like she "fit in" at the institution. SCC was a good fit because of low tuition and the convenient location. Kristen is currently enrolled full-time at SCC, majoring in radio and TV broadcasting.

Kristen's Interview Summary. Kristen came back to school because she found it hard to advance in the workplace without a degree. She was earning limited income and was struggling as a single parent. She commented about her struggles managing parenthood and her education, stating "It's been hard, and I'm not going to deny it's been hard. It's not for everybody, but to me it's what I wanted to do."

Kristen had a difficult transition from the full-semester schedule to the compressed schedule, mainly due to the time commitment that she experienced. Her two teenage children, ages 13 and 14, attended a private high school and she was responsible for their transportation to and from school. She found it challenging to schedule her courses during the time that her children were in school. Scheduling was especially difficult because most of her courses had labs and met between four and five hours twice per week rather than just the three-hour sessions that non-lab courses meet. Kristen also needed time to complete assignments and study. She enrolled in two courses per term under the compressed schedule. Additionally, she was actively involved in the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honors society, which consumed a lot of her time. Kristen did not like the compressed schedule at first but learned to enjoy it because, as she stated, it made her "more efficient."

When asked to describe how she feels about the schedule now she stated, "I love it. I like the idea that I can take 12 credit hours and I only take 2 classes at a time. It's very manageable now. I could take 3 courses at a time. The only reason I don't is just, I don't want to struggle in any course. I have a 4.0 GPA now and I want to keep that. I feel like I can handle the 2 classes being a mom, everything, being an active member of PTK I feel like I can handle it all with a 12 hour load." She also began to feel as though she had more time, "I like the compressed because I feel like I have more time because I only have one other class. I don't have to work on three other classes at the same time."

Participant 9: Leslie. *Leslie* is a 42-year-old Caucasian female. She is a full-time student majoring in both accounting and business and is an active participant of Phi Theta Kappa, where she holds an officer position. Leslie is married to a fully disabled veteran and has two adult daughters. One of her daughters is classified as disabled and relies on her for care and

transportation to and from school. She also tutors other students on a volunteer basis. Prior to coming to South Carolina, Leslie attended two other community colleges but did not complete a program of study at either school. She left those schools due to military relocation.

Leslie's Interview Summary. Leslie implied that she did not like compressed courses during the first term; however, her opinion quickly changed as she learned to manage her life more effectively. She inferred that she could not procrastinate or put off completing her course work and maintain her high level of success. Leslie also noted that the demands of her compressed courses taught her that it was acceptable to decline requests to take on additional work. She commented, "I found out that it is ok to say 'no', which was hard at first because I always said 'yes' to everything. Now I either say 'no, I can't do that' or 'not right now'."

Leslie shared that another reason student success is improved in compressed courses is because students seem to be more engaged. "Engagement" occurred because students were "immersed in their courses." Immersion seemed to occur because each class met for longer periods, and had more reading and work due each week than was required in full-semester length courses.

Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis conducted using the interpretative phenomenological methodology requires an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007) involving line-by-line evaluation of interview transcripts, the identification of themes, the researcher's interpretative account of the information, relationships between themes, and a narration of the themes (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) posited that IPA analysis is flexible and that there is no one correct method for conducting interpretative phenomenological analysis. The authors also recommended that researchers use innovative approaches to analysis; however, they provided a

systematic process to aid amateur researchers (Smith et al., 2009). In this study, the researcher followed the recommended systematic prescription, which included: (1) multiple readings of the transcript, (2) memo writing, (3) identification of emergent themes in the transcript, (4) development of connections across themes, which included identification of superordinate or overarching themes, (5) repeating the process for the next participant transcript, and (6) identification of patterns across all participants. The researcher reviewed the interview transcripts, made initial notes by hand, and then used qualitative research software (QRS) to aid with identification of patterns across themes and across participants. The handwritten notes and codes were entered into the QRS software.

Codes and themes emerged based on both the narratives provided by the participant and the interpretation by the researcher. IPA requires collaboration between the researcher and participant to develop an analysis of the experience (Smith et al., 2009). According to Smith et al. (2009), "although the primary concern of IPA is the lived experience of the participant and the meaning which the participant makes of the lived experience, the end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking" (Kindle location 1675, chapter 5 paragraph 6).

During multiple readings of each transcript and multiple reviews of each audio recording, the researcher was able to ascertain the true meaning of the participant's experience (Smith et al., 2009). This often required the researcher to interpret the meaning from the participant's interpretation and then identify descriptive and conceptual codes and descriptions for memo writing. Descriptive codes are based on the explicit nature of the experience while conceptual codes require interpretation of meaning, not clearly identified by the participant (Smith, et al., 2009).

Findings

Smith et al. (2009) inferred that there is no one correct method for writing up research findings; however, their IPA protocol suggests that researchers use an orderly sequence beginning with the first superordinate theme, defining the theme, providing evidence from participants to support the theme, and then repeating the process for each superordinate theme. The authors provided two techniques for documenting findings: one method involves relating themes to existent literature while the second recommends keeping the findings separated from the literature (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher of the present study employed a constant comparative approach that examined scholarly evidence to inform the themes generated during data analysis; however, the relationship of emergent themes to existing research literature is discussed in Chapter 5.

Five superordinate themes emerged during the data analysis process, each of which was constructed from emergent, nested themes. Superordinate themes are themes that are common among most participants (Smith et al., 2009). All emergent themes were constructed from both the participants' descriptions of their experiences and the researcher's interpretation of the descriptions; as such, they serve to explain the students' experience of higher success rates in compressed, 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses. The superordinate themes identified were:

1. Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules).
2. The compressed course schedule frequently provides evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance.

3. Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success.
4. Knowledge retention contributes to success in compressed courses.
5. Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contribute to academic success in compressed courses.

Table 4.2 shows the superordinate themes along with the corresponding nested themes.

Superordinate Themes	**Nested Themes**
Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules).	Avoiding procrastination Feeling overwhelmed/pressure Increasing frequency of studying Scheduling courses based on content or difficulty Persisting or persevering through the 7 weeks
The compressed course schedule frequently provides evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance.	Seeing grades after 7 weeks provides a sense of accomplishment and motivates students to do well in the next term. Feeling like goals are being accomplished sooner Finishing degree faster because students see grades sooner and course completion sooner
Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success.	Focusing on fewer courses at one time (2 or 3 courses rather than 4 or 5) Immersing oneself in the subject Concentrating – fewer distractions by other subjects or other courses
Knowledge retention contributes to success in compressed courses.	Retaining more information from beginning of course to final exam Retaining more knowledge from prerequisite course to next level
Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contributed to academic success in compressed courses.	Changing pedagogy– more class discussion, active learning, flipped classroom Lecturing less Focusing more on important information during class time Implementing activities

Table 4.2

Numeration was used to determine the importance of the themes and identify the superordinate themes. Smith et al. (2009) suggested that the more often an emergent theme appears signifies the importance of that theme. Table 4.3 demonstrates the numeration that the researcher used in superordinate theme identification. Themes evolved into superordinate themes if five or more participants identified the theme.

	Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments	The compressed course schedule frequently provides evidence of accomplishment which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance	Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success	Success in compressed courses resulted from increased knowledge retention	Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contributed to academic success in compressed courses
Cathy	x	x	x		x
David	x	x	x	x	x
Jeff	x	x	x	x	x
Jonathan	x	x	x	x	
Josh	x		x	x	
Keith	x	x		x	x
Kristen	x	x	x	x	x
Leslie	x	x	x	x	
Rick	x	x	x	x	x

Table 4.3

Theme One: Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules)

All participants in this study identified experiences that they or the researcher interpreted to be time management or schedule management. These experiences included avoiding procrastination, scheduling time to study and complete assignments, intentionally pairing courses together when planning academic schedules, and persevering through difficult courses.

Studying. The rigor of compressed courses fostered a change in participants' study habits, which positively affected student success. All of the research participants in this study reported having to study more frequently each week under the compressed schedule than they did during the 14-week semester. Participants also indicated that they had to actively manage and schedule time to study. One participant stated that his work, family, and school commitments required him to study "whenever he could, where he could" which was initially complicated by the compressed schedule. Managing and scheduling time to study helped him be successful.

All non-lab courses at the research site consist of 47 hours of instruction regardless of whether the course is scheduled for 7-weeks in length or 14-weeks in length. However, students had the perception that there was much less time in a compressed course. The researcher interpreted the description of "less time" to mean there are fewer days in between assignment deadlines and exams in a compressed course than in a full-semester length course. This is because compressed courses maintain the same number of credit and contact hours as the full-semester length equivalent. Josh described his experience stating, "there wasn't enough time in the compressed format so I would spend hours and hours in the lab to get everything done." He reported being overwhelmed and not getting all of his work done until he learned how to manage his time.

Several research participants reported having to improve or implement time management skills in order to keep up with the fast pace of compressed courses as well as jobs, family obligations or other responsibilities in their lives. Participants expressed that compressed classes were extremely fast paced. The increased pace required either more studying per week or increased intensity of studying than required with full-semester length classes. David noted that compressed courses were "very fast and require a lot more studying." Under the compressed schedule, David had to "spend a lot more time reading and getting prepared for class." He indicated that the adjustment from full-semester courses to compressed courses was challenging, and stated, "It's kind of difficult to go from having all that time in 14-weeks to all of a sudden you've got to do time management and figure out a schedule that works best to get everything done in 7-weeks."

David cited increased studying and reading as reasons for his improved success. When asked to describe how his study habits changed with compressed courses David responded:

> The amount of studying is still the same but the frequency of it is a lot higher because things are…the due dates are pushed closer together on assignments. Due dates are more frequent and there is less time between due dates. But I do spend a lot more time reading to be prepared for class.

He also noted that he has less time available to study in between assignment deadlines and class meetings, though he believes his studying is more focused now. He stated "Whenever you're studying a subject that you don't know much about or you don't understand, it can be a little more difficult and sometimes can get overwhelming because the assignments are so pushed together. You don't have as much time to study for your tests as you did in the longer semesters."

Joseph reported being more successful under the compressed schedule as his individual grades and overall GPA improved. However, Joseph mentioned that he was "often stressed by the amount of studying I [he] had to do." It is important to point out that he was a dual major in engineering as well as film production, so it was likely that his courses required more effort than other fields of study. When asked to describe events or issues that caused stress or made him feel overwhelmed he expressed that "it was the amount of studying involved. I got to put a lot more time in when I have a short class. Say, if I only have a week to study seven chapters, eight chapters, and actually try to retain this information and do projects as well, me personally, I just got to put a lot more time into the material." Joseph noted that he made scheduling adjustments to accommodate the increased amount of studying. He quit one of his jobs and adjusted his hours at his other job so he could have more time available to study. He stated: "I definitely wasn't able to continue my full-time job. In the beginning, I did have a full-time job, but I saw the only way that I would be able to make it through would be to take a part-time job or just don't work at all. But it's okay because other than that, I wouldn't have gotten where I am now. What I'm saying is that I feel like I've accomplished a lot." Joseph expressed a preference for the compressed schedule now that he has been enrolled in compressed courses for three semesters because he is more successful. He commented that he "had to learn to be a different type of student. I had to learn how to study for the shorter classes. I had to revamp my whole way of thinking and my behaviors and my patterns. I guess my work habits and my study habits."

Jeff stated that he had to proactively and efficiently manage his time in a seven week schedule to avoid falling behind. He stated that he "always had too much time taking two classes in 14 weeks...I have to be a little bit more efficient on my studying [now]. I have to make sure I am not wasting time when I sit down to study or do the homework or projects." Jeff took two

courses in a 14 week semester and now enrolls in two courses per seven week term, which has essentially doubled the number of credits he enrolls in at a time. However, the compressed schedule is allowing him to complete his degree sooner. He prefers to take two courses at a time so he can focus strictly on two subjects.

Rick experienced increased stress during the first compressed term due to the intensified workload of his classes. He adjusted his study habits by scheduling time to read and study every day to keep up with the demands and deadlines in his courses. He described his initial experience: "It's a lot of reading. I had a week to do four chapters, four quizzes, a test, and then a final. It's a lot of work to get through it, but I just get through it and move on to the next thing." Rick also indicated that he did not like the "rushed" feeling with his programming courses but he did not have any alternatives with the compressed schedule. He stated "I want to be able to have time to sit down and focus on something, and really learn how to do it the right way, not just get it done and move on to the next one." Although Rick's comments seemed adverse to the compressed schedule, he mentioned that he liked the compressed schedule.

