

FROM ACADEMICALLY UNDER-PREPARED TO PREPARED

JOURNEYING FROM ACADEMICALLY UNDER-PREPARED TO PREPARED:
EXPLORING DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISING AT A CARIBBEAN-BASED COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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EXPLORING DEVELOPMENTAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
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Dedication

This dissertation and my Ph.D. journey are dedicated to my loved ones who believed in me, and
equally important, the students I am yet to serve.

Acknowledgements

A journey begins with one step, and indeed, this journey has been filled with steps that would not have been possible without God, my “village”, loved ones, friends, colleagues, past students, Mizzou’s faculty, staff, and my peers.

To my God and Savior, everything under the sun begins and ends with you, so to this journey was conceived by you and ended with you as my lead. Thank you for blessing me with this unimaginable experience and for seeing me through every step of the way. For this, I thank you!

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Abstract

This study explored how developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO community college experienced the resident developmental advising service. Emphasis was placed on ascertaining how these students perceived the role of developmental advising in enabling them to develop self-regulated behaviors inclusive of goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy. The study also explored the extent to which this service promoted increased levels of persistence. A qualitative phenomenological case study guided the research process. The data collection methods included phenomenological interviews that were conducted with six student participants; semi-structured interviews that were conducted with two developmental advisors employed at the TTIOO; and documentary analysis. The study's major limitations include—the majority of the data analysis revolved around the phenomenological interviews; the interviews were facilitated virtually; and the participant selection process did not yield to intentionally recruiting students demonstrating varied levels of academic performance, and both male and female genders. The last limitation is that only one developmental advisor was employed at the time of the study. The findings revealed that the major challenges the participants encountered was the shame and embarrassment of being labelled a developmental student, a sense of being burdensome, difficulty managing course requirements, and personal and financial factors. Secondly, lecturers had a more pronounced effect on the participants' goal setting-competencies and levels of academic self-efficacy. Although the participants were appreciative of the guidance and support provided by their developmental advisor, they believed that the intervention had a minimal impact on their persistence levels.

Keywords: developmental advising, developmental students, academic self-efficacy, goal-setting, persistence

CHAPTER 1

Background and Significance

Education is a powerful revolutionary tool that empowers individuals to realize positive life experiences. From a macro perspective, it has the ability to promote societal and economic growth. More specifically, post-secondary education is one of the key cornerstones that fuels a country's sustainable development (Aljohani, 2016). By recognizing the potential personal and societal benefits that can be derived from individuals' engagement with post-secondary education, many governments worldwide commit to ensuring that citizens have increased access to this advanced level of education (Hornsby, 2014; Mok & Jiang, 2018; Saito & Smith, 2017). Similar access trends have become particularly prominent in Latin American and Caribbean countries. One notable outcome of these mass access drives is the increased enrollment of students requiring developmental and remedial support (Connolly et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009).

In the United States post-secondary developmental students are typically described as those who do not possess basic skills in core areas such as writing, reading, and math (Tritelli, 2003). Similar descriptors are used in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the post-secondary developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO are also defined as those who possess limited math, reading, and/or English competencies (Farrell, 2012). Many developmental students also demonstrate limited competencies utilizing essential academic skills that can increase the levels of success they realize (Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005). Therefore, despite this commendable enrollment trend, one burgeoning concern is whether post-secondary institutions are providing effective support mechanisms that can enable developmental students to thrive and persist post-enrollment. Many institutions provide specific programs and support services with the intent to suitably prepare developmental students for post-secondary academic

pursuits. One such source of support is the developmental advising service, which served as the focus of this study.

This phenomenological case study is situated within the Caribbean, more specifically the island of Trinidad and Tobago. A community college served as the site for this study, which I refer to as the Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Opportunity (TTIOO). This study focused on the developmental advising service that developmental students access at the TTIOO. Via this study, insight has been provided into how developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO perceive developmental advising's role in enabling them to develop self-regulated behaviors inclusive of goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy—skills that play instrumental roles in influencing students' success (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Schunk, 1990). This study also sought to capture the essence of how these students view developmental advising's role in increasing their commitment to persist with their programs.

Statement of the Problem

Developmental students often experience difficulties acquiring the academic skills that can prepare them to realize high levels of academic success and/or increase their commitment to persist (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005; O'Gara et al., 2009). This study focused on the developmental student population enrolled at the TTIOO. A critical element used to define Trinbagonian post-secondary developmental students center on individuals' performance in the regional Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination. This examination is administered by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) to all secondary school students at the point of exit from the secondary school system (this is discussed further in an ensuing section).

As reported by CXC (2018), vast numbers of Caribbean and by extension Trinbagonian students leave secondary school without acquiring math and English CXC subjects. For example,

in 2018 approximately 53% of all students failed the English examination; 76% of students failed the math examination; and 41% successfully passed five or more subject areas (Caribbean Examination Council [CXC], 2018). Although the data for 2019 showed a slight improvement, these figures remain quite concerning for the region's post-secondary administrators, governments, and human resource sectors. That is, research indicates secondary school performance outcomes are one of the strongest predictors of academic success at the post-secondary level (Rios, 2019; Woods et al., 2018). Therefore, these performance statistics suggest that more needs to be done at the secondary level to increase students' performance. They also imply that post-secondary institutions have an increased responsibility for effectively and intentionally supporting students who realize minimal success at the secondary education level.

This issue becomes even more problematic at the TTIOO, as a large percentage of the country's developmental student population typically seek enrollment at this institution—the country's sole community college. This enrollment trend indicates that intense student support systems are required to scaffold and support this particular student population with realizing their post-secondary educational goals. However, Latin American and Caribbean post-secondary institutions are generally criticized for their inability to provide robust retention-driven student support services (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). It is imperative that institutions invest the necessary resources to support students, particularly those who start their post-secondary journey at somewhat of a disadvantage. Therefore, this study is but one step that was undertaken to ascertain how developmental students perceive developmental advising, and whether this institutional support system is in fact meeting its intended goal of preparing students to successfully engage post-secondary education.

Further, most existing research and knowledge about developmental students and the support services they access center on the American experience. In the Caribbean context, very

little research has been conducted to ascertain whether gains have been made in improving the outcomes developmental students realize, particularly within the community college context. More specifically, while developmental students comprise a significant proportion of Trinidad and Tobago's post-secondary sector, and the TTIOO's student population, very little is known about these students' challenges or experiences relative to developmental support services. Additionally, in the context of the TTIOO very little is known about whether developmental advising is or can support the academic aspirations of developmental students, or whether it empowers them to harness the requisite academic skills and efficacy levels that can contribute to increased levels of academic success and persistence.

The aforementioned knowledge gaps can compromise institutional goals and broader national development agendas. That is, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT), the TTIOO, and other post-secondary institutions are inappropriately positioned to empower developmental students to succeed if they remain unenlightened about these students' perspectives and needs. Thus, realizing national and regional goals aligned with increasing access to post-secondary education can soon become a shallow promise if this research gap and other similar research agendas are not undertaken. This study will seek to acquire insights from developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO regarding the developmental advising support service. These insights can be potentially useful for informing student support policies and practices at both institutional and national levels.

Significance of the Study

International and regional development entities such as the World Bank, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continue to cite education as one measure that can empower developing states to become more sustainable and competitive on the global market (CARICOM, 2017; The World Bank, 2020a). In acknowledgement of these perspectives, the GORTT is

committed to ensuring equitable and increased access to post-secondary education (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017; The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015; The GORTT Ministry of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education, 2010). However, it is imperative for opportunity to move beyond access. In particular, by seeking to create sustainable educational opportunities for developmental students, the requisite sources of support that can enable academic success and persistence must be institutionalized across post-secondary institutions. Moreover, these services should be systematically evaluated to determine the extent to which their intended outcomes are being met.

In light of the above, this study is significant for several reasons. The first reason aligns with the limited number of studies centering on post-secondary student support systems in the Caribbean context, particularly regarding the community college system and developmental students. The voices of developmental post-secondary students navigating these spaces remain virtually absent from the discourse on institutional student support initiatives. More specifically, the realities of these students' academic experiences and challenges are virtually unknown. Whether or not students are academically-prepared, they possess agency, and their voices and perspectives can be instrumental in influencing educational policy and practice. Thus, centering developmental students' voices in this study was relevant because their insights regarding the impact of the TTIOO's developmental advising was largely non-existent. More specifically, the study provided an opportunity to assess the extent to which this support service enables developmental students to acquire goal-setting competencies, and high levels of academic self-efficacy—components that can contribute to increased academic success and persistence.

From an institutional perspective, this study can serve as an opportunity for the TTIOO's administrators to gain insight into developmental students' experiences, needs, successes, and any programmatic challenges related to the developmental advising service. These insights can

enable the TTIOO to collaborate with students to facilitate the necessary improvements. In the long-term, these factors can potentially enhance the experiences and outcomes that both the student and the institution are able to harness. The study's findings can potentially position the TTIOO to meet institutional goals related to providing effective support systems, increasing institutional retention and graduation rates, diminishing the vast number of wasted credits and financial resources, and contributing to the country's employment sector and national development agendas.

From a macro national perspective, vast sums continue to be invested in post-secondary education and broadened access drives. However, providing access without measuring and assessing the impact of such initiatives results in financial wastage, and obstructs the realization of broader national goals. This study can initiate the start of a local research agenda that centers on developing a deep understanding of the experiences, challenges, and needs that Trinbagonian developmental students negotiate. These insights can be used to inform some broader national policies and practices that can work toward effectively supporting these students. In the long-term, these considerations can potentially assist with reducing the vast amount of tuition funding that is wasted each year on incomplete courses and programs. Diminishing this research gap is one means through which the Trinbagonian government can increase their ability to execute the educational mandates proffered by regional and international entities, improve the lives of their citizenry, realize measurable and sustainable economic growth, and increase participation on the global market. Embracing this research agenda can transcend Trinidad and Tobago's borders as it is possible that this study can potentially instigate similar research agendas in other Caribbean countries. Such steps would be instrumental in enabling the development of culture and region-specific policies and practices related to Caribbean post-secondary student support systems. The benefits that can be derived

from this study are far-reaching and can translate into positive outcomes for students, institutions, and societies.

Post-secondary Education: Promoting Sustainable Development in the Caribbean

Approximately 734 million people worldwide currently live below the international poverty benchmark of less than \$1.90 per day (The World Bank, 2020a). Poverty levels remain very high within Latin American and Caribbean countries, and approximately 20% of Trinidad and Tobago's citizens currently live below the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020; The United Nations, 2019). Further, most previously colonized countries such as Trinidad and Tobago continue to have a tenuous affair with development, and poverty and inequality remain pervasive in these societies (Browne & Shen, 2017; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008). Inequality is particularly pronounced regarding wealth distribution, employment, health, housing, and access to education (The United Nations, 2019).

Over the last 30 years, one of the measures taken by Caribbean governments to reduce poverty and inequality centered on providing increased access to education across all levels. Moreover, by acknowledging the need to strengthen the Caribbean's knowledge economy, during the 1990s many Caribbean governments unilaterally agreed to bolster their respective education systems, with an emphasis on post-secondary education (Task Force on Higher Education & Society, 2000). Developments in these regards led to an unprecedented increase in the number of individuals from the Caribbean Diaspora accessing higher education in their respective countries and internationally (Artana et al., 2007). For example, revised post-secondary access initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean helped to increase enrollment from 17% in 1991 to 40% by 2010 (Ferreyra et al., 2017; The World Bank, 2017). As of 2019, the gross enrollment rate at Latin America and Caribbean post-secondary institutions peaked at 52.7% (The World Bank, 2020c).

Despite some gains, further investment is needed to increase the effectiveness of post-secondary education systems located in developing nations such as Latin America and the Caribbean (The United Nations, 2015). In 2015 the United Nations proposed 17 sustainable development goals directed at empowering nations to build their capacity to address global challenges aligned with poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. To achieve these goals, the United Nations recommended that governments should allocate between 15 to 20 percent of their annual expenditure to education; increase access to post-secondary education; and provide the requisite tools and infrastructure to ensure that adult learners acquire the skills needed to increase their employability and thus their contribution to their country's sustainable development (The United Nations, 2015). Despite adherence to these guidelines and some measured improvements in the Caribbean post-secondary education sector, the recent Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy proposed by CARICOM reports that the region's post-secondary education system remains shrouded by undersubscribed enrolment, underperformance, and inadequate job access. It was therefore recommended that Caribbean governments should inject additional resources into their post-secondary education sectors. These factors jointly influence the measures that Caribbean countries continue to implement to improve the deliverables within their respective post-secondary education sectors. In the following section, I provide an overview of Trinidad and Tobago's education context and the measures taken to improve the post-secondary education sector.

Overview of Trinidad and Tobago's Post-Secondary Education System

A member of CARICOM, the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is home to approximately 1.4 million residents (World Population Review, 2020; Worldometer, 2020). Previously colonized under British rule, the country's educational policies and practices were

patterned after the British education system, some of which currently exist (Brown & Conrad, 2007; George et al., 2003). Trinidad and Tobago's education system consists of a four-tier structure—pre-primary (ages 3 to 4); primary (ages 5 to 11); secondary (ages 12 to 18); and post-secondary/tertiary (Oxford Business Group, 2020; The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). Trinidad and Tobago's post-secondary sector consists of both private and public institutions. There are three universities, one community college, and several for-profit and non-profit institutions (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017).

Before pursuing post-secondary education, citizens are often required to have some exposure to secondary school education. At the minimum, they are required to complete the CSEC examination administered to secondary school students by the CXC. To acquire a full CSEC certificate, students are required to complete at least five subjects inclusive of math and English. However, for varying reasons some students pursue fewer than five subjects, or pursue five or more subjects exclusive of math and/or English. Additionally, students are not always successful in passing all of the CSEC examinations they complete. In Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean countries, the results obtained from these examinations serve as one measure for determining students' academic ability and preparedness for post-secondary educational pursuits. At the TTIOO, students who acquire fewer than five CSEC subjects, and those with five or more subjects excluding math and/or English are defined as requiring post-secondary developmental support (Farrell, 2012). Similar benchmarks are also used by other local institutions. In these regards, some institutions provide special programs to support these students with increasing their readiness for college-level work.

Despite the gains that have been made by increasing post-secondary access to developmental students, elements of elitism still exist within Trinidad and Tobago's education system (Steinbach, 2012). Consequently, social class often influences the educational

opportunities that individuals can access, their academic trajectory, and academic outcomes. More specifically, the type of secondary school an individual attends often times influence the experiences and academic outcomes they negotiate, and thus their post-secondary experiences and academic outcomes. For example, students defined as socioeconomically disadvantaged are more likely to attend the less prestigious secondary schools, and are prone to experience disparate realities (De Lisle et al., 2009; Deosaran, 2019; Steinbach, 2012). In many instances, these students are often left academically and otherwise underprepared to embrace the particularities of post-secondary education. Further, students from the lower socioeconomic bracket are more likely to enroll at the country's only community college or other less prestigious for-profit institutions. These enrollment trends are therefore influenced by factors such as cost, institutional access policies, and students' academic preparedness. These trends also heighten concerns aligned with retention and persistence, and the type of support services students can access. Overall, many of these factors suggest that there are inherent flaws within the country's secondary and post-secondary educational policies and practices that should be addressed.

Improving Post-Secondary Education Deliverables and Increasing Access

The GORTT has over the years attempted to address many of the shortcomings within its education system, particularly the post-secondary sector. These changes are often initiated in keeping with the recommendations proffered by global and regional bodies inclusive of UNESCO, the United Nations, the World Bank, CARICOM, and the Caribbean Development Bank. Therefore, in striving to promote holistic individual success, societal growth, and sustainable national development, many policy revisions have been initiated over the years. For example, post-secondary access policies were revisited, thereby providing opportunities for a vast sector of the population to pursue their post-secondary educational goals (The GORTT Ministry of

Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015). This policy shift also instigated the increased volume of post-secondary institutional options that Trinbagonians can now access. Moreover, the government continues to commit to promoting increased measures of inclusion and equity by providing financial support to all citizens, particularly those in need (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Development, 2016). Overall, these policy shifts have been initiated with a view to minimizing opportunity gaps, developing the country's human resources, creating equitable access to post-secondary education, and enabling sustainable development that can empower personal and national growth.