Kristen related her success in 7-week courses to time management strategies such as prioritization. She said "the way I manage my time is prioritize what has to be done. I don't have to fold this laundry, but I do have to study for my test. My test is tomorrow." Kristen schedules time to complete homework and study and she sticks to the schedule.

Cathy also implemented time management strategies to accommodate the compressed schedule. She mentioned that allowing more time to study contributed to her success. As a full-time student Cathy was taking four courses per semester. Cathy's program of study included many lab courses which had her in school from approximately 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday, during the 14 week semester schedule. Since she only took two courses per

term under the compressed schedule, she was able to reduce her time on campus to two or three days per week which provided her with much more time to study and complete assignments. Cathy stated "I don't think people understand. I was literally in class from 8 A.M. until, 3, 4, or 5 in the afternoon every day. You have to get home and do homework for an hour or two then it's time to go to bed. I didn't have time for anything. Now I can put more time into studying and doing homework." Cathy commented that she doesn't have to "cram" anymore which has improved her grades.

Procrastination. The compressed schedule did not allow time for procrastination and required students to be disciplined in completing assignments and studying. Findings indicated that students could not postpone work or studying in compressed courses and be successful. Several participants reported being overwhelmed during the first compressed term which was attributed to procrastination behavior carrying over from the 14 week semester. Participants credited increased student success to reduced procrastination and managing time more effectively. David indicated that he had a lot of idle time between assignment or exam deadlines in 14-week classes, and he put off class work until the last minute and then crammed to get everything done on time. That behavior was stressful.

David previously found himself "procrastinating a lot because there was so much time in between tests and assignments and I didn't feel the urgency to get things done right away." He noted that he could not postpone classwork under the compressed schedule without falling behind. When asked if he feels a sense of urgency in compressed courses he said "yeah, if I decide not to read a chapter for a day or two I can get extremely behind and wind up spending four hours in one day reading two chapters. I work until 6:00 pm so if I get home at 7:00 and have to read for four hours, I'm up until 11:00 and have to be back up for work the next day." He

also mentioned, “I'm very prone to procrastinating on assignments, so with the 7-week courses I don't.” David also mentioned that his “grades went up a lot when I [he] stopped procrastinating and studied more.”

David described problems that procrastinating caused him in the past, namely failing and withdrawing from classes. He stated that it was easier to procrastinate in the full-semester schedule because of a longer length of time between assignment deadlines as well as taking more classes concurrently. He said, “I’m terrible at procrastinating, so if I miss an assignment and I start to get bad grades in a class and I’ve got four other classes that I’m focusing on, I’ll just drop the one that I’m not doing well in so I can focus on the other three.”

Research participants alluded to complete immersion in subject matter under the compressed course format. Leslie affirmed that the seven week schedule “does not allow procrastination”, which is “part of the immersion, whereas before, I would read once a week. Now I read every day.” She also noted that students “definitely can’t take a break and sometimes that’s tough.” Leslie now plans her time carefully each day so that she can schedule enough time to study and complete assignments. She stated:

> There is no time to procrastinate, for anything. You're still getting the same amount of material, but you're not necessarily getting enough time to do the homework and the papers. The in-class stuff, you get more hands-on, not necessarily more lecture, which I actually like a lot. One of my classes right now, I have three days to get through two chapters, and I'm doing 16 chapters in the 7-week term. I have three days to read two chapters, understand them, take two quizzes, and take a test on top of my other courses. And write papers. I have four papers due for that class, and there are other things that are due within that, too, so it's not just simply reading.

Time management was probably more critical to Leslie than to any other participant in this study due to her family obligations and volunteer work. She indicated that she could not procrastinate and had to carefully manage her time to remain successful:

> I feel like my ability to do my extracurricular stuff and tutoring is more limited. Whereas before, like I said, I could put things off. I could focus on something else, at any time; I could drop what I was doing and say, 'You need help? How can I help you?' Now, it needs to be scheduled in advance. I really can't drop what I'm doing and play. But that's ok because I'm doing well.

Rick and Jonathan indicated that avoiding procrastination contributed to success. Rick did not consider himself a procrastinator prior to the compressed schedule but he was "much more relaxed with studying and completing assignments" during the 14 week schedule. He mentioned that he previously didn't feel "crunched" to get things done like he did under the compressed schedule. Likewise, Jonathan did not consider himself a procrastinator during the 14-week semesters but, looking back, he agreed that he probably did procrastinate. He commented, "I didn't realize I was doing it [procrastinating] but I look at myself now and how I was then. I just didn't have the correct work habits in place. I didn't have the discipline."

Scheduling. In addition to scheduling time to study and complete assignments, ideas about scheduling classes emerged during the interviews and data analysis. Several participants mentioned that they became more proactive in planning their course schedules under the compressed schedule than they did previously. They indicated that careful schedule planning was a factor related to success. For instance, Keith, David, and Josh all scheduled multiple courses, which they anticipated would be either "easy" or "boring" in the same term so they could finish them quickly and "get them over with". Keith stated that he really liked the

compressed schedule because he "knew with some classes it meant that I would be able to knock them out quickly and easily." When asked about course and time scheduling, David stated: "I found myself thinking differently about pairing courses together. Whenever I'm taking 7-week courses, I tend to take courses that are going to build on top of each other. I would take two networking courses at the same time because it's a little easier to only do the networking in seven weeks so I could get better grades."

Other participants sought out specific course modalities to enhance success so that they could better manage study and class time around other obligations. For example, Rick and David both scheduled online courses rather than face-to-face or mixed-mode to accommodate the compressed schedule along with full-time work schedules. Rick noted that he preferred compressed online classes over face-to-face classes because of the time commitment required sitting in a face-to-face class. He stated, "for people working full time, with family, it's really hard to get to those classes and get everything else done. I don't think I could have kept my grades up if I tried to take all in-class classes." Rick limits himself to two courses per term.

David began taking most of his courses online after conversion to the compressed schedule. This was largely due to his work schedule and his inability to get to night courses on time after work. In response to a question about success related to scheduling classes differently under compression David stated, "I can do better in an online class because I'm working full time now. You're in class for three hours and it can be rather difficult to work that around a full-time work schedule. It's also hard to pay attention for 3 hours, depending on the subject and the way the instructor teaches." David also added that the reason he can't "pay attention" for three hours is because of being tired from work not because of the compressed format.

Jonathan now pairs classes based on perceived difficulty in order to maximize success. In reference to scheduling courses he noted that "it all depends on the classes. The reason I say that is because some of them actually take more work than others. You got to put a lot more effort in for some classes versus the next." He mentioned that scheduling easier classes with more difficult classes enabled him to spend more time on difficult course material: "you can kind of substitute, like take a little bit of time from here and apply that time to this. I couldn't really do that before with the longer classes."

Kristen actively plans and manages her daily schedule. She explained that success for her improved primarily because she had to "actively schedule time to study and had to prioritize things that needed to be done". She felt a great deal of stress during the first compressed term but scheduling time to study helped reduce the stress. After learning how to prioritize and implement time management strategies, she began to enjoy the compressed course schedule. Like Kristen, Leslie also learned to manage her daily schedule. She had to deliberately direct her time and daily schedule to accommodate schoolwork, volunteer work, and care for her family because it was "too easy to fall behind in my classes."

Perseverance. Findings from this study revealed that students are more willing to persevere through a 7-week course that they may not like than they would a 14-week course. Wolters and Hussain (2015) defined perseverance as being able to "sustain the time and energy necessary for accomplishing long term tasks" (p. 299). A majority of the research participants in this study admitted feeling overwhelmed by the compressed schedule; however, most of them believed that by effectively managing their time they could persevere through seven weeks to the end of the course, as indicated by Kristen: "I can do anything for seven weeks. I can tough anything out for seven weeks. It's just a little more challenging."

During his interview, David mentioned that it was difficult to stay motivated for 14 weeks in subjects that were not interesting to him. Lack of motivation caused him to procrastinate and fall behind in his courses, which resulted in lower grades, failing courses, or withdrawing from courses. This difficulty seemed to dissipate under the compressed format: "it's kind of grueling to go through a subject that you don't like for 14 weeks. If you're taking something that you're not interested in but you have to have it, taking it in seven weeks you know that you just have to grind it out for the seven weeks and then you're done." David noted that frequent deadlines in his courses made it easier to stay focused and "grind it out" in less interesting courses.

Leslie had similar comments about staying engaged and persevering for seven weeks in classes that she did not like. The researcher interpreted that the compressed course format promoted a sense of accomplishment and motivation in Leslie because she was able to persevere. She explained, "sometimes you feel frustrated with so much to do but then you realize you're almost done with the term and only have a few weeks to go. Then it's easy to keep going." She noted that she often wanted to quit or withdraw from a course in the full-semester format but stated that it's easier to persist through a 7-week course. She added, "You force yourself to get through it, and if you're going to force yourself to get that far, you're going to force yourself to not fail, because then what's the point of staying anyway?" She also stated that it was "harder to quit. You make it halfway through; it's only been three weeks; It's not even been a month. Why quit now, when you're almost done, and you can move onto something else?"

Leslie also indicated that she would be less likely to withdraw from a class because:

> It's easier to get through it, because it's seven weeks. In the other format, you get to a month in and you're like 'I hate this. I really hate this class. I'm done. I can't do this for

> two, three more months.' Now it's, 'But I'm over the half way mark. I've actually really only got two weeks and then it's just a final. I can do that.' I do think that plays a big part in getting through it. You force yourself to get through it, and if you're going to force yourself to get that far, you're going to force yourself to not fail and to do well, because then what's the point of staying anyway?

Cathy was able to persevere through courses with instructors that she did not like. She indicated that she only had to deal with an instructor for seven weeks and stated "Okay, it's not that long. I can do it. I can do it. You don't realize how fast seven weeks goes by. Like now, it's almost over and we just started. It's super-fast." Cathy recalled one of her instructors reminding the class that they could persevere for seen weeks: "I remember a teacher saying 'this is tough. You've only got seven weeks. Seven weeks is a short amount of time. You can definitely endure' and I think that helped me in that class and in my other classes."

Theme Two: The compressed course schedule frequently provides evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance

Participants were motivated to succeed in their compressed courses. Grades symbolized evidence of success and participants experienced a sense of accomplishment and progress toward graduation when they saw proof that courses had been completed. Receipt of final grades at the end of each 7-week term translated to achievement of short-term goals and inspired participants to do well in the next term. One participant commented, "because classes go by quicker it's easier to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's like achieving a goal. It's easier to see that goal in a short run than it is in a long run and makes me work harder."

Josh asserted that success in compressed courses was due to seeing results more quickly, which instilled a sense of accomplishment and motivated him to do well: "instead of waiting

until the end of 14 weeks to see how well you've done, its seven weeks, your final, and then you know right away, instead of having to wait 14 weeks." Keith shared similar sentiments, though he referred to motivation throughout a course rather than just at the end of the term: "With some of my classes I feel like I get grades back from my assignments quicker than with the longer courses. It helps because you know sooner what you did wrong or what you need to study. I like seeing that I'm on the right track."

Seeing individual assignment or exam grades more frequently also motivated students in compressed classes. Kristen described how excited she was when she finished an assignment and saw her grade posted. The researcher interpreted this excitement as motivation and sense of achievement. Her instructors posted grades frequently to help students understand where they might need help. She indicated that this was because assignments were due more frequently and students needed feedback for subsequent assignments or projects. She described her feelings of enthusiasm, saying, "I love seeing that I've completed something and that I got a good grade. I can't wait to see my next grade. But that can also be frustrating if you have an instructor who doesn't post grades fast."

Perception of faster completion. With the exception of one participant, the compressed course schedule did not alter the number of courses participants completed in a semester; however, research participants perceived that they were progressing through their programs of study faster than under the full-semester schedule. Several participants indicated that they were willing to work harder because they could finish classes sooner. Jonathan mentioned that he did not like compressed courses during the first term he enrolled in a compressed schedule, but his opinion changed because his grades improved. When asked to describe the experience, Jonathan stated: "Actually I began enjoying the compressed schedule for the simple fact that I'm able to

complete more in a shorter period of time, but I don't like the workload, but I'm willing to trade." He added that he would not be as close to completion: "I wouldn't have gotten where I am now. What I'm saying is that I feel like I've accomplished a lot in a shorter period of time." Jonathan is still enrolled in four courses per semester. He is completing his degree at the same pace, but perceives that he is finishing sooner.