One of the major outcomes resulting from the change in post-secondary access policies is the increase in what Ferreyra et al. (2017) refer to as the "new" student. As noted by Ferreyra et al., this change has been observed in most Latin American and Caribbean countries. Moreover, in Trinidad and Tobago's context, the educational goals harbored by these new students are drastically different compared to past years, and students belonging to lower socioeconomic groups are now accessing post-secondary education en masse (Plummer-Rognmo, 2012). As a result, there has also been the concomitant increase in the number of students requiring remedial and developmental support. Therefore, while providing increased access is commendable, initiatives and resources are now required to support developmental students along their academic journey. This consideration is especially worthy when one acknowledges the academic-related challenges that developmental students navigate, in addition to outcomes aligned with low persistence. Moreover, these concerns are especially pervasive within the community college context.

The Community College, Academic Success, and Persistence

Community colleges are a core pillar of the post-secondary education enterprise, and open-access policies are one of their main features (Boggs, 2011). Further, these institutions are

prided for their commitment to providing vocational training that prepare individuals for entry into various employment sectors (Dougherty et al., 2017; Pedersen, 2005). Over time, community colleges in the United States have become educational spaces of choice, and thus continue to enroll vast numbers of individuals seeking post-secondary qualifications. In particular, vast numbers of non-traditional students now access post-secondary education (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). These students are defined as those who delay enrollment into post-secondary education, attend part-time, are financially independent, work full-time while enrolled, have dependents other than a spouse, is/was a single parent, and/or did not obtain a standard high school diploma (NCES, n.d. c, para. 2). Generally, a large percentage of community college students are defined as non-traditional and developmental (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Dougherty et al., 2017; Gilbert & Heller 2013). These factors all contribute to concerns aligned with student success, retention, and persistence.

Issues aligned with low program completion and persistence levels are not exempt to the community college context, however these challenges are more prevalent at these institutions (Amey, 2017; Phelan, 2014). Therefore, despite the impressive growth in enrollment, student retention remains a pressing challenge for community colleges located in the United States (Bahr, 2008; Boggs, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Similar trends have also been observed in Latin American and Caribbean countries (Ferreyra et al., 2017).

One of the factors contributing to low levels of persistence and program completion aligns with the fact that many community college students are “less able or academically prepared” to engage post-secondary pursuits (Jia & Maloney, 2015). In fact, Ferreyra et al. (2017) note that in many cases “low-ability” Latin American and Caribbean students are channeled into community colleges and technical/vocational institutions. Many community college students are often under-prepared for post-secondary pursuits as a result of prior

educational experiences such as academic failure, poor preparation, low expectations, and institutional factors (Miller & Murray, 2005). This outcome is exacerbated in the community college context because students enrolled at these institutions are typically more academically, economically, and socially disadvantaged when compared to students enrolled at four-year universities (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; O’Gara et al., 2009). In this light, Bailey (2009) notes that approximately two-thirds of American community college students require developmental and remedial support. It should be noted that limited data exists regarding Latin America and the Caribbean’s community college context. Therefore, much of the data provided is in reference to the United States context.

While Latin American and Caribbean post-secondary institutions bemoan their inability to realize high rates of retention, the student support and retention strategies utilized by these institutions are often insufficient (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). CARICOM (2017) echoes similar sentiments by noting that retention issues across all Caribbean post-secondary institutional types are a direct result of institutional learner support deficits, poverty, and socioeconomic factors. To this end, Orellana (2014) strongly asserts that the expansion of post-secondary in Latin American and Caribbean countries has not extensively benefitted developmental students.

Despite the increased enrollment of developmental students at Caribbean community colleges, insufficient support services, and associated retention challenges, limited research explore these issues. Notwithstanding the characteristics and experiences that students present, institutions are also liable in this context. That is, institutions’ intense focus on increasing enrollment while failing to provide the requisite support systems that can retain the large numbers of students enrolled annually is problematic (Ciobanu, 2013). As previously outlined, these outcomes suggest that both secondary and post-secondary institutions are required to

dedicate more resources to support all students with becoming prepared for engagement with post-secondary education.

In sum, access without the provision of sufficient support systems limits students' and institutions' ability to realize positive sustainable outcomes. This shortcoming can also translate into an empty promise for students, particularly those requiring additional support to thrive within the post-secondary milieu. Further, failure to effectively support students with harnessing the requisite skills and dispositions that can fuel academic success prohibits post-secondary institutions from realizing high graduation rates. From societal and economic perspectives, failure to effectively support students prevents institutions from contributing to building their country's human resource capacity, and a workforce that can assume meaningful roles in national and global economies. However, there are community colleges dedicated to supporting students in resourceful ways. The TTIOO is one such institution that demonstrates a commitment to supporting students, particularly those requiring developmental support.

The TTIOO's Developmental Support Unit

Developmental education refers to those programs and services that are specifically designed to prepare developmental students to engage post-secondary education (Payne & Lyman, 1996). The TTIOO's developmental education program is designed to prepare developmental students to later engage their college-level curriculum. Thus, by virtue of relaxed entry requirements, students possessing fewer than five CSEC subjects, and those without math and English are provided with educational opportunity in these regards. The TTIOO's developmental education program is designed in a manner that carefully considers students' academic and social profiles, and attempts to support students' respective developmental needs. In addition to providing remedial support in courses such as math, reading, writing, physics, biology, and life skills, students enrolled in this program are also provided with a range

of remedial, psychosocial, and developmental support services. These services are seen as precursors for empowering students to successfully navigate college life, and to ultimately realize academic success.

In the past, administrators responsible for the TTIOO's developmental education program reported that students accessing this program realize differential levels of success and demonstrate varying levels of persistence. In this light, they expressed that between one-third to half of the students enrolled in the program withdrew before the end of their first year. Although data specific to the Latin American and Caribbean regions could not be accessed, the aforementioned trend reported by the TTIOO's administrators aligns well with the data provided by Bailey et al. (2010). These researchers report that less than 25% of developmental education students enrolled at American community colleges complete a degree or persist with their programs. The trend observed at the TTIOO is also reflective of the pattern recorded by a report provided by American Association of Community College (AACC). This report revealed that almost half of community college students drop out before they begin their second year (AACC, 2012). The TTIOO's administrators also report high levels of under-performance as many students in the program tend to have GPAs below the institution's 2.0 "good-standing" average. These outcomes often occur due to underpreparedness, difficulty adjusting to the novel post-secondary experience, and other personal circumstances. However, institutional factors also play an instrumental role in these regards.

In light of the above, effectively preparing developmental students for engagement with their college-level programs and increasing these students' levels of persistence remains a major concern for the TTIOO's administrators. Although the institution has a desire to contribute to national development by providing opportunities to students with varied educational backgrounds and experiences, this goal is not being fully accomplished. This concern transcends

the personal (student) and institutional contexts. It also resonates at the national level when one considers setbacks aligned with realizing broader national and regional development goals, and increasing the country's human resource capacity. Concerns also arise when attention is paid to the financial resources expended on state-funded tuition. Similar to academically-prepared students, developmental students must assume some measure of responsibility for their educational success. However, while there are limitations regarding the scope of support interventions that institutions can provide, it is imperative that institutions implement policies and practices that can foster higher rates of academic success, holistic growth, and persistence. In the TTIOO's context, one of the primary sources of institutional support provided to developmental students is the developmental advising support service.

The Developmental Advising Support System

Developmental advising is a core component of the TTIOO's developmental education program, and the focus of this study. The developmental advising concept was initiated by Burns Crookston during the latter part of the 20th century (Gordon, 1994). Crookston differentiated between prescriptive/traditional advising and developmental advising. He surmised that a developmental approach to advising centers on individual student concerns, needs, and aspirations. Therefore, while prescriptive advising focuses on course selection and academic regulations (Ender, 1994), developmental advising is a comprehensive process that utilizes interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies to assist students with achieving specific learning, developmental, career, and life goals (Creamer & Creamer, 1994). As a result of its advising focus, developmental advising emphasizes goal-setting, problem-solving, and educational planning (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Fielstein & Lammers, 1992; Gardiner, 1994; O'Banion, 1972).

As a result of the processes involved in developmental advising and the potential benefits that can be derived from this process, this service is touted as an ideal support system for developmental students (Gordon, 1994; Hollis, 2009; Jordan, 2000). Consequently, some studies reveal that this comprehensive advising approach enables students to realize personal, academic, and professional growth (Bland, 2003). Other studies support the view that developmental advising can increase student persistence, institutional retention, and graduation rates (Bland, 2003; Creamer & Creamer, 1994). However, studies exploring developmental advising relative to the community college and developmental student contexts are generally minimal. Moreover, studies detailing the Caribbean's experience in this regard could not be accessed.

Developmental Advising at the TTIOO

The TTIOO's commitment to serving developmental students was one of the main motivations behind their developmental education program. Installing developmental advising as a core program component was seen as a precursor for effectively providing some of the support students require to thrive. Developmental advising is perceived as one institutional measure that can work toward preparing students to meet the demands of post-secondary education, reducing the magnitude of academic and other challenges that students present, and ultimately promoting academic success and persistence. It is noteworthy that the details provided in this section detailing the TTIOO's developmental advising service was drawn from my professional experiences as a practitioner at this institution. Using this reference point as the primary resource was necessary, as electronic sources providing the identified scope of details were inaccessible.

At the TTIOO, the parameters used to grant students access to developmental advisors have shifted over the years. When the developmental advising service was first introduced in

2009, access was reserved for students who were enrolled in the developmental education program. However, this service has since been extended to students enrolled in their college-level program, but whose GPA has been consistently less than the prescribed 2.0 good-standing average for two or more semesters. This change was made as the TTIOO's administrators recognized that underperforming college-level students could also benefit from developmental advising. That is, it was envisioned that support from developmental advisors could also empower under-performing college-level students to develop goals and skills that could improve their academic performance, and thereby minimize their risk of losing their state-funded tuition. These students are therefore offered the opportunity to work with a developmental advisor with the end goal of improving their academic standing. Faculty can also refer students to a developmental advisor when they envision that a particular student can benefit from this scope of support; likewise, students can also self-refer. Students are encouraged to meet with their assigned developmental advisor at least twice per semester. These frequent contacts enable both students and their developmental advisors to keep abreast of students' progress, revise goals where necessary, identify and address any challenges that may arise, and make referrals where required.

To date, no study has been conducted at the TTIOO to assess students' perceptions of the developmental advising service in particular, or to ascertain the extent to which they believe it fuels their persistence and success. Via this study, insights were provided into how developmental students enrolled in the TTIOO's developmental education program perceive the role of developmental advising in enabling them to harness effective goal-setting skills, and high levels of academic self-efficacy, which can in turn promote academic success and increase their desire to persist. In this light, Bandura's social cognitive theory served as this study's theoretical lens. Emphasis was placed on the theory's goal-setting and academic self-efficacy components,

and more so on how developmental advisors can serve as an instrumental institutional resource that can assist students with developing these areas.

Theoretical Framework Overview

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory advances human agency and posits that human functioning is predicated on triadic reciprocal relationships among one's behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). Consequently, Bandura asserts that individuals are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating organisms that are shaped by environmental events and inner forces (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2008). This study focused on how developmental advising as an institutional support service can prepare students to develop essential academic skills and academic self-efficacy. Contextually, this theoretical lens was useful because of its focus on self-regulated goal-setting behaviors, and academic self-efficacy—factors that are essential to students' success.

Self-regulation refers to those systematic efforts that individuals use to direct their thoughts, feelings, and actions, toward the attainment of their goals (Zimmerman, 2002). Therefore, from an agentic perspective, individuals are seen as proactively engaging in their personal development, and can engender specific outcomes by virtue of their self-regulated behaviors. Likewise, students (developmental and non-developmental) should be seen as possessing agency that can enable them to engage self-regulated behaviors that are directed at achieving academic success. As previously mentioned, goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy are major components of Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2008). These components can enable students to work toward realizing their academic goals and increasing their levels of persistence. This study centers on these aspects of Bandura's social cognitive theory, particularly as they relate to the role of developmental advising in these regards.

Self-regulated learners are able to direct their educational paths and successes by setting challenging goals they wish to achieve (Bandura, 1989; Schunk, 1990). As noted by Schunk (2001), goals are motivational as a result of their ability to prepare individuals to exert the efforts required to meet specific tasks; they are directive; and they affect how individuals process information. Moreover, individuals and learners alike must activate their agency by identifying practical steps for achieving set goals, and committing to following through on these steps (Locke & Latham, 1990; Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). Developmental students often require additional support to increase their competencies in areas such as goal-setting (Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005). Fortunately, developmental advising is defined as one institutional support service that can prepare students to harness competencies related to academic skills such as goal-setting. Therefore, this study explored whether the TTIOO's developmental advising service can support students with fostering these skills. Determining this is essential, as it is envisioned that increased competencies in these areas can potentially contribute to students' academic success. It is also possible that they can influence student's desire to persist. Additionally, students' ability to develop goal-setting competencies, also increase their ability to realize high levels of academic self-efficacy.

Effective goal-setting skills are seen as a prerequisite for developing academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's self-evaluation of his/her ability to successfully execute a course of action required to derive specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In particular, academic self-efficacy centers on learners and the behaviors they engage in the academic realm. It refers to an individual's belief in his/her capabilities to successfully learn or complete academic tasks or goals (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1977, 1986) asserts that the judgments of perceived capability that an individual ascribes to a specific task are strong predictors of performance outcomes. Additionally, as students

experience successful goal attainment, self-efficacy increases, and motivational levels are sustained (Schunk, 2001). These successes influence subsequent goal-setting activities and commitment to achieving these goals (Pintrich, 2002). Therefore, individuals who are self-regulated and utilize goals to provide direction and create incentives for action, are better prepared to develop self-efficacy.

As a result of the intricate relationship that exists between goal-setting and academic self-efficacy, it can be assumed that students who harness sufficient goal-setting competencies are better-prepared to develop goals that can allow them to master specific academic tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, when individuals master specific tasks or goals, they are more likely to develop high levels of academic self-efficacy relative to those contexts, and other similar situations (Bandura, 1997). These positive outcomes can also influence learners' future cognitive, motivational, emotional, and selective processes. These are promising insights as they relate to developmental students and their attempts to become better-prepared to engage their post-secondary educational pursuits.

Academic self-efficacy can be acquired via four sources inclusive of an individual's direct experience or performance accomplishment, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion such as appraisal or feedback from others, and one's physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). This study focused on the role of developmental advising as a source of institutional support in these regards. Therefore, it focused on how the appraisals and feedback from the TTIOO's developmental advisors can potentially motivate developmental students to harness goal-setting competencies and academic self-efficacy, with a view to empowering these students to realize academic success.

Research Questions and Research Methodology

The research questions that guided this study include:

1. What are the major hurdles developmental students encounter while adjusting to the post-secondary environment—especially those aligned with harnessing academic skills?
2. How do developmental students perceive the role of developmental advising in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy?
3. How does developmental students' engagement with developmental advising, and the acquisition of academic self-efficacy and goal-setting skills influence their academic performance and desire to persist?

Responding to these questions provided insight into the experiences and challenges that developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO encounter, their perception of the role of developmental advising in this context, and what they cite as necessary for fueling their academic success.

The qualitative approach informed this study's data collection and analysis processes. This methodology is best suited for this study because it embodies an approach to research that is attentive to human perspectives and experiences. Moreover, I approached this study's unit of analysis as one that is bounded, finite, and integrated. Therefore, a phenomenological case study was utilized in order to capture the true essence of students' lived experiences with the TTIOO's developmental advising service. Both Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Stake (1995) utilize the constructivist worldview to conceptualize their iterations of the case study approach. Because I desired to focus on the experiences of the developmental students in these regards, the case study as proposed by these methodologists informed how I approached this study.

Further to the above, the data collection methods included a review of institutional documentation relative to the TTIOO's developmental advising service, and traditional semi-structured interviews, and phenomenological semi-structured interviews (three-interview

series). The phenomenological interviews were facilitated with six developmental students; the traditional semi-structured interviews were facilitated with two developmental advisors employed at the TTIOO. While the developmental advisors were only required to participate in one interview each, the students were required to participate in a three-part interview series. This was essential because by conducting three separate interviews, researchers are better-positioned to “explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning.” (Seidman, 2012, p. 20). Therefore, by applying this approach to the interviewing process, I was able to acquire the depth that I need to fully understand and capture the essence of these students’ experiences with the developmental advising service. These interviews were facilitated virtually via the Zoom platform. The data analysis process entailed open and focused coding. As suggested by Stake (1995), during the theme generation process, categorical aggregation was used. Lastly, trustworthiness was addressed by utilizing data source triangulation, member-checking, and audit trails. Attention will also be paid to my researcher positionality and reflexivity processes in these regards.

The afore described methodology was instrumental in enabling me to acquire in-depth insights into the perspectives and experiences of the developmental students who access developmental advising service provided by the TTIOO. Overall, this approach allowed me to ascertain whether developmental advising enables students to harness academic skills such as goal-setting, and positive academic attitudinal dispositions inclusive of academic efficacy. It was also useful for responding to the research question that centered on whether developmental advising aids with increasing students’ academic outcomes and desire to persist.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic efficacy – an individual’s belief or confidence in their ability to successfully achieve a specific level on an academic-related task or a specific academic goal (Bandura, 1977).

Access – “the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education.” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014, p. 1).

Caribbean region – “is located southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and the North American mainland and measures around 1,000 miles from north to south and over 2,500 miles from east to west. Much of it is ocean and the Caribbean region includes about 700 islands, islets, reefs, and cays in and surrounding the Caribbean Sea.” (Caribbean & Co, 2018, para. 5).

CARICOM countries – “a grouping of twenty countries: fifteen Member States and five Associate Members. It is home to approximately sixteen million citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of 30, and from the main ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese and Javanese. The Community is multi-lingual; with English as the major language complemented by French and Dutch and variations of these, as well as African and Asian expressions.” (CARICOM, 2020, para. 1).

Developmental advising – “a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources.” (Winston et al., 1982, p. 8).

Developmental education – “programs and services designed to meet the needs of underprepared college students.” (Payne & Lyman, 1996, p. 12).

Developmental student – an individual who lacks basic competencies in at least one pre-college subject area (particularly math or writing courses) that is defined as necessary for engaging in college-level coursework (Tritelli, 2003).

Non-traditional student – “identified by the presence of one or more of the following seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into post-secondary education, attended part-time,

financially independent, worked full-time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma.” (NCES, n.d. c, para. 2).

Persistence – “continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution — including one different from the institution of initial enrollment — in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year.” (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015, p. 7).

Post-secondary education – “education that is attained when students receive post-secondary credentials. Often regarded as referring to Bachelor’s and Associate’s degrees, post-secondary credential encompasses a broader range of programmes that students may complete after secondary school including A’ Levels, certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, licenses, workforce readiness certifications and tertiary level undergraduate and post graduate degrees.” (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 202).

Retention – “continued enrollment (or degree completion) within the **same** higher education institution in the fall semesters of a student’s first and second year.” (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015, p. 7).

Acronyms

CARICOM – Caribbean Community.

CXC – Caribbean Examination Council.

CSEC – Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate.

GATE – Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses program.

GORTT – Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

GPA – Grade Point Average.

IRB – Institutional Review Board

MSTTE – Ministry of Science, Technology, and Tertiary Education.

NCES – National Center for Education Statistics.

OECS – Organization for Economic Cooperation, and Development.

TTIOO – Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Opportunity.

TTVET –Tertiary Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training, and Lifelong Learning in Trinidad and Tobago policy.

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Providing increased access to post-secondary education is one means through which countries can achieve their respective national goals, and effectively participate in the global economy. Post-secondary education typically refers to those educational programs that students engage subsequent to completing secondary school (Putnam, 1981; The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). In Trinidad and Tobago, these post-secondary programs include A-level examinations, certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, licenses, workforce readiness certifications, and tertiary level undergraduate and post-graduate degrees (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017).

The World Bank (2020b) reports that global post-secondary enrollment rates increased from 9.7% in the year 1970, to 38.8% by 2019. Consequently, the GORTT also reports an increase in enrollment rates across all local post-secondary institutions (Simms et al., 2016; The GORTT Ministry of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education, 2010). Globally, the shift in access policies has resulted in a concomitant growth in the number of students who did not previously fit the traditional definition of a post-secondary student (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). This trend has also been observed in Latin American and Caribbean countries whereby broadened access has resulted in unprecedented increases in non-traditional students (Farrell, 2012; Ferreyra et al., 2017; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Plummer-Rognmo, 2012).

Another notable trend that has occurred as a result of the shift in access policies is that much more developmental students now enroll at community colleges—both in the United States and the Latin American and Caribbean regions (AACC, 2012; Ferreyra et al., 2017). This increase in students requiring developmental support is also accompanied by concerns aligned with student success, persistence, and retention (Amey, 2017; Boggs, 2011; Crisp & Delgado,

2014; Phelan, 2014). One plausible explanation for these concerns is related to the fact that developmental students often navigate particular academic, socioeconomic, and personal challenges that can impair their ability to thrive within the post-secondary environment (Almeida, 1991; Hollis, 2009; Jia & Maloney, 2015; Miller & Murray, 2005). In order to address students' underpreparedness, many community colleges utilize resourceful means to support these students along their academic journey, motivate persistence, and realize institutional retention goals. One of these sources of support is the developmental advising service, and this source of support served as the basis for this study.

In the following section I provide an overview of Trinidad and Tobago's history with elitism, patriarchy, and gender-related dynamics and how they influenced the education system. In this light, emphasis is placed on discussing the post-secondary education system as it relates to academic-underpreparedness. Other aspects of this review focus on the community college context, specifically with regard to developmental students and factors aligned with academic success and persistence. The social cognitive theory proposed by Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1977, 1986) is reviewed as it is the lens that was used to frame this study. Emphasis was placed on the tenets that address self-regulated behaviors, goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy. The developmental advising service and its potential role in supporting the inculcation of self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy will then be addressed. A discussion of how support services such as developmental advising can contribute toward the realization of broader national goals follows, and I conclude by discussing the gaps in the literature and the intent behind this study.

Trinidad and Tobago's Post-secondary Education System: Elitism and Access

Discussions regarding the elitist scope of Trinidad and Tobago's education system necessitates an overview of broader historical influences in this regard. Owing to its' history with colonialism,

the Caribbean and by extension Trinidad and Tobago negotiated an arduous past with classism and racism (Ramsaran, 2001; Smith, 1960). Although not as pervasive as witnessed in previous years, these factors continue to have an overwhelming impact on societal functioning. Thus, it is essential to provide insight into how these factors present within the Trinbagonian society, how they impact the country's education system, and the experiences that students negotiate.

Trinidad and Tobago was colonized by the British with the intent to serve the economic needs of the British colony (Ramsaran, 2001; Smith, 1960). Consequently, colonization and the plantation system influenced the economic, political, and social structure of the Trinbagonian society. The economic system that existed then contributed to the importation of various racial and ethnic groups, most notably East Indian and African peoples. In addition, other groups inclusive of European, French, and Chinese peoples also migrated to this space, and many were able to assume prominent societal roles. As a result of this influx of distinct ethnic and racial groups, Trinidad and Tobago morphed into a culturally and socially plural society (Smith, 1960). Moreover, these groups often strived to differentiate themselves from each other by maintaining their distinctive institutions and customs—for example those associated with religion, education, economics, and cultural practices. Further, in their attempt to maintain this differentiation, these groups resided in specific geographic spaces throughout the country. In many instances this pattern of residence continues to exist, and often determines how constituents are served, particularly with regard to access to resources, jobs, and educational services.

In light of the above, the colonial era saw the emergence of a society that was rigidly socially stratified along racial, colorist, classist, and occupational lines (Brereton, 2016; Ramsaran, 2001). In this vein, Whites resided at the top of the social and economic hierarchy while Blacks and East Indians were relegated to the bottom rung. In later years, factors such as

the emergence of the 1970's Black Power Movement contributed to diversification among the economic elite and thus the inclusion of African, East Indian, Chinese, and persons of mixed heritage in this regard (Ramsaran, 2001). Despite commendable shifts in these areas, Whites and Europeans presently constitute the country's minority group. This group continues to hold strategic economic positions and are quite instrumental in the country's decision-making processes.

Contemporarily, Trinbago is not as rigidly stratified as witnessed during the colonial era, however lingering elements of this past continues to influence how institutional structures function and how Trinbagonians co-exist. Therefore, although the country has experienced significant changes post-independence, race and ethnic relations continue to be sensitive and contentious issues. For example, when independence was granted in 1962, Trinbagonian politics was divided along racial lines, whereby the quest for this new-found societal power and control adopted a racial persona—Blacks were polarized into one political camp, and the East Indians into the other dominant political group (Ramsaran, 2001; Smith, 1960). Currently, Trinidad and Tobago's political structure remains essentially organized along these racial lines. Overall, these factors associated with class and race do not only influence Trinbago's economic, political, and social structures. Rather, they also have an undeniable impact on other social institutions such as education. This area is further explored in the ensuing section.

Elitism Within Trinidad and Tobago's Education System

In many countries, access to post-secondary education was initially reserved for the elite (Mok & Jiang, 2018; Trow, 2007). Prior to the 20th century, Trinidad and Tobago's education system was primarily designed to prepare the bourgeoisie for study abroad, and to assume political and economic leadership roles within the society (Meditz & Hanratty, 1987; Williams & Harvey, 1985). However, massification initiatives now allow increased access to individuals who

would not have previously had the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education (Gale & Parker, 2017; Saito & Smith, 2017). Supporting this view, Cohen and Kisker (2010) note that the start of the mass higher education era saw a 500% increase in enrollment at institutions in the United States. Similar growth has also been recorded in other geographic domains inclusive of Latin American and Caribbean countries (Ciobanu, 2013; Ferreyra et al., 2017; Garaz & Torotcoi, 2017; Huang, 2016). For example, one of the highest increases has been recorded in Colombia where enrollment rose from 4.2% in 1970 to 55.3% by 2018 (The World Bank, 2020b). In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, the post-secondary participation rate estimated 65.23% in 2016 (Simms et al., 2016). Moreover, approximately 27% of the relevant age cohorts in these regions access post-secondary education—since 1985, this percentage has grown by 4.4% annually (Holm-Nielsen et al., 2004).

Despite the increased enrollment of individuals belonging to non-elite groups, vestiges of elitism and exclusivity are still evident within Trinidad and Tobago's education system (De Lisle et al., 2009; Deosaran, 2019; Steinbach, 2012). The core oppressive elements restricting marginalized groups' access to higher education include socioeconomic status and elitism (Alon, 2009; Perna, 2006). Like other international spaces, Trinidad and Tobago's underserved groups are defined using demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, place of residence, and secondary school characteristics. These factors often influence the types of opportunities Trinbagonians can access, inclusive of educational opportunities. While the GORTT has sought to provide an equitable education system, Trinidad and Tobago's education can still be defined as selective, stratified, and segregated (De Lisle et al., 2009; Deosaran, 2019; Steinbach, 2012). For example, these tendencies manifest within the secondary school system by virtue of the public/private secondary school divide (De Lisle et al., 2009; Deosaran, 2019; Steinbach, 2012). That is, students who can afford to attend the costly and exclusive private

schools or the publicly-funded prestigious schools are exposed to higher quality learning environments compared to that of the less-affluent, government-funded public schools. These students are therefore exposed to more positive learning experiences compared to those who attend the less-prestigious institutions—experiences that positively influence these students' preparedness for post-secondary education (Deosaran, 2019).

Further to the above, an intricate relationship exists between post-secondary institutional choice and social class (Mangan et al., 2010; Sianou-Kyrgiou & Tsiplakides, 2011). Therefore, in many cases the type of secondary school Trinbagonian students attend, and the experiences and academic outcomes derived, often influence their post-secondary institutional options and choice, trajectory, and outcomes. That is, students' secondary school background, and to a lesser extent their social class often influence the type of post-secondary institutions they can access, their level of preparedness for post-secondary education, and the levels of success they realize. As a result of the private/public secondary school divide and the disparate experiences students enrolled at both types of institutions negotiate, those who attend either a prestigious public school or an exclusive private school are predisposed to thrive at a higher rate at their post-secondary educational pursuits (Steinbach, 2012). These factors highlight some of the ways in which elitism continues to pervade the country's education system. Moreover, they reveal how socioeconomics and social class can have a direct influence on students' post-secondary experiences and outcomes.

Factors aligned with elitism surface within this study's context in pronounced ways. Most evident is the fact that the two-tiered education system tends to perpetuate the existent societal class divisions (Smith, 1960). The families of Trinbagonian students who attend the less-affluent secondary schools are more likely to have limited social status and are typically working-class (Deosaran, 2019; Smith, 1960). Moreover, these less-affluent, government-funded

secondary schools are often deprived of resources, and measurable and comprehensive institutional and educational reform policies (Deosaran, 2019). As a consequence, working-class students are often disproportionately disadvantaged regarding the secondary educational opportunities they access, their academic outcomes, and in the long-term their post-secondary experiences and academic outcomes. Moreover, in terms of post-secondary choice and access, many students who did not have the good fortune of attending a prestigious secondary school and who may not be defined as being academically prepared, are often channeled into the technical and vocational institutions. This trend has also been recorded in other Latin American and Caribbean countries (Ferreya et al., 2017). As the only community college located in Trinidad and Tobago, the TTIOO absorbs many of these students (Farrell, 2012). These factors demonstrate that despite some measured gains aligned with increasing educational opportunities for a larger sector of the population, Trinidad and Tobago's education sector fosters some measure of inequality in the area of educational access and attainment (De Lisle et al., 2009; Deosaran, 2019). Among other things, they also highlight the need for effective post-secondary student support systems, particularly at technical and vocational institutions.

In addition to the afore-described concerns associated with elitism, it is also noteworthy to highlight concerns regarding patriarchal influences, gender, and male underperformance related to the academic environment. An overview of these facets pertaining to Trinidad and Tobago's context is provided below.

Patriarchy, Gender Roles, and Education

Similar to many other Caribbean countries, Trinidad and Tobago is classified as a primarily patriarchal society (Bailey & Charles, 2010; Mohammed, 1994; Ramsaran, 2001). This is the case although a thriving matriarchal and matrilineal family structure exists alongside the dominant patriarchal structure—matriarchal and matrifocal systems that were partially due

to the country's colonial past (O'Connor, 2014). Patriarchy is "a system of domination that has an ideological and structural base which allows men to dominate women" (Chow & Berheide, 1994). It is noteworthy that patriarchy is not monolithic, rather it is a historical process that unfolds over time, and its impact is determined by factors inclusive of age, social class, race, and ethnicity (Lerner, 1986 as cited in Ramsaran, 2001).

The origins and the ways through which patriarchy surfaces in the Caribbean context are directly interconnected with race and class dynamics, and are grounded in the influence of the country's colonial past (Mohammed, 1994). That is, as previously mentioned, Trinidad and Tobago's economic system was governed by the British colonial rule with the intent to bolster their economic gains (Ramsaran, 2001; Smith, 1960). Mohanty et al. (1991) notes that during colonialism the British state fostered relations with the local patriarchy with the aim of achieving their economic goals. Since then, the state has been the "primary organizer of gender relations and the arbitrator of patriarchies" (Ramsaran, 2001). However, factors such as gender role differentiation is primarily enforced within the familial context, and via the educational content provided in schools (O'Connor 2014). Laudably, the previously strict rigors associated with patriarchy have lessened over time. Thus, women now participate in social, educational, economic, and political matters at higher levels than that evidenced in the past. However, patriarchal ideologies continue to influence how males engage with various social institutions, most notably the educational sphere.

In the past, patriarchal factors influenced many of the educational practices adopted by the Trinbagonian state (Mohammed, 1994; Ramsaran, 2001). In keeping with the ideology that males were predominantly responsible for state and economic affairs, males were initially the main recipients of educational opportunities, especially those at the post-secondary level. Fortunately, over time gender equality mandates and revised educational policy provisions saw

an increase in the number of females accessing education. For example, recent statistics show that females constitute 45% of enrolment in vocational programs, 55% of enrolment in upper secondary programs, and 52% of enrolment in post-secondary non-tertiary and short-cycle tertiary programs (OECD, 2021). Interestingly, the increase in the numbers of women accessing post-secondary education was also accompanied by a marked decrease in the number of males accessing same (Bailey & Charles, 2010; O'Connor 2014). This is the case although Caribbean and Latin American countries are among those recording a very low level of gender inequality in education (Baten et al., 2009).