Leslie also indicated that the compressed course schedule promotes a sense of accomplishment, which inspires her to be successful. Like Jonathan, she felt as though she was finishing her degree sooner: "I feel like I'm getting to my degree faster because I'm completing classes, so I can see on my transcript that this class is done, versus waiting three months to see a class on my transcript. I'm only waiting a month and a half." Leslie indicated that seeing high grades in the middle of the semester (after term one) motivated her to continue in the second term.

Josh perceived that he was finishing his degree faster and that compressed courses helped him utilize his time more efficiently. He indicated that effective time utilization contributed to his success. He noted, "I'm big on efficiency. How can I do this, how can I do this faster, and move on to something else? That appeals to me. If there is a prerequisite I can take it in the first half and take the class in the second half. I can be done and I can have extra time." When asked what he likes most about the compressed schedule, Josh stated "I can do twice as much work in a semester and graduate faster." Josh previously enrolled in five courses during the traditional, 14-week semesters, and enrolled in five courses in the compressed semesters; however, he had the perception that he was completing his degree faster.

Jeff reported that receiving good grades motivated him to persist, "It goes by fast. You take a course, you get through the material, you get your grade, you move on to the next class."

Jeff was the only participant in the study who actually increased the number of courses he was enrolled in during a semester. He took two courses per semester under the 14-week schedule but enrolled in two courses per term under the compressed schedule, essentially doubling his workload. Students like Jeff would actually complete their degree faster; however, the workload might be difficult to manage depending on other obligations in the students' lives.

Theme Three: Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success

The compressed course schedule implementation at SCC cultivated success by immersing students in subject matter and limiting their focus to fewer courses. The SCC administration implemented an eleven credit hour limit per term; essentially reducing the number of courses students take concurrently. Additionally, compressed courses had longer class meeting sessions than traditional courses which fostered concentrated, "uninterrupted learning" (Scott, 2003, p. 35).

A majority of research participants in this study attributed improved student success to increased focus and immersion in their courses. The fast pace of compressed courses stimulated participants to fully engage in their studies. Participants described an environment that fostered constant focus on their courses in order to meet assignment deadlines and keep up with the pace of their courses. Cathy reported that taking fewer courses at one time contributed to her success: "I only have to worry about one thing at a time. It's just this class. I'm taking one class a day, so say Monday's this class. Well Monday I'm doing work for that class only. Tuesday is that class only. I'm not trying to do math class, English class, and other classes all in the same day. So it works out for me."

David also revealed that the number of classes he took at any one time affected his ability to succeed as well as his level of focus. David indicated that he had a number of course withdrawals under the 14-week schedule but none under the compressed schedule. He commented:

> It's a little bit easier to maintain keeping up with just two courses at a time, rather than having to juggle four or five. People don't have to remember what's due when for four or five classes. It would be easier if every class had assignments due on the same day – like a Sunday night – but every teacher is different and you have to remember all of the due dates. It's easier if you only have two or three classes. It's easier for me to focus on just two courses than it is for four. I found myself a couple of times, if you start to get overwhelmed trying to juggle four or five courses, and you start not doing so well in one, you'll just completely drop it and forget about it to focus on the other classes. I do better with just taking two classes.

Rick described being able to focus on fewer subjects and the researcher interpreted this to be the catalyst that changed his opinion of the compressed schedule, "I do like the idea of being able to settle in on one class or two, but I think the workload sometimes can be a little much." He also indicated having a sense of stamina and motivation:

> once you get in to it, you're just constantly going. Like right now I'm taking an economics course, so I'm not having to study economics and jump over to, let's say, a database class or something, that I'm just focused on that one and I'm constantly having to read, and constantly having to stay on top of it to get my work done.

In addition to taking fewer concurrent courses, Rick attributes improved success rates to focus and immersion in courses. He suggested that the compressed format helps students "stay

on top of it [coursework] and meet their deadlines, they're more immersed in it. There's no ... You're not jumping around between classes as much."

Jeff alluded to focus as the primary reason that student success has improved across the board at SCC under the compressed schedule. When asked to explain, Jeff responded:

> I could see that in the fact that the students have less information that they have to be responsible for because they're only taking two classes that the focus is there. Whereas let's just say an average student that's coming in trying to do the four or five classes a semester, trying to focus on each one equally, I could see that he's not going to do that on five classes, where two classes it's a lot easier to be able to focus. Plus, you don't have a lot of conflicts with different homework assignments, exams coming up in say that same week of each other. One thing that you realize it is a shorter period of time that you have to focus on your two classes. You don't have much else to distract you as if, say, you were taking four classes over 14 weeks. You just have two things that you have to basically just go back and forth to concentrate on.

Kristen's opinion of the compressed schedule changed once she realized that she only had to manage two courses at a time. Kristen commented that improved student success under the compressed schedule at SCC was likely due to having fewer courses at any one time, making it easier to manage one's time. She stated,

> probably the main reason is because there is less to worry about. Instead of having four classes and trying to do four classes worth of homework over the weekend and things like that, you really only have two, I only have two at a time, or you could have three at a time. That's manageable, and people can still feel like they're not overwhelmed. I felt very overwhelmed in the full 14-week courses. Now I have two classes, two things to

> keep up with. It's very manageable. I feel like because it is manageable and less stressful, I feel like you can comprehend better. I think that would be it.

Leslie also cited focus as a contributing factor to improved success. She indicated the ability to focus on just two or three subjects at a time was much easier than her previous schedule, which required her to take four or five courses to maintain her full-time status:

> When I took five or six [courses], I would take a computer class, and an English class, and a math class, and an accounting class, and a business class, and something else. They're very non-related. While some of them had applications in the other classes, they really were not related in any way. I could take the time to say, 'Okay. I need to focus on this one, and remember this one today. I'll get to that next week, and then focus on something else...' It wasn't that it had necessarily affected my testing ability, but I definitely had to switch my focus more often and it was easier with fewer classes. I make sure that my classes have more relationship. I don't try and take a math, and a science, and English, or a math, and a history, and English.

As mentioned previously, participants seemed to schedule courses differently under the compressed schedule. When planning her academic schedule, Leslie carefully selected courses that she anticipated would maximize focus. She scheduled two accounting classes or business classes during the same term, rather than courses from multiple disciplines. She noted that she selected courses in this manner because it was easier for her to focus on two classes from the same discipline rather than having to switch focus from one subject to another. There seemed to be less interference or distraction from other subject matters when she scheduled courses in that manner. Leslie also indicated that the compressed schedule forced her to be completely immersed in the subject matter, which enhanced her ability to focus. When asked to explain how

immersion and focus contributed to student success she stated, “It's because there’s complete immersion. I cannot take a break, and stop thinking about or learning, so I’m focused. I'm in two different accounting courses, which are very, very different from each other. I have to be able to remember both at once. I have to focus on both of them, at all times, or I get lost.”

Leslie noted that it was easier to become immersed in the subject matter when she took fewer concurrent courses. She said, “I like the compressed schedule, because I do feel like I learn it better. It works really well, because I can focus on two or three [courses] at a time instead of four, five, or six at a time. I am still getting the same amount of class hours, for the most part. You definitely can't take a break, and sometimes that's tough. But I like it.” The researcher asked her to elaborate on why she learns the material better and she simply alluded to “the focus.”

Kristen had similar sentiments regarding focus. Kristen did not like the compressed schedule at first, but her opinion changed. When asked to explain how her opinion changed she stated: “I like that you're only working on two courses at a time, two or three. I feel like that really gives you time to focus on what you're working on more. I would have to say that's probably where my mind changed, I was really figuring out I don't have so much going on, I just have to worry about in my case the two classes that I'm taking and that's it.” Kristin was asked to explain improved student success across the college since the implementation of the compressed schedule. She stated:

> I think probably the main reason is because there is less to worry about. Like I said, instead of having 4 classes and trying to do 4 classes worth of homework over the weekend and things like that, you really only have a few, I only have 2 at a time, or you could have 3 at a time. That's manageable, and people can still feel like they’re not

> overwhelmed. I felt very overwhelmed in the full 14 week courses. I did because there was so much going on. Now I have 2 classes, 2 things to keep up with. It's very manageable. I feel like because it is manageable and less stressful, I feel like you can comprehend better. I think that would be it.

Rick preferred having fewer courses to focus on at one time and mentioned focus as a reason for improved success. He commented that material or knowledge from one course did not interfere with his other course: "Like right now I'm taking an economics course, so I'm not having to study economics and jump over to, let's say, a database class or something, that I'm just focused on that one and I'm constantly having to read, and constantly having to stay on top of it to get my work done that you don't forget as much. You don't just blow through something and then go to the next thing and then lose track of the first stuff."

Theme Four: Knowledge retention contributes to success in compressed courses

Retaining knowledge is a contributing factor to student success in compressed courses. Participants in this study attributed improved success across the college to the ability to retain knowledge. A majority of participants indicated that they were better able to recall information that they learned between the beginning and end of their courses in a compressed format than they were in full-semester length format. Several participants also revealed retaining knowledge from prerequisite or lower level courses to upper level courses. Two reasons were cited for this: less time from the beginning to end of a course (i.e. less time to forget) and the increased studying required each week to accommodate the pace of a compressed course. Leslie described her experience: "I feel like it's better with the seven weeks than it was with the fourteen, for learning. I just feel like it's easy to retain it now. You're just completely immersed in it, so it's there, it's constant." Jonathan agreed that he retains knowledge better from the beginning to end

of a course; however, he believes it is because assignments are due more frequently and he has to study more often: “The assignments are due a lot more frequently, and it sort of forces you to do a lot of cramming, as well, because I guess once you complete one assignment you got to directly jump onto the next.”

Rick also claimed to remember more information from the beginning to end of a course, stating, “you don't forget as much. You don't just blow through something and then go to the next thing and then lose track of the first stuff”. He surmised that the immersion in coursework helps students retain information learned in the course. He assumed that he remembers more because there is less time to forget course material than there was in the full-semester format. When asked if remembering course material contributed to overall student success he said, “that would probably be the reason. I would imagine for the people showing increased grades it was a lot of that, because that's pretty much all you do for seven weeks.”

Josh identified retaining knowledge as a primary reason for improved student success across the college. He stated, “I like them because you get all the information quick; you wouldn't have time to forget anything. You didn't have time for anything to get cloudy before it was time to test on it and move on to the next subject.” During 14-week semesters, he had to work harder to prepare for final exams because he forgot information that he had learned at the beginning of the semester, and he assumed other students had the same experience. As he described, “I think the faster you work through it the less time you have to forget what you just learned.”

Josh explained that he studied frequently throughout a term but studied less for final exams than he did in the full semester format:

> I think that it is easier to pass a 7-week class than a 14-week class. I don't feel like I had enough time to forget what I learned. I don't have to study as hard. That was my side effect. I didn't have to hit the books quite as hard for the final test, because we had just gone over it and it was still fresh in my brain. You get all the information quick, you don't have time to forget anything. You don't have time for anything to get cloudy before it is time to test on it and move on to the next subject.

As mentioned previously, David described that the frequency of studying increased each week but he did not believe that he studied more overall than he did under the previous schedule. When asked to describe how his study habits changed he commented that he studied less for exams because he retained what he learned: "I study more often, yes, but study more maybe not necessarily because by the time you take a cumulative final exam at the end of the semester, everything is still relatively fresh in your mind from week one and you don't have to go back after 14 weeks and restudy the first few chapters." Cathy shared these sentiments about remembering course material: "With 14 week courses, it was a struggle to try to remember what we went over . what we learned the first couple of weeks. When we got the review for the final exam it was kind of like, 'I don't even remember learning this.' It seemed like it was so long. It was hard to remember what we learned."

Rick proposed that absorption and engagment in the course material led to retaining knowledge and improved success. When asked to describe why he was more successful in compressed courses he indicated that he remembered more information in the seven week format than he did in the traditional format. For clarification the researcher asked if he remembered more because there were fewer weeks or because he studied more. Rick stated that both course length and study habits contributed to his success and to the success of all students; however, he

noted that immersion in subject matter and increased frequency of studying are the main factors of success: “I would imagine for the people showing increased grades it was a lot of studying, because you have to ... That's pretty much all you do for seven weeks.” He also commented, “I do think once you get into it, you're just constantly going.”