Although Caribbean and Latin American countries have been shown to have low levels of gender inequality in regard to education, gender gaps in relation to academic achievement and outcomes exist. For example, a worldwide study conducted by the OECD revealed that males are prone to underperform more so than females, exit the education system at an earlier age, are less likely than females to attain basic proficiency in core subject areas, exert less effort on academic-related tasks, and generally express more negative attitudes toward school and education (OECD, 2015b). These factors are also reflected in the outcomes derived in the Caribbean CSEC examinations, where females typically outperform their male counterparts (Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019). The OECD report also showed that males were less likely to enroll in and complete post-secondary education. Overall, these facets also influenced how males engaged with the post-secondary environment.

Across all levels of education, personal and situational factors, along with socialization processes have a direct influence on male academic performance and achievement (Majzub & Rais, 2010). However, most of the core concerns center on institutional factors and the characteristics pertaining to the educational environments that males access. It is purported that the reticence displayed by males regarding their engagement with post-secondary

education is somewhat due to males wishing to distance themselves from the educational sphere as this has increasingly become seen as a primarily female-dominated space (Bailey & Charles, 2010; Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019). For example, the feminization of school and the curricular has been perceived as injurious to males' academic advancement (Cobbett & Younger, 2012; Joseph et al., 2016). Moreover, the absence of sufficient role models within the Trinbagonian school system also derails the levels of academic achievement that males can potentially achieve (Majzub & Rais, 2010). As a result of these facets, it may seem that gender equality education initiatives would have derived the opposite of what was originally intended.

It is important to focus on the gender gap in relation to male performance, persistence, and engagement with the post-secondary education. For example, when compared to females, males are more likely to abandon their post-secondary educational goals and are less likely to complete their programs on time (OECD, 2021). This trend is directly associated with what was mentioned above regarding males' negative attitudes toward school and education (OECD, 2015b). In this light, reports by the OECD also indicate that female post-secondary students continue to complete their programs and graduate at higher rates when compared to their male counterparts. However, reports indicate that although this gender gap exists, the global education gender gap stood at 32.0% in 2017 compared to 31.7 % in 2016 (Klaus, et al., 2017). Latin America and the Caribbean recorded a gap of 29.8% during that timeframe—this was representative of one of the smallest gaps worldwide. This implies that in many ways these regions are making commendable strides in these regards.

Another consideration in relation to the aforementioned gender gap and the challenges that male students encounter aligns with males and their tendency to avoid seeking support and guidance, especially within post-secondary educational spaces (Good et al., 1989; Wimer & Levant, 2011). This proclivity can be associated with the sense of shame that males experience

when required to acknowledge their shortcomings, broader societal patriarchal influences, and gender-role related concerns. That is, the core understanding within patriarchal societies centers on the fact that males perceive themselves as dominant and as holding sufficient power over females—these factors serve as critical aspects of their masculine identity (Bailey & Charles, 2010; Mohammed, 1994). In this light, even when enrolled in post-secondary institutions, males seek to assert their dominance in these spaces as well (Bailey & Charles, 2010). Therefore, one aspect of maintaining male-centered dominance, poise, and self-assuredness centers on males' seeming aversion toward engaging help-seeking behaviors (Good et al., 1989). A study conducted by Wimer and Levant (2011) which focused on the help-seeking behaviors of college men showed that masculinity variables, norms, and ideologies were directly associated with college males' avoidance of help-seeking in the academic environment. Rather, males were found to capitalize their use of self-reliance and dominance, which sometimes resulted in minimal academic success. Their unwillingness in this regard helped to preserve their view of and adherence to masculine ideals as espoused by broader societal influences. Additionally, when compared to other racial groups, African American males are less likely to seek support related to mental health and academic-related concerns (Barksdale & Molock, 2009). This finding is particularly relevant to this study as the majority of the TTIOO's male population are in fact Black Trinbagonians.

The above-mentioned factors related to elitism and gender dynamics directly influence how Trinbagonian students navigate the resident educational system. That is, they influence the experiences students encounter, their levels of academic achievement, and how they transition to and engage with the post-secondary space. These factors also convey deep implications for how these students are served and supported along the journey toward achieving academic excellence.

Transitioning Between Trinidad and Tobago's Secondary and Post-secondary Tiers

In Trinidad and Tobago, one of the major transition points between secondary and post-secondary education is the completion of one of the region's foremost secondary school examinations. Secondary school students are required to complete the regional CSEC examinations which are prepared and administered by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC, 2020a). Citizens desirous of pursuing associate and bachelor's degree programs, and some certificate programs are required to complete the CSEC examination before advancing to the post-secondary tier. Therefore, this CSEC certificate is one of the factors used to determine an applicant's suitability for post-secondary education (CXC, 2020b).

In consideration of the above-mentioned requirements, one measure of academic preparedness in Trinidad and Tobago's context centers on the number and type of CSEC subjects an individual acquires. Consequently, post-secondary students possessing fewer than five CSEC subjects, and those possessing five or more subjects without math and/or English are defined as developmental students at the TTIOO (Farrell, 2012) and other local institutions. Many Caribbean governments have expressed concerns over the volume of students who leave secondary school without these basic requirements (Fiszbein, & Stanton, 2018; Székely, 2017). Contextually, one of the educational challenges recorded by the GORTT, is the large number of students leaving secondary school without acquiring the rudimentary skills and preparation required to engage post-secondary education (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). This is especially noteworthy as these outcomes directly influence how students later engage with post-secondary education (Rios, 2019; Woods et al., 2018). Commendably, the GORTT continues to develop policies and practices directed at addressing these issues.

Inclusion and Equity Through Access Policies and Initiatives

In an attempt to address some of the aforementioned challenges and systemic inequities, the GORTT continues to commit to addressing the shortcomings within its secondary and post-secondary education sectors (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015; The GORTT Ministry of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education, 2010). Consequently, the GORTT carefully attends to the education-related agendas and recommendations proffered by global and regional entities such as UNESCO, the United Nations, the World Bank, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Caribbean Development Bank. Therefore, enhancing education-related deliverables, policies, and practices remain a primary focus for both the GORTT and post-secondary institutions operating in this country.

To dismantle some of the aforementioned deficiencies, since 2004 the GORTT continuously strived to strengthen all its education structures and institutions with a view to promoting holistic individual success, societal growth, and continuous sustainable national development (The GORTT Ministry of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education, 2010). In this light, revised policies and other educational-related initiatives have resulted in increased access to the citizenry, growth in the number of post-secondary institutions, and revised policy frameworks (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). For example, the number of post-secondary institutions located in Trinidad and Tobago grew from one primary regional provider—The University of the West Indies—to several private and state-funded post-secondary institutions (Ali, 2007, as cited in Pragg, 2013). As of 2010, the total number of registered post-secondary education providers stood at 86, and these institutions currently fall under the purview of the country's Ministry of Education. Twelve of these institutions inclusive of the TTIOO has been accredited by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT, 2020).

More recently, and in keeping with the recommendations proffered by the United Nation's 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the GORTT committed to continuing to promote economic inclusion and participation by increasing access to post-secondary education, with the intent to assist citizens out of poverty (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015). In this light, the GORTT implemented two guiding policy frameworks related to the education sector. The first being the Policy on Tertiary Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training, and Lifelong Learning in Trinidad and Tobago. The second and most recent policy is the 2017-2022 Education Policy Paper. Both policies have been instrumental in contributing to the increased enrollment of students who are financially challenged, non-traditional, and developmental. They have also assisted with narrowing the opportunity gap (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017).

Further to the above, CARICOM's recent Regional Education and Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy specifically outlines areas that Caribbean member states should address regarding human resource development, education, and training (CARICOM, 2017). More precisely, the HRD strategy stipulates that attention should be paid to providing quality, equitable, inclusive education, and lifelong learning. The GORTT continues to respond to these recommendations by constantly revisiting their educational policies and practices. The GORTT also continues to commit to providing the financial support and other resources required to fulfill these objectives. For example, in its most recent national development proposal, the Vision 2030 National Development Strategy 2016-2030, the GORTT pledged to continuing to provide tuition funding to those in need; developing a system that provides second chances to students at all levels of the education system; continuing to increase access to adult education; and working with post-secondary institutions to develop a culture of research and development within respective institutions (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Development, 2016). It is

envisioned that these initiatives can assist with minimizing opportunity gaps, developing the country's human resources, creating equitable access to post-secondary education, and enabling sustainable development that can empower personal and national growth.

Increased Access and Shifting Student Demographics

Globally, the ubiquitous access to post-secondary education has resulted in a fundamental change in student demographics and the increased enrollment of non-traditional students (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). This change is especially pronounced regarding the disparate academic abilities, levels of commitment, and prior experiences that students present (Altbach et al., 2009; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Saito & Smith, 2017). Plummer-Rognmo (2012) also asserts that one consequence of these shifts is that students pursuing post-secondary educational goals within the Caribbean are radically different from previous years. Ferreyra et al. (2017) refers to these individuals as the "new" student. That is, the characteristics typical of this new student profile in Latin American and Caribbean countries include individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those who possess limited cultural capital, and those who are first-generationers (Brunner, 2005; Donoso & Schiefelbein, 2007; Ferreyra et al., 2017). Therefore, students from middle and upper socioeconomic groups are no longer the sole participants in post-secondary education, and student profiles are now more heterogenous than before.

By virtue of increased state-funded tuition and open-access policies, a wider cross-section of the Trinbagonian population is now able to pursue their academic goals at several institutions, once they at least meet the criteria of possessing five CSEC subjects inclusive of math and English ((The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017; The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015; The GORTT Ministry of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education, 2010). However, developmental students often have a greater challenge in this

regard. For example, in referencing the Latin America experience, Ferreyra et al. (2017) notes that low-ability students are primarily granted access to the technical and vocational institutions versus the four-year institutions. Similarly, in the context of Trinidad and Tobago developmental students often represent a significant proportion of the TTIOO's student population (Farrell, 2012; T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020).

The above-mentioned enrollment pattern is similar to that evidenced in community colleges located in the United States. As reported by those with expert knowledge related to American community colleges, the high numbers of developmental students enrolled at these institutions influence the extent to which these institutions can effectively support students along their academic journeys, and the levels of retention they realize (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera 2016; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Boggs, 2011). Similar concerns have also been shared by the TTIOO (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020). These concerns related to the community college context, and factors aligned with developmental students and institutional support systems are addressed in the ensuing sections.

Overview of the Community College

The community college model first emerged in the United States and thus constitutes a significant part of this country's post-secondary education enterprise (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Crisp & Mina, 2012). Consequently, during the 2017/18 academic year approximately 44% of American undergraduates were enrolled at a community college, while the typical annual average is 40% (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2020). As the term "community" implies, community colleges are focused on serving the communities within their respective local/geographic contexts. Therefore, their programmatic scope seeks to prepare community residents to meet the needs of local employers—a measure that has the potential to engender

economic prosperity for individuals, communities, and societies alike (Treat & Hagedorn, 2013). Some of these characteristics are also applicable to the Caribbean's community college context.

The community college model was introduced to the Caribbean during the 1960s, and these institutions served varying needs in different Caribbean countries (Grant-Woodham & Morris, 2009). According to Grant-Woodham and Morris (2009) Caribbean community colleges were established with the intent to be community-oriented, and were designed to respond to the post-secondary education needs of the residents in their vicinity. Moreover, most of these institutions were often born out of an amalgamation of several post-secondary institutions. These institutions were defined as specialized models, that provided technical/vocational training. Overtime, community colleges have become a core pillar of the post-secondary education system within the Caribbean region. They are seen as instrumental in assisting Caribbean governments with meeting their respective demands for post-secondary education, and for contributing to societal and economic development imperatives (Grant-Woodham & Morris, 2009; Gudapati, 2021).

Similar to the American context, one of the core features of community colleges in Latin American and Caribbean regions centers on their delivery of vocational training, job preparation, and transfer programs (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Grant-Woodham & Morris, 2009). However, in recent times this scope has been broadened with the intent to allow community college students to acquire a "responsive, socioeconomically progressive international education." (Treat & Hagedorn, 2013, p. 6). Other attributes of community colleges located in Latin American and Caribbean countries include their open-access policies, low tuition costs, and their emphasis on enrolling non-traditional, underserved, and developmental students (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Grant-Woodham & Morris, 2009). These factors influence the high enrollment of low-income and developmental students evidenced at community colleges (Bland, 2003; Bragg

& Durham, 2012; Crews & Aragon, 2007). As previously mentioned, they also influence concerns associated with students' academic performance and persistence (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera 2016; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Boggs, 2011). That is, while issues aligned with low academic performance, student persistence, and institutional retention is not reserved for the community college context, these issues are more prevalent at these institutions (Amey, 2017; Boggs, 2011; Phelan, 2014). Both student and institutional characteristics contribute to these challenges (Altbach et al., 2009; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Cotton et al., 2017; Ferreyra et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Mendoza et al., 2016; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019; Saito & Smith, 2017; Smith, 2007).

It is important to include the caveat that although this study is situated within the Caribbean context, most of the data provided is specific to the American community college experience. This is necessary as data detailing the Caribbean's experience in these regards is inaccessible. Therefore, while individual institutions may possess data repositories relative to developmental students, enrollment, and persistence patterns, it is difficult to acquire a holistic view of these facets. Overall this makes it difficult to assess how well the Caribbean's community college system is working. It also makes it challenging to observe how the diverse regions within this space address the aforementioned issues, and to ascertain the scope of students' outcomes in these regards. It is difficult to determine how many Caribbean students enroll at community colleges annually. However, Székely (2017) estimates that 15% of persons who enrolled in post-secondary education in Latin America pursued a technical degree, the equivalent of a community college two-year degree. Moreover, this trend has been observed for over 20 years. It is possible that this estimate may also be applicable to the Caribbean, but this cannot be ascertained at this point.

The Community College Student

One of the outcomes associated with broadening access to post-secondary education is the increasingly diverse student populations that post-secondary institutions in many countries now serve (Hornsby, 2014; Mok & Jiang, 2018; Saito & Smith, 2017). With such increased access, students enrolling at post-secondary institutions present a wide range of abilities, competencies, and life and educational experiences (Altbach et al., 2009; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Saito & Smith, 2017). In particular, community college students are usually more academically, economically, and socially disadvantaged compared to students enrolled at four-year institutions (Gilbert & Heller, 2013; O’Gara et al., 2009; Pedersen, 2005). That is, as a result of their programmatic scope, and factors such as their open-access policies, low tuition costs, community colleges typically enroll large numbers of non-traditional, underserved, and developmental students.

Non-traditional students are described as being a heterogenous group that is underrepresented in higher education (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; NCES, n.d., b). In the context of the United States, various factors are used to define non-traditional students. One perspective defines non-traditional students as being over the age of 23 at the point of enrollment (Metzner & Bean, 1987). These students are also described as those who would have followed an alternative path to college, and who may have differential motivations for pursuing post-secondary education (Newbold et al., 2010). This feature is also typical of many Trinbagonian community college students (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020). The NCES (2002) further outlines that non-traditional students typically work fulltime, have dependents, are financially independent (from the financial aid eligibility perspective), and are often without a high school diploma, or the matriculation requirements necessary for enrollment into colleges or universities. In the United States, traditionally-underserved students

are usually socioeconomically disadvantaged, belong to the working-class strata, are usually females (particularly female minorities), and members of minority racial groups (Brown et al., 2016; Garaz & Torotcoi, 2017; Serna & Woulfe, 2017). Another noteworthy point related to non-traditional students surrounds the fact that compared to their traditional counterparts, they tend to place a greater value on their interactions with faculty (Newbold et al., 2010). Specific definitions of non-traditional Caribbean students could not be accessed, however to a large extent the afore-identified features are also applicable to this context. For example, Plummer-Rognmo (2012) purports that Caribbean post-secondary students are now older, and occupy full-time jobs while studying part-time.

In light of the above considerations, American community college students are usually older, where approximately 40% fall between the 22-39 age range, and approximately 10% are usually over the age of 40 (AACC, 2017). During 2018, data collected by the NCES (2020b) revealed that 41% of American students enrolled at four-year institutions were employed, while this figure was 46% for community college students. The Community College Research Center (CCRC, 2020) further records that during any given year, approximately 80% of community college students are employed, and 39% work fulltime. Specific to the Colombian context, a study conducted by Mendoza et al. (2016), revealed that many students enrolled at a technical/vocational institution (equivalent to a community college) were challenged by obligations related to employment. Ferreyra et al. (2017) also note that vast numbers of students enrolled at Latin American and Caribbean technical/vocational institutions are required to work while pursuing their educational goals.