Keith attributed increased student success rates to remembering course material and having fewer courses at one time. Although Keith mentioned fewer courses, the researcher interpreted this as knowledge retention because Keith focused on remembering class material rather than being more focused during this part of the interview. He explained that, “while there’s not as much time to absorb information, there's also not as much time to forget. What you study seven weeks ago, you're typically going to remember more than what you studied 14 weeks ago. Generally, well you are, you're lowering the number of things that you're having to study. Instead of studying four things, you're only studying two. I think that helps as well. There’s more studying, but you’re only studying for two classes so it’s easier to remember.”

As with all participants, Cathy was asked to explain why student success rates are higher in compressed courses than in full-semester length courses. She indicated that students remember more information in their classes and that they have more time available to study or have free time because they take fewer concurrent courses. When asked her to clarify her experiences regarding retaining information, she explained:

> I think since it's shorter you don't have as long to forget the information. It's still kind of fresh and it's current. I think it works. With 14-week courses, it was a struggle to try to remember what we went on … what we learned the first couple of weeks. When we got the review for the final exam it was kind of like, ‘I don't even remember learning this.’ It seemed like it was so long. It was hard to remember what we learned.

Theme Five: Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contributed to academic success in compressed courses

Research participants alluded to the idea that pedagogy was redesigned to foster student success; however, it was a gradual process. The common sentiment among participants was that instruction improved as faculty became more experienced teaching compressed courses. Participants felt as though a 14-week course was initially "just crunched into 7-weeks" in the beginning, as described by Rick: "instructors would say, 'Well, this is what we did over a 14 week course, let's just do the same thing over seven weeks, cause now they're taking fewer classes they'll be able to do more'. It didn't necessarily always compute the right way....." Rick indicated that courses became better designed as the compressed terms continued, and noted that faculty began focusing on the most important information needed to be successful in a class. He described how instruction changed, "it wasn't just a linear path of chapter one, chapter two, anymore. It was a little more of 'let's focus on this, we're going to learn these concepts versus learning this chapter' and I think that was very beneficial, focusing on the certain concepts a little more."

Participants perceived a process where faculty seemed to learn how to implement different instructional methods. The researcher interpreted these instructional methods to be active learning activities and learner-centered instruction. Jeff described this change:

> They tried to cover everything. They tried to get the information out from all of the chapters. Now what they do is concentrate on the important areas. They were trying to cover one whole chapter in detail. I think you're seeing now a little bit more concentration on certain areas in that chapter that the student needs to get out of it to help

> them with their exam or the labs, and that way the other 50% of the time the students have an opportunity to do the labs in class with the instructor there to interact with them.

Cathy noticed a change in pedagogy and noted that there were fewer lectures and more hand-on activities and group or class discussions; more of a shift from strictly lecture to a combination of lecture and activities She also discerned receiving feedback from her instructors more frequently. She had many of the same instructors from previous semesters. Cathy stated:

> My teachers had us doing activities from our books and other stuff. They couldn't stand up there and lecture for three hours so they would teach us and then say, 'Well turn your book to this page and work on this activity and then we're going to revisit it.' It gave us a chance to apply immediately what we just learned versus having to wait. You're refreshing your knowledge and seeing what you have already learned. Instantly you get your feedback right then and there before you go home and try to do it on your own. I did appreciate that. Before it would be just like they just lectured and then the class was over. It left little time for us to say well I understand that or something like that. You don't know because you haven't applied it yet."

Cathy also noted that her instructors seemed more accessible after the conversion to the compressed schedule. She described her instructors as "really wanting students to do well". She preferred to take face-to-face courses because the in-person format provided more opportunity for interaction with faculty, but she indicated that even her online instructors were more attentive and responded quickly to questions about courses. She described the accessibility of faculty, stating, "the office hours seem like a little bit more time. They usually offer time right before class or right after. Some of my professors even if I have a question in the middle of a class, I

didn't understand why I got this on a grade, and they'll take a little bit of time out just to help you out. They'll say meet me after class for this. It does work out."

Faculty seemed to shift pedagogy to focus only on material that was critical to the learning objectives in a course. David described experiences, similar to Jeff's, in 14-week courses where students were responsible for all material in a text book and all material in PowerPoint slides. Now he feels as though only critical information is covered. David works full time in his career field (information technology) and defined important content as that needed to be successful in his career field:

> I feel like they focus more on the importance of the chapters in the material, rather than ... Again just filling in with pointless information that it's just more stuff for you to have to try to remember. It's the important stuff that's needed in the career field. For instance, in a hardware class, you might learn the speed of a USB3, but do you need to know it for your field? No. In a 14-week course, they're going to teach it to you. In a 7-week course, they're probably not going to because it's a waste of time.

Kristen experienced a different instructional adaptation in her courses. Kristen described a shift from more formal instruction to casual demonstration:

> Instructors kind of figured it out as they went. It was, 'things used to be this way last time but we can't do that anymore so we got to figure out how as we go'. The instructors were trying to figure out what was most important to keep. Projects were dropped. That's mostly what we do in our area. It's a project. Instead of editing 7 or 8 commercials in spots, we would edit 3 or 4. Those 3 or 4 counted for more. I think we did lose some of the things that we were taught. They were lost in a formal setting. This is what we're going to learn today. It was more of, 'hey guys, let me show you how to do

> this real quick'. I think the same material was covered; it was just more casual, 'hey, look up here real quick'. We're all sitting there with headphones in our ears and our own monitors, he's up at the front and he's there and he'll say, for instance, 'Hey Mark, I forgot, will you come show me how to do this, or this isn't lining up right or I can't make this look right or whatever'. Or he'll say, 'hey guys, Kristen had this problem, let me show what we're going to do to fix it'.

Kristen added that she believes that most instructors truly want students to succeed and will do whatever it takes to help students be successful. She stated that "faculty have genuine interest in students' well-being."

Josh described a shift in instruction but he also stated that faculty seemed to be more available and more willing to help students. He said, "They [faculty] were always available for whatever you needed, either by email or in person. I didn't have any bad experiences with teachers that were frustrated with the switchover. Everyone just wanted to help students." Josh noted that instructors were aware of the increased workloads on students and "made students aware that there is help available, whether it is from them or from somebody else."

Josh also indicated that students were able to build stronger relationships with instructors in compressed classes. When asked to elaborate on this he stated, "I feel like you got a better relationship with your instructors because there's so many extra hours in the course [session]. I feel like you can build a relationship faster because you are in a three-hour section."

Rick also described the willingness of faculty to help students, "I know a lot of them, from the programming side, would say, 'Look, I know this is going to be hard, this is going to be difficult for a lot of you. You're not going to have time to make up missed work' ... and you know, most professors, at least on the programming side, all seemed to be like 'look, if you're

having problems just come talk to me' and from talking to other students that did have problems, they were all willing to work with them. They knew that it was going to be an issue and they were like, 'look, the course is what it is, but just come talk to me and we'll figure something out'." Rick revealed that all of his instructors were willing to help their students in any way they could to ensure the students were successful. Many instructors developed online tutorials or provided links to helpful resources in the Learning Management System to help students.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from participant interviews and data analysis. During individual semi-structured interviews, participants were asked questions regarding their lived experiences in compressed 7-week classes as well as experiences in 14-week full-semester length classes. Five superordinate themes that emerged during the data analysis process, using an interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology, were identified and reported.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings in terms of the research literature and the theoretical framework that guided this study. Chapter 5 also presents implications of the findings to practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5 – Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine students' lived experiences in compressed courses to understand why academic success improved under the compressed scheduling format at one institution. The researcher employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology, which facilitated a deep exploration of the participants' lived experience of the phenomenon. The research question that guided this study was: How do students explain higher success rates in compressed 7-week courses than in full-semester length courses? Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome, or I-E-O, model provided the conceptual lens through which this study was conducted.

Interpretation of Findings

Chapter 4 presented the findings from in-depth interviews, including verbatim excerpts from participants, and interpretations made by the researcher. The researcher identified superordinate themes and nested themes based on both the interpretations of the compressed course experiences, as detailed by participants, and the interpretation of those accounts by the researcher. In accordance with IPA methodology (Smith et al.,2009), interpretations were based on the participants' viewpoints rather than the perspective of the researcher. This chapter presents the researcher's interpretation of the findings related to the literature and the conceptual framework.

The findings in this study demonstrated a clear relationship between the compressed course environment and the academic success of the participants. Each of the research participants had different backgrounds and life demands. Some were married with children, some single parents, some veterans, and most were employed. Many participants had prior college experiences and most were first generation college students. All participants had

obligations that interfered with school. Despite these external demands, the environment yielded academic improvement. In addition to improved success, the environment seems to have fostered increased focus, time management skills, and knowledge retention in participants.

Five superordinate themes emerged during data analysis:

1. Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules).
2. The compressed course schedule provides frequent evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance.
3. Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success.
4. Success in compressed courses is a result of knowledge retention.
5. Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contribute to academic success in compressed courses.

The findings supported the literature regarding improved grades, learning, pedagogy, and overall academic success. There were, however, inconsistencies between the findings and literature related to faculty-student interaction and student-student relationships. The study also addressed a gap in the literature concerning time and schedule management triggered by the compressed schedule conversion.

Southeastern Community College (SCC), like most two-year institutions, experienced low student success rates in courses (grades of A, B, or C). Review of success rates among multiple course scheduling formats at SCC revealed that success rates were higher in shorter

duration courses. SCC converted its academic schedule to a compressed 7-week format in order to improve student success rates.

SCC administrators uncovered a phenomenon but did not fully understand the causes of improved success other than course length. The findings from this study contribute to the understanding of improved academic success in the shortened course modality. The findings address such issues as students' motivation, engagement in longer class meetings, procrastination and time management strategies, and changes in pedagogy and instructional methods.

This chapter begins with a brief review of the conceptual framework and then relates the findings to the conceptual framework and the literature. The chapter then presents the implications of the findings to professional practice in education. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research as well as suggestions for practitioners considering an implementation of compressed course scheduling.

Review of the Conceptual Framework

The Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model framed this research. The I-E-O model was developed by Astin (1993) to guide the assessment of educational practices and activities. The model "captures the longitudinal nature of the process, highlights the interactivity between student background characteristics and the college environment, and provides a broad context in which institution-specific investigations [of attrition] can be conducted" (Kelly, 1996). Essentially, the I-E-O model provides a guide to measure the effects that input and environment variables have on outcomes. Additionally, the I-E-O model is used to guide assessment of the effects that inputs have on an environment. Astin and Antonio (2011) stated that "input and output data, by themselves, are of limited usefulness. What we need in addition is information about the student's educational environment and experience" (p. 19). The I-E-O model

provided a framework under which the researcher was able to identify student success as an outcome and the compressed course schedule as an environment variable. Research participants (students) and their background characteristics were inputs into the compressed schedule environment.

Heaney and Fisher (2011) suggested that factors other than the educational environment impact outcomes, such as student maturation or the external environment (i.e. home-life or family and work obligations). Student success research often "attempts to isolate the impact of college from other factors, including pre-entry characteristics as well as extra-collegiate factors, in order to clearly identify those factors which can be attributed to the college environment" (Heaney & Fisher, 2011, p. 66). The current study suggests the possibility that the community college environment affects outcomes. For example, in response to the demands of compressed courses (environment), most participants implemented time management strategies, which contributed to academic success (outcome). This finding was true regardless of participants' external characteristics. In addition, participants claimed that learning was improved, which held true regardless of external factors.

Environment and *outcomes* were the primary elements considered in this research. However, it is likely that the *inputs* (participant characteristics and external demands) played a role in student success. For example, participants reported that pedagogy and teaching methods had changed. While it is likely that the compressed course *environment* elicited pedagogical changes, it is also possible that the changes in pedagogy were in response to characteristics or external demands of the *inputs* (students). A night class largely populated by adult students who work full-time, for instance, may have responded better to flipped-classroom techniques, discussions, or other active learning activities rather than lecture due to the length of the class

session (Taylor & Trumpower, 2014, Wlodkowski, 2008). Wlodkowski (2008) suggested that enhancing meaning or developing competency through learning activities leads to higher motivation in adult learners and, ultimately, improves success. It is possible that instructors implemented pedagogical changes to ease the transition to longer class sessions or to break up the monotony of a three-hour lecture. Data analysis showed that increased demand of study time and class work caused students to adjust schedules to accommodate jobs and family. For example, participants with full-time employment had to adjust study time based on their work schedules or enroll in online courses rather than face-to-face courses due to the increase in course session length and work load.

Connection between Findings and Literature

A review of literature on compressed courses revealed that students enrolled in compressed courses often experience learning improvements and higher grades compared to students enrolled in traditional semester length courses (Anastasi, 2007; Daniel, 2000, Gamboa, 2013; Scott, 2009; Scott & Conrad, 1993; Tatum, 2010, Wlodowski, 2003). The findings from this study are consistent with the existing literature in terms of academic success, knowledge retention and learning, and instruction.

Theme One: Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules)

As stated in chapter four, research participants identified time management, schedule management, avoiding procrastination, and perseverance as contributing factors to improved academic success under the compressed course schedule. Strategies implemented by participants as a result of the compressed course environment included scheduling time to study and

complete assignments, intentionally pairing courses together when planning academic schedules, and persevering through difficult courses.

Time management and studying. The findings in this study clearly indicated that time management strategies, spawned by the fast pace and rigor of the compressed schedule, had a significant impact on student success. The researcher's interpretation of interview data indicated that all participants implemented some type of time management or schedule management behavior and indicated that those behaviors contributed to success. Literature has shown that ineffective use of time, or even a perception of having no control over time, increases students' stress levels (Kerns & Gardiner, 2007). Factors related to time management, such as poor time allocation and cramming for exams, have often been cited by students as reasons for low academic performance and high levels of stress (MacCann, Fogarty, & Roberts, 2011). Deficient time management leads to stress, depression, and feeling overwhelmed; and it contributes to poor academic performance (Kerns & Gardiner, 2007; Macan, Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 1990; Misra & McKean, 2000).

Time management strategies are often prescribed to students for effective study methods. Misra and McKean (2000) found that academic stress was reduced when students applied effective time management strategies in their lives. Macan et al. (1990) found that students who reported using time management behaviors perceived themselves as having greater performance, which was quantitatively verified by GPA examination. Later research also demonstrated that effective time management skills increased students' academic performance (Campbell & Svenson, 1992; Misra & McKean, 2000). Plant, Ericsson, Hill, and Asberg (2005) reported that focused, uninterrupted study time has a positive effect on GPA.

Participant accounts about changes in study habits were interpreted as studying more frequently and actively scheduling time to study. These activities contributed to improved success in compressed courses. Crede and Kuncel (2008) found a direct correlation between effective study habits and academic performance. The researchers reported that "study motivation and study skills exhibit the strongest relationship with both grade point average and grades in individual classes" (Crede & Kuncel, 2008, p. 427). Crede and Kuncel (2008) defined study skills as the ability to manage time and implement study strategies. Yuksel (2006) posited that students often come to college with ineffective study and time management habits and often do not understand the importance of these skills to success. The compressed course classroom, both virtual and brick-and-mortar, created an environment that cultivated effective time management and study habits. One participant corroborated this concept, stating he "had to learn how to become a student again."

Time management and procrastination. A majority of participants in this study reported not being able to procrastinate in a compressed schedule. Completing work in a timely manner and studying on a regular basis contributed to student success. A study conducted by Hafner, Oberst, and Stock (2014) revealed that students who utilized time management skills did not procrastinate and allocated time effectively to studying and assignment completion. Students who did not implement time management put off important academic tasks until right before the deadline. The researchers posited that time management behavior is "an effective intervention to initiate goal-directed behavior, foster persistence and avoid distraction" (Hafner et al., 2014, p. 358).

Procrastination is conduct related to poor time management skills and is a common behavior among students, associated with low grades and poor academic performance (Hafner,

Oberst, & Stock, 2014; Klassen, Krawchuk, & Rajani, 2008). According to Choi and Moran (2009), most researchers characterize procrastination as adverse, dysfunctional behavior with negative consequences. Procrastination, from this viewpoint, hinders students' ability to finish assignments or other work on time (Harriott & Ferrari, 1996). Klassen et al. (2008) posited that procrastination "is connected with negative behaviors and outcomes, such as submitting late assignments, cramming, test and social anxiety, use of self-handicapping strategies, fear of failure, under-achievement and can result in damaging mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety" (p. 916).

Theme Two: The compressed course schedule provides frequent evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance

A study conducted by Wolters and Hussain (2015) revealed that perseverance of effort was directly related to students' feelings of confidence and their ability to succeed academically. Students who have the ability to persevere are better able to manage their time, to be confident in their ability to succeed, and typically to not postpone completion of academic work (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). The researcher's interpretation of interview data indicated that the compressed course environment elicited a sense of accomplishment and progress in participants, which produced feelings of motivation and enthusiasm. A majority of participants experienced a sense of accomplishment upon course completion and earning final grades in individual courses. Completion of short-term courses demonstrated progress toward degree completion and attainment of short-term goals. This progress or sense of accomplishment seemed to have motivated students to persist in the academic strategies that contributed to their success. One participant indicated that the end of a compressed term was "like achieving a goal." As mentioned in chapter four, participants perceived that they were completing their degree faster

even though they enrolled in the same number of credits per semester under the compressed schedule as they did in the full-semester schedule.

Participants' experience of increased motivation is consistent with the literature on compressed courses. Tatum (2010) posited that the concentrated learning opportunities that accompany compressed courses increase students' motivation and creativity. Scott (2003) also suggested that students feel more motivated in compressed courses, which leads to deeper levels of learning and improved creativity. Martin and Culver (2009) suggested that compressed or intensive courses motivated students and promoted an environment of continuous learning. Seamon (2004) proposed that evidence of progress motivates students to persist. Seamon (2004) reported that "learners who believe they are making real progress toward worthy goals will enjoy learning more and be much more eager to stick with the task through difficulties such as the long, rigorous sessions of intensive courses" (p. 857). This was consistent with findings from Donaldson and Graham (2002) who asserted that students persevere through difficulties when they see the end in sight.

In addition to final grades in courses and course completion, frequent feedback from instructors, typically in the form of grades, motivated participants to maintain performance or even to work harder in their classes; and, as mentioned previously, feedback in the form of final grades motivated students to do well in subsequent courses. Lei (2010) reported that grades are extrinsic motivators for college students. Extrinsic rewards, such as grades, promote motivation (Deci et al., 2001). The concept of motivation based on performance is consistent with the expectancy theory of motivation (Friedman & Mandel, 2009-2010; Isaac, Zerbe, & Pitt, 2001). Expectancy theory of motivation, as defined by Isaac et al. (2001), postulates that individuals will act upon circumstances that maximize desired outcomes. In other words, "people will

expend effort when they believe that certain levels of performance are attainable" (Isaac et al., 2001, p. 214). The compressed course schedule seems to have created an environment that encourages students to maximize performance. This is consistent with Donaldson and Graham's (2002) findings that accelerated learning environments, such as compressed courses, cultivate motivation, concentration, and self-direction.

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) is linked to academic performance, as well. SDT promotes student "interest in learning, a valuing of education, and a confidence in their own capacities and attributes" (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991, p. 325). Three types of behavioral motivation were identified in SDT: intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation (Clark, Middleton, Nguyen, & Zwick, 2014). Intrinsic motivation involves behavior related to enjoyment, extrinsic motivation relates to a goal or reward, and amotivation is a lack of motivation due to the inability to identify any type of reward associated with the behavior. Participants were nervous about the compressed schedule and even disliked compressed courses in the beginning. However, evidence of accomplishment seemed to instill a sense of "I can do this," which was interpreted as intrinsic motivation by the researcher. Participants were eager to maintain their higher performance levels after viewing "confidence in their own capacities and attributes" (Deci, et al., 1991, p. 325).

Grades are extrinsic motivators for many college students (Lei, 2010). An ethnographic study conducted by Van Etten and Pressley (2008) found that grades are a key motivational factor for students. Grades are "performance-contingent" (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001, p. 1) rewards. Performance-contingent rewards "convey substantial positive competence information when a person receives a level of reward that signifies excellent performance" (Deci et al., 2001, P. 5). Deci et al. (2001) argued that extrinsic rewards could invoke intrinsic motivation. In the

present study, evidence of success (grades or extrinsic rewards) seemed to facilitate intrinsic motivation (students' desire to perform well because they enjoy evidence of success).

Theme Three: Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and improves academic success

Compressed courses engage students in educational activities and promote focused learning (Martin & Culver, 2009; Scott, 2003; Tatum, 2010). Compressed courses provide focused, uninterrupted learning by immersing students in the subject matter and allow students to synthesize course material better by allowing them to "focus on a particular class, uninterrupted by other subjects" (Scott, 2003, p. 35). Scott (2003) reported that students who enrolled in four to five longer courses gave some courses less attention than others. Under these conditions students had to prioritize which course or courses needed their immediate attention; giving courses which students viewed as less important little or no attention (Scott, 2003). A compressed schedule allows students to focus on one or two courses so they can give equal time and attention to each course. Tatum (2010) argued that immersion and intensity of learning experiences enhance motivation and "the opportunity for immersion in a topic or field is better when a class is taken in a short, intensive block without the distraction from other classes" (p. 38).

Findings from this study support the literature related to concentrated learning in compressed courses. Research participants identified focus as an important aspect of their success. A majority of participants reported being more focused on coursework under the compressed course schedule than they were in the full-semester course format. The fast pace of compressed courses required rigorous attention to assignment deadlines and course material. Students enrolled in compressed courses at SCC typically take fewer courses at one time than

they would in a full-semester schedule. All but one participant in this study enrolled in fewer concurrent courses, allowing them to focus on fewer subjects. According to Scott (2003) enrollment in fewer courses enables students to devote more time and concentration to each subject. Donaldson and Graham (2002) found that students enrolled in compressed courses spend more focused time on-task and noted that both students and faculty focus on the most critical course materials and spend less time on inconsequential material. The authors also speculated that students enrolled in compressed courses feel a sense of urgency to use time constructively (Donaldson & Graham, 2002).

Participants in this study revealed that it is easier to focus on two courses at a time rather than four or five. One participant indicated, "it's easier to maintain keeping up with just two courses at a time." Another participant reported purposefully scheduling two courses on different days so that she could focus on one subject Mondays and Wednesdays and a different subject on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The compressed course schedule allowed participants to dedicate more time to fewer courses; i.e., participants did not have to switch focus between four or five subjects, which provided them with more uninterrupted study time.

In a study on compressed courses and learning, Deichert, Maxwell, and Klotz (2016) cited immersion in subject matter and focus as possible reasons for academic success in compressed courses. The authors implied that students who are enrolled in compressed courses take fewer courses simultaneously in order to focus on fewer subjects (Deichert et al., 2016). The researchers stated, "accelerated courses could therefore allow students to become more immersed in a particular subject while taking the appropriate academic load" (Deichert et al., 2016, p. 7). Previous research by Goodwin and Califf (2007) on attrition supports the claim that

academic workload affects student success; the researchers demonstrated that workload was a contributing factor to students dropping out of college.

Memory theory, known as interference theory (Anderson, 2003), may be a contributing factor to lower academic performance in longer courses. Early studies on memory and forgetting revealed that research subjects were more likely to forget a memory item if some other item had become associated with that memory (Anderson, 2003). The memory research, conducted by Mueller and Pilzecker in 1900, became known as retroactive inhibition or interference theory (Anderson, 2003). Interference theory applied to learning states that "tasks preceding or following a learning activity will 'interfere' with an individual's long-term retention of the learned material" (Scott and Conrad, 1992, p 417). It is possible, then, that material studied in one course could interfere with material learned in another course. Aguilar (2006) supported interference theory and asserted that the more courses students take concurrently, the more distracted they will be; therefore, taking fewer courses allows students to focus on fewer subjects, improving chances of success.

Theme Four: Knowledge retention contributes to success in compressed courses

Knowledge retention was described by participants as being better in compressed courses than in longer courses, which contributed to improved success. Participants indicated that it was easier to retain information from the beginning to end of a course as well as from one course to the next. This finding is consistent with the research literature. Scott (2003) discerned that students perceived greater learning and retaining of knowledge when immersed in a concentrated learning experience such as a compressed course. Students reported processing learning material better and stated that "concentrated learning experiences led to greater understanding of the material and more in-depth, creative thinking" (Scott, 2003, p. 36). These findings were

supported by Wlodkowski (2003) in his research on adult students enrolled in compressed courses (which he termed accelerated courses). He reported that "accelerated courses provide levels of learning indistinguishable or greater than those demonstrated by the younger students in conventional courses" (Wlodkowski, 2003, p. 7).