Additionally, many community college students often present learning disabilities, possess different learning objectives, and display varied levels of preparedness for and commitment to their programs (Boggs, 2011; Bragg & Durham, 2012). Many of these students

also possess limited academic skills, a factor that can impede their academic success and levels of persistence (AACC, 2012; Bragg & Durham, 2012; Gilbert & Heller, 2013; McIntosh, 2012). Coupled with this is the fact that many students enrolled at these institutions also experience what Flynn (2015) refers to as a shame-based sense of self. This sense of shame is often experienced as result of students' limited prior academic success and experiences within the educational space. Further, this shame tends to prohibit many community college students from effectively harnessing the requisite academic skillsets that can empower them to aptly navigate the campus environment and accompanying college-related requirements. It also promotes low self-esteem, poor self-concept, self-doubt, and insecurity related to the academic sphere; it also constrains students from making connections to support systems that could potentially improve their outcomes (Kaufman, 1989 as cited in Flynn, 2015). Unfortunately, insights and data detailing the Caribbean's experience in these regards could not be sourced. As previously mentioned, the inability to access this type of data obscures an understanding of the Caribbean's reality in these contexts. It also makes it challenging to clearly define a Caribbean community college student by virtue of demographic and other characteristics that may be endemic to students residing in these locales.

The Developmental Student

In many cases, students requiring developmental and remedial support embody many of the characteristics that non-traditional students present. However, students requiring post-secondary developmental and remedial support are defined as those who are insufficiently prepared for post-secondary education, as a result of prior educational experiences such as academic failure, poor preparation, and low expectations (Miller & Murray, 2005). These students typically lack basic skills in reading, writing, and/or math (Tritelli, 2003). Further, many developmental students often demonstrate low levels of motivation, and high levels of

disinterest in their coursework and the overall post-secondary experience (Almeida, 1991). Hollis (2009) also surmises that in many instances they do not perceive themselves as being powerful, feel insecure about their status, and fail to reflect on their presence in and interaction with the post-secondary world. These factors jointly impact how developmental students engage the post-secondary experience and the levels of success they can realize.

Recent years witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of developmental students accessing post-secondary education in the United States (Connolly et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). This growth is particularly evident at community colleges, despite the recent decline in the general enrollment rates at these institutions (AACC, 2012; CCRC, 2020; NCES, 2020a). While an average of 32% of students enrolled at four-year institutions are required to complete developmental courses (CCRC, 2020), approximately 66% of community college students require developmental support (Bailey, 2009).

Defining Trinidad and Tobago's Developmental Student

Ferreyra et al. (2017) notes that low-ability students accessing post-secondary education in Latin American and Caribbean countries typically seek enrollment at institutions that provide short-cycle tertiary programs such as technical and vocational institutions and community colleges. As previously discussed, Trinbagonian post-secondary students requiring developmental support do not possess math and/or English, and/or have fewer than five CSEC subjects at the time of completing their secondary school education—these descriptors are therefore used to refer to the developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO (Farrell, 2012). These students are often insufficiently prepared for college-level coursework as a result of the prior educational experiences they negotiated at the secondary schools they attended (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020). This does not imply that these students do not have a role in these outcomes. However, as expressed in the literature institutional and

governmental policies and practices, alongside societal factors must also be considered (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). Therefore, as a result of their limited success at the secondary level, these students are required to access remedial support before transitioning to their college-level programs. At the TTIOO, the length of time students spend in the developmental program is reliant on the number of remedial courses students are required to complete, the time it takes for them to successfully complete these courses, and whether they proceed on any leave of absences during their enrollment in the developmental program (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020).

With regard to enrollment trends, Farrell (2012) notes that at the onset of the change in the institution's access policies, the TTIOO witnessed an influx of students with developmental needs. However, over time funding and other factors led to decreased enrollment in these regards. On a broader note, generalized data regarding the enrollment and persistence of development students at Caribbean community colleges could not be accessed. This implies that more efforts need to be directed toward collecting and analyzing this type of data. Such data collection agendas are necessary for providing a coherent understanding of the characteristics embodied by the Caribbean's post-secondary developmental students, and among other things, these students' behavioral patterns related to academic success and persistence. However, other statistics can be used to shed some light on the issue of academic underpreparedness in these spaces.

From a regional perspective, many Caribbean governments have expressed concerns about the high failure rate relative to the math and English CSEC subject areas. For example, in 2018 approximately 47% of all students registered for English acquired a passing grade, and 24% of all students registered for math were successful (CXC, 2018). Performance rates for 2019

reveal a commendable improvement in both subject areas whereby 79.16% of students were successful in English, and 45.96% in math (CXC, 2020c). However, despite some improvements, one of the educational challenges recorded by the GORTT's Ministry of Education is the large number of students leaving secondary school without acquiring the rudimentary skills and preparation required to engage post-secondary education. For example, while 15,616 Trinbagonian students registered for CSEC examinations in 2016, 41% acquired five or more subjects; 21% acquired two or less subjects; and 22% were not successful in any of the subjects (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). Further, students who acquired five or more subjects inclusive of math and English ranged from 48.9% in 2010, to 53.7% in 2016 (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017).

The afore-identified statistics are worrying for several reasons. The findings from several studies indicate that the grade point average achieved at the level of secondary education is one of the strongest predictors for all future educational outcomes (Rios, 2019; Woods et al., 2018). This view suggests that it is likely that many students who performed below average in their CSEC examinations could in fact expect similar outcomes at the post-secondary level. Further, while most Trinbagonian post-secondary institutions providing associate and bachelor's degree programs require that applicants possess at least five CSEC subjects inclusive of math and English, the statistics above suggest that many students are ill-prepared to meet these requirements. Moreover, as one of the country's few post-secondary institutions that provide an opportunity for these developmental students to pursue an associate or bachelor's degree program, the TTIOO absorbs a large proportion of the nation's developmental students (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020).

In consideration of the above-mentioned student characteristics, it can be assumed that developmental students are required to overcome many hurdles in order to thrive academically.

That is, students across institutional types often experience various emotional, psychological, and personal challenges (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). Moreover, compared to students enrolled at four-year institutions, community college students are typically more exposed to economic, academic, and social disadvantages (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; O’Gara et al., 2009). Therefore, it can be surmised that in addition to their academic underpreparedness, developmental students often navigate all of these other challenges simultaneously. These factors can potentially impair their ability to realize academic success and persist with their programs.

Persistence and Retention at the Community College

It is essential to note that much of the ensuing discussion about persistence and retention in the community college context centers on the American experience. This source of reference is being heavily utilized because very few accessible studies have been conducted on this topic in the Caribbean. Consequently, the definitions used to refer to persistence and retention have also been coined by American practitioners. Moreover, as highlighted by Mendoza et al. (2016), existing student retention theories were developed in response to the experiences that students enrolled at traditional four-year institutions negotiated. In this light, these researchers note that those perspectives are not always applicable to students pursuing technical or community college degrees in countries outside of the United States. These factors jointly emphasize the need for more Caribbean post-secondary research agendas to be dedicated to these areas. By so doing, the Caribbean would be better positioned to cultivate culture-specific persistence and retention theories.

In the context of American post-secondary institutions, retention is defined as “the process that leads students to remain within the study program and institution in which they enroll and earn a higher education degree.” (Borgen & Borgen, 2016, p. 505). Retention also

“focuses on the institution’s intent to keep students enrolled from one term of study to the next.” (Hirschy et al., 2011, p. 301). Further, Hagedorn (2005) identifies four types of retention inclusive of system, institutional, academic discipline/major, and course. System retention adopts a broad scope and refers to those “persisters” (Hagedorn, 2005) who frequently transfer or enroll at different institutions, different campuses managed by the same institution, or different institutional types. As its name implies, institutional retention is measured by the share of students who remain enrolled at one institution from year to year. While system and institutional retention refer to the broader institutional contexts, academic discipline/major retention refers to the retainment of students within a particular area of study, discipline, or a specific department. Lastly, defined as the smallest unit of analysis regarding retention, course retention is measured by course completion. That is, this type of retention measures how many students actually complete the courses they engage. In this study, both academic discipline/major and institutional retention is paramount. That is, consideration is paid to students’ ability to stay enrolled in the TTIOO’s developmental education program whereby the developmental advising service is made available. However, more emphasis is placed on institutional retention and developmental students’ willingness to remain enrolled at this specific institution.

While the terms retention and persistence are often used interchangeably, they are in fact two distinct concepts. Persistence refers to “students maintaining or completing their enrollment at any post-secondary institution, not just at a specific college.” (Hirschy et al., 2011, p. 301). Therefore, while both terms are often used interchangeably, retention refers to an institution’s ability to retain students; persistence addresses students’ decisions to remain enrolled. As a result of the limited Caribbean-based literature on this topic, these definitions have been applied to this study.

Retention challenges across post-secondary institutional types have been reported in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Norway, Trinidad and Tobago, New Zealand, and Latin America (Bartram, 2009; Borgen & Borgen, 2016; Felmine, 2016; Jia & Maloney, 2015; Longden, 2012; Perry & McConney, 2010; Pineda-Báez et al., 2014). Additionally, persistence and retention rates are especially low at community colleges (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Bailey, 2009; Boggs, 2011). For example, the overall retention rate at American four-year institutions is approximately 81% (Education Data, 2019), while the average rate at community colleges is 62.5% (CCRC, 2020; Education Data, 2019). Moreover, less than 25% of developmental students complete a degree or certificate within eight years (Bailey et al., 2010). Data compiled by the CCRC (2020) disaggregates persistence rates by revealing that in 2019, the first-year persistence rate for full-time community college students was 69.7%, and 50.8% for those who were part-time.

Similar persistence and retention challenges has been recorded in Latin American and Caribbean countries as well (Ferreyra et al., 2017). For example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) broadly defines programs comparable to those offered at community colleges as short-cycle tertiary programs (OECD, 2019). These programs are vocational in scope and seek to provide students with professional knowledge, skills, and competencies. Students typically spend approximately two years in these programs before transitioning to higher order programs such as bachelor's degrees. Global reports indicate that approximately 45% of students enrolled in short-cycle tertiary programmes actually graduate from these programs by the end of their program's theoretical duration (OECD, 2019). This implies that many students seem to take longer than the two-year timeframe to complete their programs, and/or may have withdrawn from their program altogether. Challenges in this regard have also been highlighted by Latin American countries. For example, the System for Dropout

Prevention in Higher Education (SPADIES) in Colombia estimates that the typical withdrawal rate at four-year institutions is 10.1%, while it is 20% per year and 55% per cohort relative to the technical and vocational institutions (Colombia Ministry of Education, 2015). Data specific to the Caribbean could not be accessed.

In addition to the above, the vast numbers of developmental students enrolling at community colleges compound concerns aligned with academic success and persistence (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera 2016; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Boggs, 2011). Approximately 66% of community college students are described as requiring developmental support (Bailey, 2009). It is inferred that this volume of developmental students intensifies challenges related to persistence and retention faced by community colleges (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Phelan, 2014). In fact, Jia and Maloney (2015) explicitly state that one of the primary factors contributing to low levels of persistence and retention at community colleges aligns with the fact that many students enrolled at these institutions are less able or academically prepared to follow-through on their post-secondary educational goals. However, Bragg and Durham (2012) caution educational practitioners and researchers against applying a deficit perspective to understand these students' experiences and outcomes. Rather, they call for a reframing of this deficit perspective and highlight the need for success to be determined in consideration of particular student goals and characteristics. Overall, these outcomes are worrisome. Many reasons have been proffered to explain low levels of student success and persistence in the community college context, and both institutional and individual characteristics play major roles (Calcagno et al., 2008; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Institutional Factors Influencing Academic Success, Persistence, and Retention

Extensive research conducted on American institutions indicate that institutional factors play a pivotal role in influencing students' success, persistence, and retention (Astin & Oseguera,

2012; Lau, 2003; McClelland, 1990; Tinto, 2006). In this context, these perspectives will be applied to this discussion, in addition to those proffered by Latin American and Caribbean authorities. American practitioners assert that institutional factors such as funding, the provision of academic support, and campus/student engagement initiatives influence student success, persistence, and retention (Lau, 2003; Tinto, 2006). Additionally, results from several studies based in the United States suggest that institutional control, size, cost, and selectivity impact student and institutional outcomes (Astin & Osegura, 2012; McClelland, 1990). Astin's study also found that persistence and degree completion levels correspond with the percentage of resources that institutions invest in student support services (Astin, 1993, as cited in Astin & Osegura, 2012).

In the context of Latin American and Caribbean countries, institutional factors also play a prominent role in influencing student outcomes and levels of persistence (Ferreira et al., 2017; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). In this light, some of the aforementioned sentiments are applicable to these contexts. Munizaga Mellado et al. (2019) reference the importance of institutional factors such as available psychological support, scholarships, financial aid, student-teacher interactions, and positive campus environments in influencing Chilean students' outcomes and levels of persistence. Moreover, in an extensive report on higher education in Latin America and Caribbean countries, Ferreira et al. (2017) in collaboration with the World Bank Group indicate that factors inclusive of institutional autonomy and limited accountability efforts, curricular structure, insufficient academic advising and student support systems, and limited funding and resources tend to negatively impact student success and persistence. For example, many institutions in these regions function autonomously from education policy makers and their respective governments. Ferreira et al. note that this practice makes it challenging for post-secondary institutions to be held to high

levels of accountability regarding the public funds they receive. Additionally, students are not held accountable for their outcomes and low performance even when they access publicly funded tuition.

In addition to the above, Ferreyra et al.'s (2017) report also suggest that the academic advising and student support systems available to students in these countries are not as effective as those provided to students enrolled at American institutions. Moreover, these practitioners also question some aspects of the Latin American and Caribbean post-secondary curriculum. For example, Ferreyra et al.'s comparison between the retention rates at Colombian and American institutions revealed that Colombian institutions faced a greater hurdle managing student retention. They explained that one reason for this is due to the divergent program and curricular structures utilized by both countries. That is, while American students are required to complete general education courses during their first year of college, Latin American and Caribbean students are required to begin their program courses once enrolled. Therefore, Ferreyra et al. cite these curricular rigidities as a core influencing factor relative to persistence and retention concerns. Lastly, insufficient public funding and resources, alongside political factors also influence how well institutions are able to function, and thus the services they provide to students (Astin & Osegura, 2012; McClelland, 1990). A critical component of this factor is that very few Latin American and Caribbean post-secondary institutions allocate sufficient resources, or install effective policies and practices directed at improving retention (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019).

Overall, it can be surmised that topping the list of institutional factors, is an institution's commitment to providing student-centered resources and support systems that can enable students to thrive academically (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Voigt & Jundrieser 2008; Wimshurst et al., 2006). Further, providing these support services are especially important in the community

college context (Calcagno et al., 2008; Craig & Ward, 2008). However, American community colleges are usually criticized for failing to provide adequate student support systems (AACC, 2012; Dowd & Shieh, 2014). Similarly, while not restricted to community colleges, the retention strategies utilized by post-secondary institutions located in Latin America and the Caribbean are also lacking in their ability to sufficiently support and retain students, even when controlling for students' poor prior preparation (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). However, the financial limitations that community colleges navigate must be considered. For example, compared to larger four-year institutions, American community colleges typically receive less funding and endowments (Dowd & Shieh, 2014; Phelan, 2014). As a result, Dowd and Shieh (2014) assert that community colleges are usually required to engage in a process of "resource-maximizing". Consequently, limited financial resources are spent on more pressing institutional demands versus areas such as student support (Dowd & Shieh, 2014; Katsinas et al., 2008; Martinez, 2018). It is plausible that similar financial challenges are also experienced by community colleges located in Latin America and the Caribbean.

While restricting the volume of resources allocated to support services is seen as a means to conserve limited financial reserves, such decisions tend to exacerbate the retention issue, particularly with regard to developmental students (AACC, 2012; Bragg & Durham, 2012). Moreover, Bailey et al. (2010) pointedly note that effectively providing these sources of support and addressing the needs of developmental students are the most pressing and difficult challenges community colleges navigate.