Other researchers have made similar claims as Scott (2003) and Wlodkowski (2003):

1. Rawls and Hammons (2012) suggested that students enrolled in accelerated courses or programs are more likely to demonstrate learning outcome achievement than students in traditional courses.
2. In a study of 500 students enrolled in compressed psychology courses, Anastasi (2007) found that there were greater learning outcomes for students enrolled in compressed courses.
3. Sheldon and Durella (2010) reported greater levels of learning in accelerated developmental courses.
4. Kuscera and Zimmaro (2010) discovered that learning outcomes were superior in intensive courses during their research of instructor effectiveness in various course formats.

Diechert, Maxwell, and Klotz (2015) studied knowledge retention, specifically, in compressed courses. The researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study of information retention in compressed courses. The study analyzed data from 132 students enrolled in introductory psychology courses. Diechert et al. (2015) reported that students in 8-week courses retained more knowledge than students in other course formats and that "accelerated course formats produce learning outcomes that are similar or superior to those found in traditional course formats" (Diechert et al., 2015, p. 8). Diechert et al. (2005) suggested that immersion in

subject matter and the time spent learning in a single class meeting contributed to increased knowledge retention. The authors also stated that students in the 8-week courses reported using better learning strategies. Participants attributed knowledge retention to increased frequency of studying and shorter amount of time between the beginning and end of a course. Findings from the current study suggest that instructional methods and course design also contributed to knowledge retention.

Theme Five: Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contribute to academic success in compressed courses

Shafer (1995) identified three major differences between compressed and traditional courses: student learning, the instructor's role, and the instructor-student relationship. Shafer (1995) studied students to understand why they elected a compressed course when the same course was available in a 14-week format. He observed that student-faculty and student-student interaction occurred more frequently in compressed courses than in 14-week courses and noted there was "increased interaction between students and instructors, with increased discussions before and after class" (Shafer, 1995, p. 161). Both students and faculty in the study reported that the "structure" of compressed courses increased learning by forcing students to focus on one task until it was complete. Shafer (1995) also reported that compressed courses offer more opportunity for diverse teaching methods and fewer lectures. He stated that variety is necessary to "reduce boredom in the longer class periods" (Shafer, 1995, p. 35). In compressed courses, instructor's role shifts from a passive presenter of information to an active facilitator of learning activities.

Adversaries of compressed courses claim that the format is often too compresssed and lends itself to ineffectually-developed curricula and inadequate learning (Brookfield, 2003;

Shafer, 1995; Wlodowski, 2003). Findings from this study indicate otherwise. Participants in this research study credited instruction, course content, and learning activities as aiding in student success.

Participants in this study experienced a shift in instruction where faculty began to focus on the learning objectives rather than on covering an entire textbook. Course content for the new compressed courses was redesigned to ensure that students were only responsible for material needed to master the learning outcomes. Johnson's (2009) research into faculty perspectives on teaching compressed courses uncovered instructional strategies aimed at improving both the teaching and learning experiences. He posited that compressed courses should be designed with learning outcomes in mind. To accomplish this, Johnson (2009) suggested that faculty focus on depth rather than breadth. For example, instructional activities such as hands-on exercises, class discussions, or group discussions, which focus on learning outcomes, may be more efficient than covering all material in a textbook through lecture and summative assessment. Johnson (2009) also recommended that faculty become familiar with content of other courses in their discipline to avoid duplication of course material.

Scott and Normore (2013) postulated that active learning is critical in compressed course formats and stressed that interaction is vital. Activities that include problem solving, role-playing, and skill development are more memorable to students and foster greater learning than passive teaching methods such as lectures (Scott & Normore, 2013). A classroom environment that builds relationships, both student-student and faculty-student, enhances the learning experience (Scott & Normore, 2013).

Participants suggested that changes in instruction contributed to learning and overall course success. The researcher interpreted that there was a gradual shift in pedagogy where

faculty began to focus on the most important course material using discussions, hand-on activities, and group learning. Instructors spent less time on lecture and more time on class activities. One participant described better instruction under the compressed schedule: "they concentrate on the important areas, spend time with students completing labs, and interact more with students during class." These findings were supported by Lee and Horsfall (2010) who stated that compressed learning "can be conceptualized as an approach to education in which learning and teaching methods emphasize active, holistic experiences designed to increase the learning that can be achieved within any given timeframe" (Lee & Horsfall, 2010, p. 192).

Implications for Professional Practice in Education

Educational research has two purposes: to provide scholarly knowledge and to improve educational practice (Vanderlink & van Braak, 2010). This research was designed to gain knowledge about improved student academic success in a compressed course schedule at one institution. This was done by examining participants' lived experiences in compressed courses. SCC converted the academic schedule to compressed format based on extensive analysis of *quantitative* data demonstrating improved student success in shorter-duration courses. The qualitative methodology that guided this study was beneficial as the IPA approach provided the researcher with a rich, detailed account of the student experience in compressed courses, from the participants' perspective. These findings, added to the quantitative data, showed overwhelming support for the compressed schedule and provided insight into the compressed course environment. Additionally, and in alignment with Vanderlink and van Braak's (2010) definition of educational research, this research has implications for improving educational practice.

The findings provided a deeper understanding of why students performed better in compressed courses than in full-semester length courses. The results and themes uncovered have practical implications to higher education practice that may assist administrators and other college professionals considering a conversion to a compressed schedule. This research also has implications for practitioners or administrators currently working with compressed courses in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and student success strategies as it demonstrates how compressed courses impact student success. The findings are also beneficial to faculty who may be reluctant to teach compressed courses as well as to students who might be concerned about enrolling in a compressed course.

Aside from the compressed course schedule, this research has implications for student success in general. This study revealed that frequent assignment deadlines and exams, common in compressed courses, encouraged students to avoid procrastination; however, this seemed to occur as participants adapted to the compressed schedule. Practitioners should consider this finding as they develop programs to acclimate students to a compressed schedule. Time management, procrastination avoidance, and effective study skills could be incorporated into compressed schedule orientation programs for existing students and college orientation courses for new students. These skills could even be addressed in remedial and curriculum level courses as needed.

This study illustrated that motivation is imperative to student success. Faculty, counselors, and student services personnel should collaborate on ideas to inspire motivation, such as 1. Frequent feedback from faculty, advisors, or student success coaches, 2. Interim grades or progress reports, and 3. Other measures that provide students with a sense of progress and accomplishment. Helping students establish short-term, reachable goals that relate to long-

term goals would encourage students to persevere and persist in their educational endeavors, ultimately improving graduation rates. These efforts should not fall solely on the shoulders of advisors and student success coaches; they would serve students well if incorporated into the curriculum. Faculty should have professional development opportunities available to encourage learner-centered pedagogy and help faculty adopt pedagogical approaches that include the success strategies discussed in this section.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considerable literature exists on compressed courses; however, the researcher found no existing research on a schedule conversion as wide-scale as the compressed schedule implementation at the study site. In addition, existing literature on compressed courses seems to have been conducted at sites where full-semester length courses were also available to students. This is important because these options allow students to self-select compressed courses. Further research on compressed schedule implementations that remove longer courses from the offering would add to the scholarly literature and benefit the academic community. A study on students who have only experienced compressed college courses would also aid educational practice. This would identify differences in success between students who have only taken compressed college courses versus those who adjusted to the change.

This research utilized a distributed sample of participants from a variety of course modalities (traditional, online, and mixed-mode) and academic majors; however, it was limited in terms of the number of participants. This research was also limited to students enrolled in economics courses. Future qualitative research should be conducted on a large scale to determine if other factors contribute to improved student success in compressed courses. Future research should also be expanded to other academic disciplines.

A study of students who's GPAs may have dropped under a compressed schedule, as well as participants who stopped attending college after a compressed schedule conversion, would also benefit the scholarly literature. SCC enrollment declined over the past several semesters; however, the decrease in enrollment is consistent with a statewide decline in enrollment. There are no data to support a claim that enrollment decreased because of the compressed schedule conversion. Nonetheless, future research on the number of students who stop attending an institution due to a compressed schedule would be advantageous. Likewise, an examination of student withdrawal from individual courses would be beneficial to the academic community. The course withdrawal rate declined under the compressed course schedule at SCC, but the causes are uncertain. Existing literature and this study provide evidence of success in compressed courses, but it would benefit the academic community to understand how to help students who struggle in compressed courses.

The majority of existing literature on compressed courses was conducted using qualitative interviews with student participants, feedback from student participant surveys, or review of student records. Future research should be designed with a focus on faculty, pedagogy, and curriculum. An understanding of why student success was improved in compressed courses from a faculty perspective would contribute to the scholarly research. A deeper understanding of compressed course pedagogy and curriculum development would be beneficial to educational practice, as well. It would be beneficial to understand if faculty maintained the same amount of workload and content in courses, or if workload was decreased, making it easier for students to earn a successful grade. This research should include student learning outcomes and program assessment in addition to other student success criteria.

A final recommendation for future research is a comprehensive case study examining the effects of compressed courses on long-term learning and knowledge recollection, cumulative GPA, class attendance, retention, persistence, and graduation rates. A case study would also be an ideal methodology to investigate whether or not compressed courses compel students toward a specific course modality such as online, hybrid, or face-to-face.

Summary

This study was launched because of a phenomenon that occurred at one community college; student success (defined as earning a grade of A, B, or C) was higher in shorter courses, with the highest success rates realized in the shortest duration courses. Based on success rate data, college administrators implemented a compressed academic schedule. The compression required conversion of more than 1,000 courses from a 14-week, full-semester format, to a compressed, 7-week format.

The astonishing increase in student success was unexplained. College administrators recognized that student success was greater in shorter courses; however, the reasons why were unclear. Through this study, the researcher pursued the causes of improved student success in compressed courses. The purpose was to hear an explanation of this phenomenon directly from students. The researcher wanted participants to shed light on the unanticipated success that accompanied the transition from 14-week course length to 7-week format.

This study uncovered factors that contribute to student success in compressed courses by examining participants' lived experiences in those courses and their interpretations as to what contributed to their success after making the transition. The findings revealed that compressing courses, alone, does not cause success; rather, the shortened course format cultivates behaviors in

students and faculty that contribute to success. These behaviors were the key findings in this study and include:

1. Success in compressed courses requires effective time management including diligence in studying, avoiding procrastination, perseverance, and schedule adjustments (both academic and personal/work schedules).
2. The compressed course schedule provides frequent evidence of accomplishment, which stimulates motivation and fuels perseverance.
3. Immersion in subject matter while enrolled in fewer concurrent courses enhances focus and contributes to academic success.
1. Success in compressed courses resulted from knowledge retention; i.e., retaining more information from beginning of course to final exam and retaining more knowledge from a prerequisite course to the next level course.
5. Innovative instructional methods and supportive faculty contribute to academic success in compressed courses.

Higher education administrators and other practitioners considering a compressed schedule implementation should design an environment that will maximize student success. The environment should include time management strategies for students, frequent feedback and support to motivate students, a strategy to enhance focus such as a minimum number of concurrent courses or credits, and learner-centered pedagogy and instructional methods such as flipped-classrooms, active learning, group work, and class discussions. Advisors or success coaches should ensure that students understand the time requirements of compressed courses and help students set reasonable expectations. For example, students should be cautioned that

working full-time while attending school full-time is not conducive to success and is especially difficult under a compressed schedule.

Finally, in the interest of student success, community colleges should not only introduce new and innovative concepts and changes, but should also measure the outcomes of those changes. Measurements might include, but should not be limited to, improved student success rates, learning, or critical thinking. Once the measurement has taken place and improvements demonstrated, a qualitative inquiry into the students' explanations and lived experiences of the changes would provide insight into "how" and "why" the change was successful, as was demonstrated in this study.

References

Aguilar, S. K. (2004). A study on the efficacy of compressed scheduling formats in higher education. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text (Order No. 3135930).

American Association of Community Colleges. (2009). *AACC statement on common criticisms of colleges — the community college perspective.* Retrieved from: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Documents/ps11092009.pdf

American Association of Community Colleges. (2016). *AACC 2016 Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/AACCFactSheetsR2.pdf

Anastasi, J. S. (2007). Methods and techniques: Full-semester and abbreviated summer courses: An evaluation of student performance. *Teaching Of Psychology*, *34*(1), 19-22.