In order to mitigate the impacts associated with low academic success and persistence, the support services provided by post-secondary institutions can play an integral role motivating, supporting, and guiding students during their transition from secondary to post-secondary education; they can also enhance students' ability and desire to persist (Laskey &

Hetzel, 2011; Lizzio & Wilson, 2003; Petty, 2014). Therefore, by effectively supporting developmental students, institutions are positioned to bolster weak student profiles and increase students' desire to persist (Cotton et al., 2017; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Smith, 2007). Thus, it is incumbent upon post-secondary education administrators to provide the requisite financial and human resources required to install and maintain student-centered support systems. Students' decision to withdraw can be preempted when institutions implement systematic and individualistic intervention plans, and effective monitory measures to gauge when students are at risk of withdrawing from their programs (Duarte et al., 2014; Ferreyra et al., 2017; Ishitani 2008). Overall, such interventions can enhance academic performance and persistence relative to the developmental student population. In addition to these institutional factors, student-related characteristics also influence the level of success students realize and their persistence levels.

Student-Related Factors Influencing Academic Success, Persistence, and Retention

Student characteristics influencing successful academic outcomes include students' demonstration of academic competence relative to writing and speaking competencies; development of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions; occupational attainment; preparation for adulthood and citizenship; personal accomplishments and development (Braxton, 2008). They also include a good command of soft skills such as regular class attendance, the application of effective academic skills and strategies, and the personality traits and dispositions that can complement students' desire to pursue post-secondary academic goals (Rachal et al., 2007; Gale & Parker, 2017).

Personal events and/or physiological and psychological conditions also influence students' ability to function at optimal levels. That is, researchers purport that emotional, psychological, and challenging personal factors often contribute to low levels of persistence,

institutional retention, and student success (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). Moreover, the varying levels of academic abilities and commitment to academics students present affect their ability to succeed and persist (Altbach et al., 2009; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Saito & Smith, 2017). As previously mentioned, these concerns are exacerbated in the community college context because of the experiences many community college students negotiate (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; O’Gara et al., 2009). For example, Mendoza et al.’s (2016) study on retention at a Colombian technical institution revealed that students’ persistence levels were impacted by their low socioeconomic background and academic readiness, financial hardships, obligations related to work and family life, and transportation and safety challenges. These realities can also be applied to many post-secondary students in other Latin America and Caribbean countries.

Additionally, although both academically-prepared and developmental students negotiate persistence issues, many studies suggest that developmental students are less likely to persist with their programs (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Grimes & David, 1999). These students are less likely to persist because oftentimes they have been ill-prepared to adopt the skills and dispositions that can enable them to succeed academically and/or complete their programs (Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005).

In summary, the particular experiences, characteristics, and dispositions that developmental students possess often negatively impact their academic success and potential to persist (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera 2016; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Boggs, 2011). As discussed in a previous section, developmental students are often in need of remedial support in subject areas inclusive of reading, writing, and/or math; demonstrate low levels of motivation, and high levels of disinterest in their coursework and the overall post-secondary experience; do not perceive themselves as being powerful; feel insecure about their status; and fail to reflect on their presence in and interaction with the post-secondary world (Almeida,

1991; Farrell, 2012; Hollis, 2009; Tritelli, 2003). They are often without the soft skills imperative to successful program completion (i.e., attending class, maintaining concentration, using effective study strategies and the social skills necessary to ask questions); and the personality traits and dispositions needed to successfully pursue their academic goals (Rachal et al., 2007; Gale & Parker, 2017). Additionally, while high levels of academic self-efficacy can promote successful academic outcomes, developmental students often exhibit low levels of this academic self-assuredness (Almeida, 1991; Hollis, 2009). Therefore, once developmental students are intentionally supported with the goal of empowering them to harness the appropriate academic, dispositions, and motivations they can be better prepared to succeed academically and persist with their programs.

Theoretical Framework: The Social Cognitive Perspective and Academic Self-Efficacy

The academic self-efficacy concept has its origins in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Bandura (1977, 1986) describes human beings as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating organisms that are shaped by environmental events and inner forces. These factors jointly influence individuals' motivations, behaviors, and efficacy levels. It is noteworthy that this theoretical perspective has its roots within North America, and has been extensively applied to explore educational and occupational behaviors specific to this geographical context. However, very few accessible studies within the United States context have applied this approach to explore the community college students, particularly those requiring developmental and remedial support. Moreover, no studies could be accessed that applied this framework to explore similar topics within the Latin American and Caribbean contexts. In this study, the social cognitive framework was applied to a country outside of the United States with the intent to explore how an institutional support service provided at a community college can

empower developmental students to harness some of the skills and dispositions they require to thrive within the post-secondary environment.

The social cognitive theoretical perspective advances human agency, and posits that human functioning is predicated on triadic reciprocal relationships among one's behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1977, 1986), these factors exert reciprocal influences on each other via a process of reciprocal determinism. Moreover, from an agentic perspective, individuals are seen as proactively engaging in their personal development, and can engender specific outcomes by virtue of their behavior. Similarly, developmental students and their behaviors are influenced by inner forces and environmental factors. Thus, these students are also active agents that can shape their educational experiences in a manner that allows them to realize positive outcomes.

Overall, this theoretical perspective is instrumental for enabling researchers and educators to understand a range of student motivations and actions (Liao et al., 2014). Bandura (1977, 1986) specifically notes that the feedback and guidance from others is useful empowering students to enhance their educational outcomes. In this context this perspective was useful for exploring whether the support and guidance provided by developmental advisors can motivate developmental students to harness self-regulated behaviors inclusive of goal-setting skills and healthy levels of academic self-efficacy. Therefore, for this study, emphasis was placed on the components of Bandura's theory that focus on self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy.

Self-Regulated Behaviors

Zimmerman (2002) describes self-regulation as those systematic efforts that individuals use to direct their thoughts, feelings, and actions, toward goal attainment. More specifically, self-regulated behaviors related to the academic sphere must include three features inclusive of

students' "use of self-regulated learning strategies, their responsiveness to self-oriented feedback about learning effectiveness, and their interdependent motivational processes."

(Zimmerman, 1990, p. 6). Therefore, it can be surmised that individuals can activate their agency by intentionally engaging self-regulated behaviors that can potentially result in positive outcomes and goal achievement. Similarly, students (developmental and non-developmental) should be seen as possessing agency, that once activated can enable them to engage self-regulated behaviors directed at achieving their academic goals.

"Self-regulation is not achieved by a feat of willpower." (Bandura, 1986, p. 336).

Therefore, although the desire and will to achieve specific goals and outcomes are necessary prerequisites, other conditions must also be present. These include the application of self-observation, self-monitoring and self-reactive influences, self-diagnostic devices, and self-motivating devices (Bandura, 1986). From this perspective, individuals are not merely required to regulate their behaviors to achieve specific goals, or to be sufficiently motivated in these regards. They are also required to observe and monitor their performance and react to these observations by setting future realistic and attainable performance standards. Moreover, students are required to continuously strive to maintain sufficient levels of motivation whereby they are invested in setting goals that can facilitate progressive improvement (Bandura, 1986). Additionally, while self-motivation is also an essential component of self-regulated behaviors, feedback is also instrumental in these regards (Zimmerman et al., 1992). Therefore, in this context it will be instrumental to determine whether the feedback provided by developmental advisors can prepare developmental students to harness their academic self-regulative strengths.

Overall, students who engage high levels of self-regulated behaviors are able to adopt high levels of efficacy related to their academic pursuits; this in turn influences the knowledge

and skill goals students set for themselves, and their commitment levels in these regards (Zimmerman, 1990). Self-regulatory mechanisms work well when students apply them consistently, even when faced with challenges, stressors, or competing attractions or obligations (Bandura, 1995). Moreover, an intricate relationship exists among self-regulated behaviors, goal-setting, and academic self-efficacy. That is, a student who displays high levels of self-regulatory behaviors are better prepared to increase their competency levels and achieve mastery related to subject areas and/or specific skillsets (Bandura, 1986, 1995). As previously discussed, many developmental students commence their post-secondary education journeys with limited academic skillsets. In this context, this framework was useful for determining whether the support and feedback provided by developmental advisors enables developmental students to harness self-regulated behaviors, especially those associated with goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy.

Goal-Setting Skills

Self-regulated behaviors play an integral role in influencing the measures of success students are positioned to accomplish (Bandura, 1986, 1995). Similarly, goals also enhance self-regulation efforts (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2001). In this light, most theories focusing on self-regulation emphasize its inherent link with goals and goal-setting activities (Schunk, 2001). Goal-setting involves a process whereby individuals establish an objective which serves as the aim of their actions (Schunk, 2001). Goals also specify the requirements that are essential for achieving personal success (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, goals and goal-setting skills serve as motivational tools because of their ability to influence students to exert the efforts required to meet specific requirements (Bandura, 1986, 1995). They also provide insight into the potential outcomes that can be derived (Schunk, 2001). Goal-setting can therefore be conceptualized as a cognitive tool

that enables individuals to focus on goal-specific tasks, apply appropriate goal-attainment strategies, and monitor contextual progress (Schunk, 2001).

Goals are reflective of one's purpose and are aligned with quantity, quality, or rate of performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Therefore, utilizing effective goal-setting skills require students to go beyond identifying specific goals, rather students must also identify practical steps for achieving these goals, and demonstrate commitment to following-through on these steps (Locke & Latham, 1990; Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). Additionally, goals should be accepted by the student responsible for attaining said goals. Some students may reject imposed goals, therefore students should be encouraged to participate in the goal-setting process to enhance acceptance of the goals and commitment to pursuing identified goals (Bandura, 1997).

The virtues of effective goal-setting skills are well-documented. In particular, students who are able to effectively apply self-regulated behaviors to their academic pursuits are better equipped to set challenging goals to realize successful outcomes (Bandura, 1989; Schunk, 1990). Individuals who set specific but attainable goals thrive at a higher rate when compared to those who set easy or non-specific goals, or no goals at all (Lunenburg, 2011). Numerous studies conducted in the United States also indicate that when low-achieving students are coached in setting proximal goals, such goal-setting activities enhance these students' academic achievement, and increases their intrinsic interest in the subject matter (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). More recent studies also reveal that self-regulated learning, goal-setting, and planning activities are significant predictors of academic achievement (Alotaibi et al., 2017; Morisano et al., 2010). Lunenburg's (2011) study also revealed that students who completed a four-month goal-setting intervention showed significant improvement in their academic performance when compared to the control group. Similar outcomes were also derived from a study conducted by Zimmerman et al. (1992). These outcomes do not imply that all students capable of engaging

self-regulated behaviors and goal-setting activities are successful at all times. However these factors can generally influence positive outcomes in many cases.

To realize positive outcomes associated with effective goal-setting skills, where possible, individuals should also access support and enlist self-regulative influences that can support their goal-setting and goal-achieving efforts (Bandura & Cervone, 1983). Students should seek guidance and feedback in these regards, as these insights can influence performance outcomes (Bandura, 1986, 1995; Locke & Latham, 1990; Schunk, 2001). These perspectives imply that while self-directed learning and other individual cognitive efforts are essential, social support systems can also motivate individuals to commit to pursuing set goals. These points are noteworthy as students' poor academic progress and/or their desire to withdraw from their program is often precipitated by a lack of clear goals and motivation (Lunenburg, 2011). As previously discussed, these outcomes are especially prevalent in the context of community college and developmental students (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera 2016; Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010; Boggs, 2011). Therefore, acquiring social support is especially essential in the context of developmental students who are striving to harness academic skills inclusive goal-setting competencies. Consequently, institutional support systems such as developmental advising services can be potentially useful in these regards. Moreover, by actively participating in the goal-setting process, these students may be more receptive to the goals that are identified in their respective contexts, and thus may be more committed to following-through with these efforts. Another positive outcome related to effective goal-setting skills is the influence it has on academic self-efficacy.

Academic Self-Efficacy

As previously mentioned, an intricate relationship exists among self-regulated behaviors, goal-setting, and academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1995). Moreover, effective

goal-setting skills are seen as a criterion for developing academic self-efficacy (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). That is, according to Schunk (2001), people generally assess their performance—by virtue of quantity, quality, or rate of performance—with their goal. These self-evaluations, feedback from others, and goal attainment often helps to build one’s self-efficacy levels. The outcome of this is that increased levels of self-efficacy can serve as a motivator for individuals to persist with the task at hand, and select new and challenging goals.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s self-evaluation of his/her ability to successfully execute a course of action required to derive specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1986). These beliefs influence how individuals think and feel, their motivational levels, and consequently their actions. As noted by Bandura (1977), these beliefs also serve as a strong basis for individuals’ persistence levels. It is noteworthy that self-efficacy is not stable across all circumstances, it is situational and contextual (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). For example, an individual may possess high levels of self-efficacy regarding their job-related competencies. However, this individual may display lower levels of self-efficacy within the academic context. This study did not focus on generalized self-efficacy, it centers on efficacy that students apply to the academic realm.

Academic self-efficacy applies to learners and the behaviors they engage in the academic realm. It refers to a student’s belief in his/her capabilities to successfully learn or complete academic tasks or goals (Bandura, 1986). Abd-Elmotaleb and Saha (2013, p. 118) define it as “personal judgments of one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of educational performances.” Bandura’s (1977, 1986) main assertion is that the judgements and assessments regarding one’s perceived capability in a specific context/task are strong predictors of performance outcomes and student success (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Therefore, students’ perception of their capabilities and the meanings they assign

to their educational experiences are pivotal in these regards. However, while students' assessments and judgements may be accurate in some cases, studies conducted by Young and Ley (2002), and Robins and Beer (2001) revealed that many of the students who participated in their respective studies exaggerated their academic capabilities, and thus their personal assessments and judgements were incorrect. Despite the tendency to over-estimate efficacy levels in some cases, academic self-efficacy is a key contributor to students' success as it "influence the choices learners make and the courses of action they pursue." (Pajares, 2002, p. 116).

High levels of academic self-efficacy become evident when students are confident in their ability to organize, execute, and regulate their task performance at a designated level of competence (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). Conversely, students with very low levels either fail to engage any of these cognitive tasks or may do so at very minimal levels. Academic self-efficacy is impacted by task difficulty as some learners may believe in their ability to perform either simple or challenging tasks (Sharma & Nasa, 2014). For example, a student may feel confident reading and understanding assigned course readings, but may doubt his/her ability to write an analytic essay on the content reviewed. Further, students possessing high levels of academic self-efficacy are not easily intimidated or challenged by complex academic tasks (Bandura, 1986). Instead, they approach these situations as opportunities that can enable personal growth and mastery. These individuals are also more likely to embrace failure as they perceive it as a temporal hurdle that can be overcome.

On the other hand, individuals demonstrating low levels of self-efficacy have the tendency to feel overwhelmed and are easily threatened when required to navigate difficult situations. According to Bandura (1986, 1997), individuals possessing low levels of academic self-efficacy are less likely to commit to set goals and where possible often avoid setting

cognitively-oriented goals and tasks. Unlike those with high levels of self-efficacy, they do not perceive failure as an opportunity to grow and master specified tasks, and lack the ability or desire to persevere when faced with adversities. They also explain their failures in terms of lack of ability and/or capacity to persist with particular tasks (Adeyemo, 2007). Lastly, students who display high levels of academic self-efficacy visualize positive outcomes, while those who do not are more likely to engage in cognitive negativity (Bandura, 1997).

Sources of Academic Self-Efficacy

Both general and academic self-efficacy can be acquired via four sources inclusive of an individual's direct experience or performance accomplishment, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion such as appraisal or feedback from others, and one's physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1977). While all of the aforementioned sources are influential, this study focuses on whether the verbal persuasion, appraisals, and feedback provided by developmental advisors influences developmental students to develop and utilize self-regulated behaviors inclusive of goal-setting skills, and healthy levels of academic self-efficacy.

Bandura (1986) notes that verbal persuasion has the ability to assure individuals that they possess the capabilities required to master specific tasks or courses of action. However, the actions that are reinforced via persuasion should be realistic and attainable. Individuals must also believe that they possess the capacity to execute these courses of action. This is necessary as unrealistic beliefs regarding one's ability can result in failure which can further weaken one's perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Individuals who are verbally persuaded of their ability to complete specific tasks are better prepared to "mobilize greater sustained effort than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulty arise." (Bandura, 1986, p. 400). Therefore, educators play pivotal roles in these regards. Educators can play an instrumental role in instilling positive self-perceptions of efficacy in their students by

incorporating a variety of learning strategies into their pedagogical practices (Schunk, 1995). For example, educators may provide training and guidance in areas such as goal-setting, strategy training, and modeling, and by providing consistent feedback on students' performance (Schunk, 1995). Similarly, developmental advisors are seen as educators who are also required to provide appraisals and feedback to the students they serve. It is possible that such feedback and appraisals can potentially influence learners' academic self-efficacy similar to that evidenced in the formal teaching context. However, the influence of this particular source of support has not been fully explored, especially with regard to developmental students and the community college context.