Anderson, M. C. (2003). Rethinking interference theory: Executive control and the mechanisms of forgetting. *Journal of Memory and Language, 49*, 415-445.

Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, *10*(3), 378-395.

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W., & Antonio, A. L. (2012). *Assessment for Excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education* (2nd ed.). United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield.

Attewell, P., Lavin, D., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2006). New evidence on college remediation. *The Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 886-924.

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., & Kena, G. (2012). *The condition of education 2012* (NCES 2012-045). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045.pdf

Austin, A. M., & Gustafson, L. (2006). Impact of course length on student learning. *Journal of Economics and Finance Education, 5*(1), 26-37.

Bailey, T., Cho, S., & Columbia University. (2010). Issue Brief: Developmental Education in Community Colleges. *Community College Research Center, Columbia University*

Bailey, T., & Morest, V. S. (2006). The community college equity agenda in the twenty-first century: Moving from access to achievement. In *Defending the Community College Equity Agenda* (p. 246-270). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.

Baker, C. (2010). The impact of instructor immediacy and presence for online student affective learning, cognition, and motivation. *Journal of Educators Online, 7*(1), 30.

Bean, J. P., & Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research, 55*(4), 485-540.

Birkholz, A. D. (2004). An investigation of student, faculty, and administration perceptions of the application of accelerated learning strategies in the Wisconsin Technical College System. *Journal of Vocational Education, 29*(1), 27-52.

Boggs, G. R. (2011). Community colleges in the spotlight and under the microscope. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 2011*(156), 3-22.

Boggs, G. R. (2011). The American community college: From access to success. *About Campus, 16*(2), 2-10.

Bragg, D. D., & Durham, B. (2012). Perspectives on Access and Equity in the Era of (Community) College Completion. *Community College Review*, *40*(2), 106-125.

Brookfield, S. D. (2003). A critical theory perspective on accelerated learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 97*, 73-82.

Burns, K. (2010). Community college student success variables: A review of the literature. *Community College Enterprise*, *16*(2), 33-61.

Carlton Parsons, E.R. (2008). Positionality and a theoretical accommodation of it: Rethinking science education research. Published online 19 March 2008 in Wiley Inter Science (www.interscience.wiley.com), 1127-1144. doi: 10.1002/sce.20273.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York, NY: Springer.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (2008). *The American community college* (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) 2015 Cohort Key Findings. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Credé, M., & Kuncel, N. R. (2008). Study Habits, Skills, and Attitudes: The Third Pillar Supporting Collegiate Academic Performance. *Perspectives On Psychological Science (Wiley-Blackwell)*, *3*(6), 425-453.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crowe, A. R., Hyun, E., & Kretovics, M. (2005). Reflections on summer teaching: Academic rigor or curriculum light. *Summer Academe, 5*, 7-20.

Daniel, E. L. (2000). A review of time-shortened courses across disciplines.*College Student Journal*, *34*(2), 298-308.

Davies, W. M. (2006). Accelerated teaching formats: A review. *Issues in Educational Research, 16*(1), 1-20.

Donaldson, J. E., & Graham, S. W. (2002). Accelerated degree programs: Design and policy implications. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *50*(2), 2-13.

Dowling, M. (2004). Hermeneutics: an exploration. *Nurse Researcher*, *11*(4), 30-39.

Duckworth, A., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*(6), 1087-1101.

Fike, D. S., & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community college. *Community College Review, 36*(2), 66-88.

Friendman, B. A., & Mandel, R. G. (2009-2010). The prediction of college student academic performance and retention: Application of expectancy and goal setting theories. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 11(2), 227-246.

Furr, M. (2012). A comparative study of the accelerated 8-week and traditional 16-week online course formats at a North Carolina community college. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text (Order No. 3541516).

Gamboa, B. R. (2013). *Impact of course length on and subsequent use as a predictor of course success* [Institutional Effectiveness Report]. Retrieved from http://www.craftonhills.edu/~/media/Files/SBCCD/CHC/About%20CHC/Research%20a

nd%20Planning/Research%20Briefs/Academic%20Success%20Studies/Compressed%20Course%20Study.pdf

Geltner, P., & Logan, R. (2001). *The influence of term length on student success* (ERIC RR-2001.4.1.0). Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED455858.pdf

Gilchrist, A. L., & Cowan, N. (2011). Can the focus of attention accommodate multiple, separate items? *Journal of Expirimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 37*(6), 1484-1502.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Häfner, A., Oberst, V., & Stock, A. (2014). Avoiding procrastination through time management: an experimental intervention study. *Educational Studies (03055698), 40*(3), 352-360.

Hansen, J. T. (2004). Thoughts on knowing: Epistemic implications of counseling practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *82*(2), 131-138.

Harrell II, I. L. (2008). Increasing the success of online students. *Inquiry*, *13*(1), 36-44.

Hayward, M. S., & Williams, M. R. (2015). Adult learner graduation rates at four US community colleges by prior learning assessment status and method. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39*(1), 44-54.

Heaney, A. & Fisher, R. (2011). Supporting conditionally-admitted students: A case study of assessing persistence in a learning community. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *11*(1), 62-78.

Hicks, W. L. (2013). Pedagogy in the twenty-fist century: An analysis of accelerated courses in criminal justice. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *25*(1), 69-83.

House, J. D. (1999). The effects of entering characteristics and instructional experiences on student satisfaction and degree completion: An application of the Input-Environment-

Outcome Assessment Model. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, *26*(4), 423-434.

Hussar, W. J., & Bailey, T. M. (2013). *The influence of term length on student success* (National Center for Education Statistics). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013008.pdf

Husserl, E. (2012). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Inman, W. E., & Mayes, L. (1999). The importance of being first: Unique characteristics of first generation community college students. *Community College Review*, *26*(4), 3.

Isaac, R. G., Zerbe, W. J., & Pitt, D. C. (2001). Leadership and motivation: The effective application of expectancy theory. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 13*(2), 212-227.

Johnson, C. (2009). Faculty Speak on the Impact of Time in Accelerated Courses. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *57*(3), 149-158.

Karp, M. M., & Bork, R. H. (2014). They never told me what to expect, so I didn't know what to do: Defining and clarifying the role of a community college student. *Teachers College Record*, *116*(5), 1-40.

Karp, M. M., O'Gara, L., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). *Do support services at community colleges encourage student success or reproduce disadvantage? An exploratory study of students in two year colleges.* Unpublished manuscript, Community College Research Center, Columbia University, New York, NY. Retrieved from http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/do-support-services-encourage-success.html

Kelly, L. J. (1996). *Implementing Astin's I-E-O model in the study of student retention: A multivariate time dependent approach* [Paper presented at the 36th AIR Forum May 5-8,

1996 in Albuquerque]. Retrieved from ERIC: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED397732.pdf

Klassen, R. M., Krawchuck, L. L., & Rajani, S. (2008). Academic procrastination of undergraduates: Low self-efficacy to self-regulate predicts higher levels of procrastination. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 33*, 915-931.

Krevotics, M. A., Crowe, A. R., & Hyun, E. (2005). A study of faculty perceptions of summer compressed course teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, *30*(1), 37-51.

Kucsera, J. V., & Zimmaro, D. M. (2010). Comparing the effectiveness of intensive and traditional courses. *College Teaching, 58*, 62-28.

Kuh, G. D., & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student-faculty interaction in the 1990s. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*(3), 309-332.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2007). Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, propositions, and recommendations. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *32*(5), 1-182.

Lee, N., & Horsfall, B. (2010). Accelerated Learning: A Study of Faculty and Student Experiences. *Innovative Higher Education*, *35*(3), 191-202.

Lei, S. A. (2010). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Evaluating benefits and drawbacks from college instructor's perspectives. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 37*(2), 153-160.

Leong, P. (2011). The role of social presence and cognitive absorption in online learning environments. *Distance Education*, *32*(1), 5-28.

Lutes, L. & Davies, R. (2013). Comparing the rigor of compressed format courses to their regular semester counterparts. *Innovative Higher Education, 38*, 19-29.

Macan, T. H., Shahani, C., Dipboye, R. L. & Phillips, A. P. (1990). College students' time management: Correlations with academic performance and stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82*(4), 760-769.

Mandernach, B, Donnelli, E., & Dailey-Hebert, A. (2006). Learner attribute research juxtaposed with online instructor experience: Predictors of success in the accelerated, online classroom. *The Journal of Educators Online, 3*(2), 1-17

Martin, H., & Culver, K. B. (2009). To concentrate, to intensify or to shorten: The issue of the short intensive course in summer sessions. *Summer Academe, 6,* 59-69.

McIntosh, M., & Rouse, C. (2009). *The other college: Retention and completion rates among two-year college students*. Retrieved from Center for American Progress website: http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/02/pdf/two_year_colleges.pdf

McPhail, C. J. (2010). *The completion agenda: A call to action*. Retrieved from American Association of Community Colleges website: The completion agenda: A call to action

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Misra, R., & McKean, M. (2000). College students' academic stress and its relation to their anxiety, time management, and leisure satisfaction. *American Journal of Health Studies, 16*(1), 41-51.

Mittwede, S. K. (2012). Research paradigms and their use and importance in theological inquiry and education. *Journal of Education and Christian Belief, 16*(1), 23-40.

Moore, J. (2012). A personal insight into researcher positionality. *Nurse Researcher, 19*(4), 11-14.

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2015). Social capital and academic motivation among first-generation community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 39*, (235-251).

National Center for Education Management Systems and Jobs for the Future. (2007). *Adding it up: State challenges for increasing college access and success*. Retrieved from http://www.cpec.ca.gov/CompleteReports/ExternalDocuments/Adding_It_Up.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *Profile of undergraduate students: 2011-12* [Data File]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015167

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2013). *College and Career Tables Library* [Data File]. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/tableslibrary/viewtable.aspx?tableid=7463

National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *Enrollment in distance education courses, by state: Fall 2012*(NCES 2014-023). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014023.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2015). *Graduation rate from first institution attended within 150 percent of normal time for first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking students at 2-year postsecondary institutions* (NCES Table 326.20). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_326.20.asp?current=yes

National Community College Benchmark Project (2012). Report of 2012 Aggregate Data. Retrieved from https://my.tridenttech.edu

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2009). *Education at a glance, 2009: OECD indicators*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/43636332.pdf

Ospina, S. (2004). Qualitative Research. In G. R. Goethals, G. S. Sorenson, & J. M. Burns (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of leadership*, p. 1279-1284). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1979). Interaction effects in Spady and Tinto's conceptual models of college attrition. *Sociology of Education*, *52*(4), 197-210. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2112401

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 126-136.

Price, D. V., & Tovar, E. (2014). Student engagement and institutional graduation rates: Identifying high-impact educational practices for community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(9), 166-782.

Price, K., & Baker, S. N. (2012). Measuring students' engagement on college campuses: Is the NSSE an appropriate measure of adult students' engagement. *Journal of Continuing Education, 60,* 20-32.

Rankin, K. R., Katsinas, S. G., & Hardy, D. E. (2011). Community college retention and access issues: A view from the field. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, *12*(2), 211-223.

Reclaiming the American dream: a report from the 21st- Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/aboutcc/21stcenturyreport/index.html

Rini, A. L. (2011). *The Contribution of student success programs on community college student persistence and graduation rates*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Pennsylvania, . Retrieved from Proquest Document ID 3455403

Rugutt, J., & Chemosit, C. C. (2009). What motivates students to learn? Contribution of student-to-student relations, student-faculty interaction and critical thinking skills. *Educational Research Quarterly, 32*(3), 16-28.

Schuetz, P. (2005). UCLA community college review: campus environment: A missing link in studies of community college attrition. *Community College Review*, *32*(4), 60-80.

Scott, K., & Normore, A. H. (2013). Accelerating success for basic skills students at the community college. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College, 20*(2), 15-28.

Scott, P. A. (2003). Attributes of high-quality intensive courses. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *97*(1), 29-38.

Scott, P. A., & Conrad, C. F. (1992). A critique of intensive courses and an agenda for research. In *Higher education handbook of theory and research* (pp. 411-459). New York, NY: Agathon Press.

Seamon, M. (2004). Short- and long-term differences in instructional effectiveness between intensive and semester-length courses. *Teachers College Record, 106*(4), 852-874.

Serdyukov, P. (2008). Accelerated learning: What is it?. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, *1*(1), 35-59.