Academic Self-Efficacy's Impact on Student Outcomes

An individual's self-efficacy beliefs and judgements about their ability in particular contexts influence task choice, effort, persistence, resilience and achievement (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In this light, many studies exploring the impact of academic self-efficacy on student outcomes support Bandura's view that these personal assessments and judgements influence the outcomes that materialize (Devonport & Lane, 2006; Multon et al., 1991; Shaabani et al., 2011; Zimmerman et al., 1992). Sharma and Nasa (2014) also assert that this is the case whether these assessments and judgements are productive or self-debilitating, pessimistic or optimistic, motivating or demotivating.

It should be mentioned that while this particular study focuses on academic self-efficacy relative to the community college and academic-underpreparedness contexts, most of the accessible literature and research on this topic was conducted at four-year institutions within the United States. Additionally, the majority of the studies reviewed in this section did not always focus on developmental students. Research relative to academic self-efficacy, developmental students, and the community college context remains limited. Lastly, data

regarding this topic is inaccessible regarding the Latin American and Caribbean contexts. This highlights the need for research agendas relative to these contexts to be initiated, with the intent to explore these areas and the realities students in these spaces negotiate. It must also be noted that while some of the studies are dated, there are limited recent studies that address this specific topic regarding the community college context. Despite these shortcomings, the following sections highlight some of the studies that have applied the social cognitive theoretical framework to explore student outcomes, and those that informed elements of this particular study.

Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theoretical framework was applied to this study with the intent to ascertain whether developmental advising promotes increased levels of academic self-efficacy, academic skill development, and persistence. This study drew on several studies that have applied this theoretical framework to explore student behaviors and academic outcomes within the post-secondary environment. For example, Heller and Cassady (2017) suggest that Bandura's (1977, 1986) triadic reciprocal model is a useful tool for measuring student achievement experiences. These researchers found that while behavioral and personal factors were useful for predicting the success of students enrolled at four-year institutions, environmental factors were the most significant predictor of student success within the community college context. Also applying this theoretical framework to their study, Wright et al. (2014) found that environmental factors matter more so than behavioral and personal factors. These researchers found that students who perceived that they had access to social supports (on and off campus) displayed higher levels of efficacy in both the academic and career spheres. These outcomes are significant to this study because they highlight the powerful influence that environmental factors can have on academic success. This study focused on one aspect of the TTIOO's campus environment—the developmental advising service that the developmental

students access. Therefore, it was important to determine the impact this institutional and environmental factor conveys for developmental students' academic self-efficacy, academic skill development, and persistence levels.

In addition to the above, Erlich and Russ-Eft (2011, 2012, 2013) have extensively applied the social cognitive theoretical framework to explore how constructs such as self-efficacy and self-regulated learning are applied to academic advising for the purposes of assessing student learning. Consequently, they have examined whether self-efficacy and self-regulated learning constructs could be used to measure student learning processes, determine the level of learning students acquire within the academic advising setting, and improve the advising process. The findings derived from their studies indicate that academic advising could in fact be adapted to increase students' self-regulated learning strategies, which in turn increases students' self-efficacy levels. These findings also reiterate the importance of effective academic advising approaches and the role they have in fueling students' academic success. These findings are promising because they highlight the utility of the social cognitive perspective in assessing academic advising practices, and the potential outcomes of these practices. They have also proven that academic advising does in fact have the potential to promote increased levels of self-regulated learning and self-efficacy. However, while Erlich and Russ-Eft broadly focus on academic advising, it will be instructive to determine whether developmental advising, particularly within a community college context derive similar outcomes. Additionally, while Erlich and Russ-Eft applied a quantitative approach to explore these areas, this study will utilize a qualitative approach. This measure will be useful for identifying specific experiences that participants would have encountered in these regards.

Overall, research generally reveals that healthy levels of academic self-efficacy can derive many positive outcomes relative to students' motivation and resilience levels, skills and

dispositions, academic performance, and program persistence. Some of these studies are highlighted in the following sections.

Motivation, Skills, and Dispositions

Academic self-efficacy impacts students' aspirations, levels of interest in academic pursuits, and academic accomplishments (Bandura, 1986). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) also assert that academic self-efficacy is significantly associated with students' learning, cognitive engagement, analytical thinking, academic commitment, and strategy use. Therefore, when compared to students displaying low levels of academic self-efficacy, students displaying high levels are better prepared to develop and utilize cognitive skills, and other academic-related skillsets and dispositions that can enable them to thrive with their academic tasks and responsibilities. Further, learners demonstrating high levels of academic self-efficacy are more likely to engage effective self-regulated learning behaviors that enable them to achieve their academic goals (Pintrich & Garcia, 1991, as cited in Liao et al., 2014; Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Shaabani et al.'s (2011) study on the relationship between academic self-efficacy, creativity and critical thinking in Iranian undergraduates found that academic self-efficacy had a positive effect on students' ability to think critically and to be creative. A study recent quantitative study was conducted in South Korea by Kim and Byun (2019) on the influence of academic self-efficacy, critical thinking disposition, and learning motivation on nursing students' problem-solving abilities. These researchers found that academic self-efficacy was a core factor influencing students' success. It was also found to positively impact motivational levels and critical thinking. Devonport and Lane's (2006) study also found that optimal self-efficacy levels influenced students' decisions to seek support when required, and their ability to cope. To this end, the levels of academic self-efficacy students display is a good predictor of how they address stress and anxiety-related experiences (Chemers et al., 2001).

Academic Performance and Persistence

One of the foremost studies assessing the impact of academic self-efficacy on student outcomes was conducted by Multon et al. (1991). This study entailed a meta-analysis of 39 studies, and these researchers concluded that academic self-efficacy indices had the strongest effect on academic outcomes, and were predictive of grades and program persistence. The study also revealed that efficacy levels in low-achieving students was less than the levels displayed by high-achievers. A similar study was conducted by Barrios (1997) on students enrolled at a community college, where some students participated in a program designed to increase efficacy levels. Barrios found that those who received the training showed significant improvements in their grades and persistence rates, compared to students who did not receive the training. Other studies also found similar results which revealed that academic self-efficacy positively impacts college grades (Akomolafe et al., 2013; Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011; Chemers et al., 2001; Zajacova et al., 2005). For example, in a study evaluating the impact of academic self-efficacy on STEM undergraduate students, Ballen et al. (2017) found that it enhanced students' ability to grasp course content and thereby increased their academic performance. In the context of developmental students, Bembenuddy's (2009) study found that academic self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of academic achievement among this study's participants.

Persistence

In addition to positively influencing students' academic performance, Bandura (1993) surmised that students' assessments and judgements relative to their scholastic aptitude and academic performance influences their decisions to persist with challenging tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, studies focusing on the relationship between academic self-efficacy and retention indicate that academic self-efficacy is often a predictor of students' re-enrollment

decisions and program persistence (Devonport & Lane, 2006; Multon et al., 1991). For example, Devonport and Lane's (2006) study revealed that academic self-efficacy scores taken at the beginning of a course was a good predictor for identifying students who were at risk of withdrawing from the course. That is, of all the students who were at-risk of withdrawing, an overwhelming 81.3% did in fact withdraw before the semester ended. Additionally, DeWitz et al. (2009) exploration of the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and one's purpose in life found that students' views and beliefs regarding their academic abilities influenced their view of their life's purpose. Moreover, this life purpose was a key determinant in influencing their desire to persist toward program completion.

Incongruence Between Academic Self-Efficacy and Performance

Despite the aforementioned benefits, some studies establish weaker links among academic self-efficacy, students' academic outcomes, and persistence. For example, a study conducted by Young and Ley (2002) revealed that while high levels of academic self-efficacy influenced successful outcomes, in many cases learners' high levels of academic self-efficacy were incongruous with their academic capabilities. That is, many participants had an exaggerated perception of their capabilities. This outcome supports results from Robin and Beer's (2001) study which also revealed that there is often a disconnect between learners' beliefs about their competency and their actual performance. Liao et al.'s (2014) study on the impact of academic self-efficacy on persistence also found that academic self-efficacy did not directly predict persistence levels for community college students. Rather, persistence was influenced by academic self-efficacy alongside extrinsic motivational factors such as the potential rewards that can be derived from completing one's college education. Despite these inconsistencies, the majority of the findings from studies in these regards indicate that high levels of academic self-efficacy can positively impact students' learning outcomes, academic

goals, decisions to persist, and strategy and skill application. It is therefore imperative that post-secondary institutions provide support services that can enable students to enhance these capacities.

Developmental Education Programs and Support Services

Developmental education within the post-secondary educational environment emerged during the early 1800s (Arendale, 2002). During this time, American college administrators observed that many students were underprepared, and were unsuccessful with harnessing the basic skills and knowledge required to pursue post-secondary education. Interestingly, this level of academic-underpreparedness was also observed at top tier institutions such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale universities (Arendale, 2002; Payne & Lyman, 1996). Thus, the developmental education initiative was born out of a need to sufficiently prepare students to successfully engage their college programs. In particular, attention was paid to providing supplemental instruction in areas such as math, science, reading, writing, and English (Dotzler, 2003). Since then, developmental education programs have become a mainstay at most American colleges and universities, particularly community colleges. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of accessible studies focusing on developmental education centers on the American experience. This research gap needs to be addressed, therefore studies highlighting the American experience in these regards will serve as the primary reference points for this discussion.

Developmental programs are one of the primary features of the American community college system (Bailey, 2009; Crisp & Delgado, 2014). Moreover, Bailey et al. (2010) describes addressing the needs of developmental students as the most pervasive challenge that community college administrators face. As previously discussed, developmental students often possess limited proficiency in areas inclusive of reading, writing, and/or math, in addition to

other academic skills (Almeida, 1991; Farrell, 2012; Hollis, 2009; Tritelli, 2003). Therefore, developmental courses usually entail instruction in these areas (Bailey, 2009; Tritelli, 2003). While developmental courses do not count toward a degree or certificate, they are designed to prepare developmental students for engagement with college-level coursework (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). In addition to course instruction, other features of community college developmental programs typically include mandatory assessments, compulsory placement in developmental courses, tutoring services, advising and counselling, and program evaluations (Boylan et al., 1997; Gerlaugh et al., 2007; Perin, 2004).

The impact of developmental education on student outcomes remains inclusive. Therefore, while a few studies reveal some positive outcomes, many studies situated in the United States suggest that developmental education is not accomplishing its intended purpose (Jaggars & Stacey, 2014). For example, Bettinger and Long (2005) utilized data acquired from the Ohio Board of Regents to ascertain the effectiveness of developmental education. These researchers found that developmental education negatively impacted student outcomes, and that developmental students fared worse than their non-developmental counterparts. This study also found that developmental students completed fewer credit hours, and were less-likely to complete their programs or transfer to a four-year institution. Similarly, Crisp and Delgado's (2014) study which used data from the Beginning Post-secondary Students Longitudinal Study also found that developmental education decreases the likelihood that students will transfer to a four-year institution. These researchers also failed to establish a significant relationship between developmental education and persistence.

In addition to the above, Calcagno and Long (2008) found that developmental education tends to incur positive short-term outcomes such as persistence to the second year of college. However, it does not always contribute to long-term outcomes such as completing an entire

degree program or transferring to a four-year institution. Dougherty et al. (2017) also assert that national studies conducted on developmental students found that the majority of developmental students enrolled in developmental courses do not complete all required courses, particularly math. Overall, approximately less than a quarter of developmental education students enrolled at community colleges complete a degree or certificate within eight years of enrollment (Bailey et al., 2010). These outcomes suggest that as a result of the challenges that developmental students experience, more institutional resources should be dedicated to supporting these students with persisting with their programs.

Despite this disparaging picture regarding the effectiveness of developmental education, Bailey (2009), and Bailey et al. (2013) caution against the tendency to broadly describe developmental education as being ineffective. They advise that consideration should be paid to the reality that developmental students are academically weaker than their non-developmental peers. Therefore, a comparison between developmental and non-developmental students is insufficient to determine if developmental education is solely responsible for worsening or failing to improve student outcomes. Moreover, Bailey surmises that it is possible that students' outcomes could be worse without developmental education. As a result of the uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of developmental education, some practitioners and researchers assert that more research is required to measure the effect of developmental education on community college student outcomes (Bahr, 2010; Calcagno & Long, 2008). To extend this view, more research in these regards is also required in the Latin America and Caribbean spheres.

Developmental Support Services

Support services have become commonplace across post-secondary institutions, however they are an integral part of the developmental programs provided by community

colleges (Bettinger et al., 2013; Dotzler, 2003; Fike & Fike, 2008). Community college administrators recognize that providing effective support systems is one measure that can empower developmental students to thrive, and thus they often install a range of support services across their respective campuses (Cooper, 2010; O’Gara et al., 2009). These support services are intended to complement and support students’ academic goals, bolster students’ academic profiles and outcomes, and increase institutional retention (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012; Cooper, 2010).

Similar to research on developmental education, the overwhelming majority of studies exploring developmental support services center on the American experience, and four-year institutions. However, expanding research to include the Latin America and Caribbean realities is becoming increasingly important. This consideration is necessary as open access initiatives continue to abound in these regions, and increasing numbers of developmental students continue to seek post-secondary qualifications. Therefore, it is instructive for stakeholders in these regards to be aware of how developmental students are being supported in these regions, and how well these implements are working, especially toward facilitating student success and persistence.

Most research conducted on student support systems reveal that effective modes of student support involve interpersonal and interactive dimensions (Cotton et al., 2017; Jacklin & Le Riche, 2009; Pineda-Báez et al., 2014). These interpersonal and interactive forums occur via the relationships students develop with faculty, counsellors, advisors, peer mentors, and other support staff (O’Banion, 1972; O’Keeffe, 2013; Schwebel et al., 2012). These interactions provide opportunities for students to highlight their challenges, assess their levels of resilience, receive feedback, and seek appropriate guidance/referrals (Cotton et al., 2017). Moreover, these support services can empower developmental students to harness academic skills, realize long-

term academic success, and increase their levels of persistence (Tinto, 2012). In anticipation of these potential outcomes, most successful developmental programs provide students with access to mandatory advising and/or counselling support services (Boylan et al., 1997; McCabe & Day, 1998).

Developmental Advising: Support for Developmental Students

This discussion on developmental advising applies the perspectives and research related to the United States context, as perspectives and research centering on the Latin American and Caribbean experience in these regards remains inaccessible. Burns Crookston was instrumental in conceptualizing the developmental approach to advising during the 1970s. Later on, other supporters of the developmental advising movement included practitioners such as Terry O'Banion, Roger Winston, Stephen Ender, and Theodore Miller (Grites, 2013). The need to reconceptualize the traditional advising process was predicated on the belief that there was a need to educate the whole student; it was also acknowledged that more attention should be paid to effectively supporting the increasingly diverse college student population (Grites, 2013). Consequently, Crookston (1972) differentiated between prescriptive academic advising and developmental advising. However, despite this distinction, a continuum exists among the three major types of advising—prescriptive, developmental, and intrusive advising.

Prescriptive academic advising primarily attends to simple course scheduling, course selection, and academic regulations (Ender, 1994). This form of advising seeks to ensure that students select appropriate courses in sequential order, and that they adhere to regulations aligned with course enrollment, and other general institutional academic guidelines. Earl (1987) describes intrusive advising as an action-oriented proactive approach, and as one that centers on encouraging students to seek assistance to preempt potentially negative outcomes, or to prevent the intensification of any challenges or concerns they experience. Thus, in many cases

intrusive advising does not embody mentorship or developmental components as students are referred to the requisite campus support providers. However, intrusive advising has been credited with influencing student success. For example, the City College of New York's (CUNY) intensive ASAP developmental program prioritizes intrusive advising support by virtue of mandatory and frequent individual advising—a measure that has been shown to positively influence student success (Kolenovic et al., 2013; Scrivener et al., 2015). Other studies examining the influence of intrusive advising in the community college context also reveal that this scope of advising can connote positive student-related outcomes (Donaldson et al., 2016; Hansen, 2014; Rios, 2019; Thomas, 2020). However, there are several limitations regarding the intrusive advising model. For example, Donaldson et al. (2016) study that examined the perceptions of first-year community college students regarding intrusive advising revealed that this scope of advising did not sufficiently promote increased levels of student autonomy, neither students' mastery of academic planning skills. During their engagement with students, advisors were also criticized for not utilizing available advising tools, and access to advisors was limited. Rios's (2019) study also found that intrusive advising did not increase persistence levels beyond students' first semester. While no advising model is perfect, developmental advising is structured to address some of these shortcomings.