Shafer, D. W. (1995). *A qualitative study of adult and traditional college students' perceptions of a compressed and traditional length college course* (Order No. 9536851). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304162682). Retrieved from

http://ezproxy.neu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304162682?accountid=12826

Shannon, H. D., & Smith, R. C. (2006). A case for the community college's open access mission. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *136*, 15-21.

Sheldon, C. Q., & Durdella, N. R. (2010). Success rates for students taking compressed and regular length developmental courses in the community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*, 39-54.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. [Kindle]. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com/

Tatum, B. C. (2010). Accelerated education: Learning on the fast track. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching, 3*(1), 34-50.

Terenzini, P. T., Springer, L., Yeager, P. M., & Pascarella, E. T. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. *Research in Higher Education*, *37*, 1-22.

Thurmond, V., & Popkess-Vawter, S. (2003). Examination of a middle range theory: Applying Astin's Input-Environmental-Outcome (I-E-O) model to web-based education. *Online Journal of Nursing Informatics, 7*(2). Retrieved from http://ojni.org/7_2/thurmond.htm

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *45*, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1982). Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. *The Journal of Higher Education, 53*(6), 687-700.

Tinto, V. (1987). *The principles of effective retention* [Paper presented at Maryland College Personnel Association conference, November 20, 1987]. Retrieved from ERIC: http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED301267

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Vanderlinde, R., & van Braak, J. (2010). The gap between educational research and practice: Views of teachers, school leaders, intermediaries and researchers. *British Educational Research Journal, 36*(2). 299-316.

Van Etten, S. Pressley, M., Freebern, G., & Echevarria, M. (1998). An interview study of college freshmens' beliefs about their academic motivation. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 13*(1), 105-130.

van Manen, M. (2014). Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing. [Kindle Edition]. Retrieved from www.amazon.com

Van Scyoc, L. J., & Gleason, J. (1993). Traditional or intensive course lengths? A comparison of outcomes in economics learning. *The Journal of Economic Education, 24*(1), 15-22.

Wild, L., & Ebbers, L. (2002). Rethinking student retention in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 26,* 503-519.

Wlodkowski, R. J. (2003). Accelerated learning in colleges and universities. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 97*, 5-15.

Wlodkowski, R. J. (2008). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Wolters, C., & Hussain, M. (2015). Investigating grit and its relations with college students' self-regulated learning and academic achievement. *Metacognition & Learning, 10*(3), 293-311.

Wood, J. L., & Palmer, R. T. (2014). Academic achievement and the community college: Perspectives of black male students on the importance of "focus." *College Student Affairs Journal, 32*(1), 141-153.

Wood, J., & Turner, C. S. (2011). Black males and the community college: Student perspectives on faculty and academic success. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 35*(1-2), 135-151.

Yeh, C. J., & Inman, A. G. (2007). Qualitative data analysis and interpretation in counseling psychology: Strategies for best practices. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35*(3), 369-403.

York, T. T., Gibson, C., & Rankin, S. (2015). Defining and measuring academic success. *Practical Assessment, Research, & Evaluation, 20*(5). 1-20.

Yuksel, S. (2006). Undergraduate students' resistance to study skills course. *College Student Journal, 40*(1), 158-165.

Appendix A – IRB Approval

Northeastern

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: August 31, 2015	IRB #: CPS15-08-06
Principal Investigator(s):	Carolyn Bair Laurie Boeding
Department:	Doctor of Education Program College of Professional Studies
Address:	20 Belvidere Northeastern University
Title of Project:	Academic Performance in Compressed Courses: A Phenomenological Study of Community College Student Success
Participating Sites:	Trident Technical College permission in file
DHHS Review Category:	Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents:	One (1) signed consent form
Monitoring Interval:	12 months

Human Subject Research Protection
490 Renaissance Park
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
617.373.7570
fax 617.373.4595
northeastern.edu/hsrp

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: AUGUST 30, 2016

Investigator's Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB **immediately** of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee **prior to being instituted.**
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630

Appendix B – Email Invitation to Participants

Email invitation for student participation in a grounded theory research study for Doctoral Candidate at Northeastern University

Date:

Dear ECO210 and ECO211 Students,

My name is Laurie Boeding and I am a graduate student at Northeastern University. I am working on the last stage of my doctoral degree by conducting a study on students enrolled in compressed courses at TTC. My research topic is: Student success in compressed courses.

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study. Participants will have an opportunity to tell their stories, whether positive or negative, about compressed courses. All results will be kept confidential.

If you take part in this study you will be asked to participate in a 60 to 90 minute interview to explain your personal experiences with compressed courses. You may also be asked to participate in a follow up interview if more information is needed. Participants will be given a $20 prepaid MasterCard or Visa for their time.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to participate.

Participants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Must have initially enrolled at TTC in Fall 2013 or earlier
- Must be enrolled in ECO210 or ECO211 during Fall 2015
- Must have taken classes during the following semesters: Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Fall 2014, and Spring 2015
- Must have had an improvement in Grade Point Average since fall 2013. Students who GPAs have remains the same will also be considered.
- Must be enrolled in a TTC degree, certificate, or diploma program
- Must be at least 18 years old

If you are interested in participating I will need to collect some information from you either by email or through an online survey to determine if you are eligible. You are not committing to participate by providing your information; you may still opt out of the study at any time if you are selected to participate. To respond by email please reply to this message indicating that you would like to participate and answer the questions below in your response. If you would prefer to complete a short survey with the same questions please click Survey Link

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact:

Laurie Boeding,
Northeastern University Doctoral Student
Email: boeding.l@husky.neu.edu

1. Contact Information. (This information will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in the study and your contact information will not be shared).

   Name:

   Email address:

   Phone number:

2. Are you currently enrolled at TTC full-time or part-time? Full-time is 12 or more credit hours. Part-time is fewer than 12 credit hours.

3. Are you currently enrolled in ECO-210 Macroeconomics?

4. If you answered "Yes" to question 3, which section of ECO-210 are you enrolled in?

_____	ECO-210-001	_____	ECO-210-W01
_____	ECO-210-002	_____	ECO-210-W02
_____	ECO-210-003	_____	ECO-210-W03
_____	ECO-210-MP1		

5. Are you currently enrolled in ECO-211-Microeconomics?

6. If you answered "Yes" to question 4, which section of ECO-211 are you currently enrolled in?

_____	ECO-211-001
_____	ECO-211-W01

Appendix C – Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program
Principal Investigator: Carolyn R. Bair, Ph.D.
Student Investigator: Laurie Boeding, Doctoral Student
Title of Project: Academic Performance in Compressed Courses: A Phenomenological Study of Community College Student Success

The following demographics will be collected: Enrollment status, gender, age, ethnicity, race, marital status, employment status, whether student has children under age 18, single parent, does student care for other family members, financial aid, veteran status, GED vs. HS diploma, first generation student, prior college experience.

To Interviewees:

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. We have reviewed the informed consent document together and I provided you with a copy for your records. Do you have any questions about the consent? This interview will last 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Do I have your permission to record the interview? The information that you share with me will be confidential. Your name will not be used to protect your privacy. During the interview we will talk about your experiences in compressed courses and in full-semester length courses. We will also discuss factors that might affect your decision to persist in school. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Experiences with compressed courses

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. Why did you decide to enroll at TTC?
3. As you know, the college converted its entire course schedule from 14-week, full-semester length courses to a compressed, 7-week format in fall 2014. Tell me a little about your experiences in compressed courses.
4. How did you feel about the change to a compressed schedule when you first learned about it?

5. What did you think about compressed courses the first time you took a compressed course?
6. Tell me about your experiences in 14-week, full-semester length courses.
7. Data analyzed at the college shows that students are more successful in compressed courses than in full-semester courses. Why do you think that is?
8. Have you, personally, experienced increased academic success since the conversion to compressed courses? Why do you think that is?
9. How has the compressed schedule affected the following areas of your life (please share your personal experiences):
    a. Study habits
    b. Class schedule
    c. Work schedule
    d. Caring for children or family members
    e. Transportation
    f. Any other issue you can think of.
10. What do you like most about compressed courses?
11. What do you like least about compressed courses?
12. What do you think about compressed courses now that you have been enrolled in these courses for more than 2 semesters?
    a. Has your opinion changed since you first heard about the change? How?
13. What compressed class formats have you taken? Face-to-face, online, mixed-mode (hybrid)?

14. Do you think any of the formats that you have taken are better under a compressed schedule than others? Why?
15. How many classes do you usually take during a compressed term? How many did you take during a 14-week, full-semester?
16. Do you think the number of classes you take at the same time affects your success in those classes? Why or why not?
17. Do you think that teaching methods are different in your compressed courses than in the full-semester courses that you took? How?
18. Do you feel that you have more time to interact with classmates in compressed courses? Please describe some of those experiences.
19. Do you have more contact with faculty in compressed courses than you did in full-semester courses? Please describe some of the experiences.
20. In general, do you think the courses themselves changed since compression? If so, how?
21. Are there any courses or subject areas that you think are better suited to compressed courses than others? Why do you think (subject – economics, history, English, etc.) is effective in a compressed format?
22. Do you feel that the College helped prepare you for compressed courses?
    a. Did you attend an information session?
    b. Can you think of things that weren't done that might have helped?
23. Have your instructors shared their opinions about the compressed schedule with you and your classmates? Can you provide examples of things that were said (remember, this is strictly confidential)?

24. Do you think the instructor's attitude toward a course or course format affects your ability to succeed in the course? Why or why not?
25. Have you ever withdrawn from a course? If so, what caused you to withdraw? What might have prevented from withdrawing from the course?

Appendix D – Informed Consent

Northeastern University
Human Subject Research Protection
400 Renaissance Park
Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115-5000
Tel: 617.373.7570, Fax 617.373.4595

Template 1 NU HSRP Rev. 4/21/2015

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education
Name of Investigator(s): Carolyn Bair, PhD, Principal Investigator; Laurie Boeding, Doctoral Student
Title of Project: Academic Performance in Compressed Courses: A Phenomenological Study of Community College Student Success

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask the researcher any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have completed both full-semester length courses and compressed courses at the research site.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this research is to understand what students experience with the compressed course schedule and how the experiences differ from full-semester length courses. The goal is to understand factors that relate to improved student success in the compressed format.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60 to 90 minute, one-on-one interview with the researcher as well as a 15-30 minute follow-up interview. The first interview will be conducted face-to-face at the research site in a mutually agreed upon location. The follow-up interview may be face-to-face, via telephone, or via email. You will also be asked to allow the researcher to audio record the initial interview, which will later be transcribed into text. You will be given a chance to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy and to provide more information.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

You will be interviewed at a location that is mutually agreed upon between you and the researcher. The interview will be scheduled on a day and time that is convenient for you. The initial interview will take between 60-90 minutes. The follow up interview can be conducted in person, by phone, or by email; whichever you prefer. The follow up interview is expected to last between 15-30 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

We do not anticipate any risks to you for participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

APPROVED
NU IRB# CR515-08-06
VALID 8.31.15
THROUGH 8.30.16

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help students and faculty understand which factors contribute to student success in compressed courses.

Who will see the information about me?

The information you provide in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way as being of this project.

The audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as transcription is complete. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name on the transcripts as well as on the written report. Transcripts will be stored on an encrypted hard drive owned by the researcher and stored at the researcher's residence. No one other than the researcher has access to the drive. Data will be destroyed in accordance with Northeastern Institutional Review Board policies.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of my participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact:

Student Researcher

Laurie Boeding
Northeastern University Graduate Student
boeding.l@husky.neu.edu
(843) 810-1568

OR

Principal Investigator

Carolyn R. Bair, Ph.D.
Higher Education Administration
Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies, 20 BV
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
c.bair@neu.edu
617-390-4197

APPROVED
NU IRB# CPS15-08-06
VALID 8-31-15
THROUGH 8-30-16

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

Participants will receive a $20 pre-paid Visa or MasterCard for participation in this study.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

State any costs that may be incurred by the participant for the study, e.g., parking.

Is there anything else I need to know?

You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study. Dual credit students (high school students enrolled in TTC courses) are not eligible to participate.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part **Date**

_____
Printed name of person above

_____ _____
Signature of person who explained the study **Date**

Laurie Boeding
Printed name of person above

APPROVED
NU IRB# CR515-0806
VALID 8-31-15
THROUGH 8-30-16