Faculty and paraprofessionals are more likely to undertake the responsibility of providing both intrusive and prescriptive advising (Lowenstein, 2009). However, developmental advising continues to develop as a specialized profession (McGill, 2016). Developmental advising encompasses a broader approach when compared to intrusive and prescriptive advising. That is, Crookston (1972) describes it as a comprehensive process that utilizes interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies to assist students with achieving specific learning, developmental, career, and life goals. Developmental advising is defined as “a systematic

process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources.” (Winston et al., 1984, p. 19). Earl (1987) asserts that developmental advising considers the “whole” student, and students’ prior experiences and needs. This approach to advising therefore centers on individual students’ experiences, challenges, needs, and goals (Gordon, 1994). Moreover, King (2005) conceptualizes it as both a process and an orientation that reflects the idea of movement and progression. Therefore, developmental advising focuses on enabling students to develop a positive approach in pursuit of their academic, career, and personal goals; take responsibility for their behaviors and decisions; and realize successful outcomes (Crookston, 1972; Earl, 1987; Winston et al., 1984). Thus, its ultimate goal centers on empowering students to progress toward long-term success.

Features and Focus of Developmental Advising

Developmental advising “stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life.” (Winston et al., 1984, p. 19). This advising process should also reflect an institution’s commitment to supporting holistic student development. Therefore, in contrast to prescriptive and intrusive advising, developmental advising focuses on empowering students to accomplish their academic and life goals, and to acquire the skills and attitudes that can promote intellectual, occupational, and personal growth (Crookston, 1972; Ender, 1994; Winston et al., 1984). The overarching aim of the developmental advising process is enabling students to become self-directed and to actively participate in their academic and career planning processes (Crookston, 1972).

In order to effectively support students during the developmental advising process, several key elements should be included. The process should attend to exploring and setting academic, career, and life goals (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; O’Banion, 1972). It should also focus

on solidifying students' program and course choices, and course scheduling (O'Banion, 1972). Lastly, developmental advising should center on discussions that broaden students' interests, enable the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships, clarify personal values, and enhance critical thinking and reasoning skills (Creamer & Creamer, 1994). By attending to these areas, students are better prepared to address a myriad of concerns or issues they may encounter in their personal, career, social, and academic lives.

Further to the above, another essential feature of the developmental advising process is the shared power dynamic between developmental advisors and their advisees (Bland, 2003; Brown & Rivas, 1994; Ender, 1994). While developmental advisors can be defined as the facilitators of the developmental advising process, students are also expected to assume some responsibility for sustaining the advisee/advisor relationship, and for identifying and selecting appropriate decisions and actions (Crookston, 1972). Therefore, an integral aspect of power-sharing in this context is active collaboration.

Although developmental advisors hold a position of authority, they should utilize an interactive and collaborative approach to aid students with accomplishing the aforementioned goals, and to encourage students' active participation in the process, (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Crookston, 1972; Earl, 1987; Frost, 1994; Winston et al., 1984). This is the preferred approach as "students are academically and socially integrated when they have positive regard for their academic performance and when they value the social relationships they have established at the institution." (Coll & Stewart, 2008, p. 41). Further, "the student cannot be merely a passive receptacle for knowledge, but must share equal responsibility with the teacher for the quality of the learning context, process, and development." (Crookston, 1972, p. 5). Thus, via this approach, students' goals are developed in partnership with advisors versus, being determined by the advisor (Creamer & Creamer, 1994).

Advisee/Advisor Contact and Interactions

Frequency of Contact and Caseload Volume. Developmental advisors are usually the primary contact in times of crisis, and are required to be competent regarding the referral process (Jordan, 2000). However, apart from moments of crisis, these advisors are encouraged to have frequent contact with students under their purview (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Varney, 2007). Winston et al. (1984) suggest that students should have at least three hours a year of individual attention. Moreover, both student and advisor should assume responsibility for sustaining the relationship, and the frequency with which they interact (Brown & Rivas, 1994). While there is no specific reference to developmental advisors and no set advisor/advisee ratio, data collected by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2011) indicates that the median individual advisor caseload at two-year medium-sized colleges is approximately 260 students at any given point. However, these advisor/advisee assignments often depend on the institutional context, size, and available resources.

Advisor/Advisee Interactions. Prior to interacting with students, developmental advisors should consider their level of preparedness for addressing the academic and emotional needs that students present (Hollis, 2009). In so doing, developmental advisors should reflect on the process and their capacity to provide meaningful support. Likewise, they should also demonstrate a willingness to be available to students, and should be compassionate about student success (Grites & Gordon, 2000). More importantly, during their interactions with students, developmental advisors should be empathic to students' values, needs, and perspectives (Bland, 2003). Additionally, to facilitate the previously identified goals, developmental advisors must carefully attend to each detail of their interactions with students (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; O'Banion, 1972). That is, they should strive to acquire in-depth understandings of students' academic abilities and/or the issues they present at any specific

interaction (Hollis, 2009). These guidelines prepare developmental advisors to facilitate authentic collaborative advisor/advisee relationships that can empower students to gradually assume responsibility for their success (Bland, 2003; Brown & Rivas, 1994; Jordan, 2000).

Developmental Advisors' Roles and Skills

Developmental students enroll at post-secondary institutions with varying perspectives and experiences, some of which influence the magnitude of their developmental needs (Hollis, 2009). As previously noted, many of these students do not perceive themselves as being powerful or capable of successfully navigating the post-secondary trajectory, and are often insecure about their status—factors that affect their academic performance and desire to persist (Almeida, 1991; Hollis, 2009). To mitigate the impact of these factors, developmental advisors are responsible for providing learning opportunities outside of the classroom setting, with the goal of inspiring students to develop positive views of their academic selves, and to ultimately realize academic success (Crookston, 1972; Hollis, 2009). Accordingly, the developmental advisors that participated in Frost's (1993) study revealed that the attitudes they bring to the process are more important than practice. These advisors also expressed that they used this advising relationship to encourage students to actively participate in their college experience, explore with students the factors that fuel sustainable success, and demonstrate interest in students' academic progress and extracurricular achievements.

Developmental advisors should adopt mentorship roles to assist students with harnessing the skills required to effectively pursue their academic goals (Frost, 1993). More specifically, they should strive to provide support and motivation; acknowledge students' academic abilities; coach to students' strengths; and utilize effective referral systems (Hollis, 2009). Developmental advisors are therefore facilitators that enable students to develop an awareness of their values, personal characteristics, aspirations, and needs (Gordon, 1994;

Jordan, 2000). To successfully achieve these outcomes, they are required to utilize a holistic approach in their support of students and thus employ a range of institutional and community resources (Ender, 1994). To ensure that a collaborative approach is prioritized, developmental advisors are also required to utilize specific communicative skills.

Developmental advisors utilize a range of communicative and attentive skills with the intent to provide an environment where students can comfortably express their needs. In fact, their skillsets are similar to those used by counselors and other student affairs practitioners (Jordan, 2000). However, in the advisor/advisee context, these skills are used with the intent to foster developmental growth and to prepare students to achieve specific goals (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Jordan, 2000).

To ensure effective goal-setting, developmental advisors should be thorough in their analysis of students' abilities, acutely aware of students' impediments, prepare to support students through setbacks, and enlighten students about campus resources that can fuel their success (Bland, 2003; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Hollis, 2009). Additionally, open and honest communication is required between both advisor and advisee in order to facilitate goal-directed dialogue and behavior (Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Jordan, 2000). Effective listening and relational skills are also paramount, and developmental advisors must attend to openly stated details, hidden messages, and non-verbal cues (Bland, 2003; Jordan, 2000). Developmental advisors must also possess the ability to ask questions that will allow them to acquire in-depth understandings of the issues that students present, develop practical strategies/goals, and make appropriate referrals (Bland, 2003).

It is noteworthy that the developmental advising service is not a standalone support service, and collaboration is required with other institutional and community service/support providers. Therefore, another important skillset that developmental advisors should possess is

the ability to make effective referrals and collaborate with other campus and community student support providers (Bland, 2003; Jordan, 2000). Effective developmental advisors are acutely aware of their institution's academic and support services, in addition to off-campus resources (Bland, 2003; Jordan, 2000; O'Banion, 1972; Winston et al., 1984). Overall, the techniques used by developmental advisors prepare them to support students with harnessing the requisite skills, dispositions, and self-awareness that can enable them to realize many of their academic, personal, and professional goals.

The Outcomes of Effective Developmental Advising

Developmental advising can be conceptualized as an interactive, interpersonal, and collaborative support service that aims to encourage students' active participation relative to engaging the post-secondary education trajectory (Bland, 2003; Hollis, 2009; Schwebel et al., 2012). It is envisioned that by adopting a collaborative advisor/advisee approach, students will be increasingly motivated to participate in a developmental process that can facilitate personal, academic, and professional progression. This aligns well with Bandura's theoretical perspective which highlights the positive outcomes that can be derived when students receive feedback and guidance from those within the institutional context. Moreover, developmental advising is also believed to be particularly beneficial for developmental and at-risk students (Gordon, 1994; Jordan, 2000). It should be noted that most studies exploring the effectiveness of this support service is limited to the United States context. Consequently, these perspectives will be used to highlight the potential benefits ascribed to the developmental advising service.

Preference for Developmental Advising

Students enrolled at both four-year institutions and community colleges have expressed a preference for developmental advising (Harris, 2018; Johnson, 2019; Smith, 2002). For example, a quantitative study conducted by Hale et al. (2009) revealed that out of 429 students,

360 preferred the developmental advising approach. A more recent quantitative study conducted by Harris (2018) at a historically Black college located in South Carolina also revealed that students reported more positive experiences with developmental advising when compared to the prescriptive approach. Harris found that developmental advising assisted with diminishing under-represented students' feelings of isolation and increased their sense of belonging on campus. Harris's study is particularly noteworthy in this context as the student population in this study is similar to that at the TTIOO. That is, although Harris's study does not focus on the community college or center on developmental students, the student population at the TTIOO is also primarily Black. Additionally, many of these students would have experienced some of the challenges typically negotiated by under-represented groups.

Like the studies above, Johnson's (2019) study which focused on the community college context also found that students preferred the developmental advising approach. Students at this institution felt that developmental advisors affirmed their presence, and genuinely cared about their progress. Interestingly, the results from this study indicated that students expressed a preference for prescriptive advising when they first began their programs. However, this inclination shifted when they became more comfortable with their coursework and the campus surroundings.

Academic Self-Efficacy and Skill Development

Developmental students often feel insecure about their role and status as post-secondary students, and often doubt their ability to perform in these environments (Almeida, 1991; Hollis, 2009). As outlined in the theoretical discussion, one of the primary sources that enables students to develop positive self-perceptions and academic self-efficacy is the feedback and appraisals they receive from others, particularly from those within the institutional context (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Schunk, 1995). Educators play an instrumental role in motivating students

to develop positive self-perceptions by incorporating various learning strategies into their pedagogical practices (Schunk, 1995). For example, educators may provide training in areas such as goal-setting, strategy training, and modeling, and by providing consistent feedback on students' performance (Hollis, 2009; Schunk, 1995).

Similarly, in their role as non-faculty developmental educators, developmental advisors utilize techniques and resources that can enable students to develop an awareness of their values, personal characteristics, aspirations, and needs (Gordon, 1994; Jordan, 2000). Overall, they have a large responsibility for promoting students' academic, professional, and personal growth (Bland, 2003; Hollis 2009). In order to facilitate these goals, providing consistent feedback is a pivotal aspect of this advising approach (Bland, 2003; Hollis, 2009; Schwebel et al., 2012). As noted by Bandura (1977, 1986) when students receive feedback, they are better positioned to hone the requisite skills that can increase their ability to thrive academically. Feedback is also essential for empowering students to develop competencies utilizing effective goal-setting, time-management, and study skills; and the self-awareness and dispositions that can enable them to successfully pursue their academic goals (Rachal et al., 2007; Gale & Parker, 2017; Smothers, 2012). As Frost (1993, p. 15) aptly notes, this scope of advising "should provide for new directions of thought and have the capacity to change behavior." However, while these practitioner and theoretical perspectives suggest that developmental advising can promote skill development, studies exploring this area particularly relative to the community college and developmental student contexts is inaccessible.

Developmental advisors have the potential to motivate students to develop positive academic self-concepts (Crookston, 1972; Frost, 1993; Grites, 2013; Hollis, 2009). There are studies demonstrating that effective advising can enable students to develop their academic self-concept and self-efficacy. For example, findings from Young-Jones et al.'s (2013) study

indicate that factors inclusive of advisor accountability, advisor empowerment, student responsibility, student self-efficacy, student study skills, and perceived support significantly impacted students' success. Effective advising has also been shown to increase students' career-efficacy (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014; Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). This is noteworthy as career planning is an integral aspect of the developmental advising process. While these studies did not directly explore developmental advising, their findings are promising and could also potentially apply to the developmental advising process.

In addition to the above, strengths-based advising approaches have also been shown to increase academic self-efficacy in first-year students enrolled at a four-year institution (Soria et al., 2017). This is noteworthy as Gore's (2006) study which explored academic self-efficacy as a predictor of college outcomes found that academic self-efficacy can in fact be used to predict students' academic performance and persistence. This researcher also asserts that students require sufficient feedback regarding their academic tasks and responsibilities so that they can realistically assess their capacity to achieve academic goals. It is evident that effective advising can promote positive student outcomes. Again, while these studies do not specifically pertain to developmental advising, their findings are promising and could also potentially apply to the developmental advising process. Similar to discussions regarding skill development, studies exploring the impact of developmental advising on academic self-efficacy relative to the community college and developmental student contexts is inaccessible.

Increased Engagement, Persistence, and Retention

Many studies reveal that students' engagement with campus-related activities and programs can increase their desire to persist, enhance their post-secondary experience, and bolster their academic outcomes (Hollis, 2009; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Schwebel et al., 2012; Tinto, 2006). Consequently, the interactions that students have with developmental advisors

can also potentially increase their involvement in institutional programs, activities, and services (Hollis, 2009; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Schwebel et al., 2012). Such engagement within the campus space can also potentially increase students' desire to persist.

While advising services are critical across all institutional types, they are especially essential at community colleges, and for supporting developmental and at-risk groups (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; McArthur, 2005). To support this view, findings from Fowler and Boylan's (2010) study highlight that it is imperative for advisors and developmental educators to address non-academic and personal factors that affect students' success, particularly students with weak academic skills. These researchers surmise that addressing these areas can contribute toward increasing persistence. While this study is not specific to developmental advising, developmental advisors serve as developmental educators, and much of Fowler and Boylan's findings inform their practice.

Other studies assessing the impact of advising also confirm that effective advising plays a pivotal role in improving student persistence and institutional retention (Bahr, 2008; Gore, 2006; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Kolenovic et al., 2013; Kot, 2014). Failing and Lombardozzi (2020) note that developmental advising in particular has a positive impact on students' degree progression which in turn lowers both students and institutions' average course-pathway costs. This outcome is noteworthy because of the potential cost savings that both institutions and students can access—particularly students with minimal financial capital and those adversely affected by educational costs (Bowen et al., 2009). Overall, it is quite plausible that developmental advising contributes to increased levels of persistence and institutional retention (Bland, 2003; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Crookston, 1972; Gordon, 1994). However, recent studies exploring developmental advising as a retention and persistence tool within the community college context remains minimal.

Developmental Advising and Inconclusive Evidence

It is envisioned that developmental advising can enable students to effectively adopt the role of “higher education student” and strengthen their ability and commitment to meeting institutional expectations and requirements (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Pearson, 2012; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Developmental advising can therefore potentially expose students to several psychosocial, academic, and personal benefits. The interactions, and the feedback and appraisals provided by developmental advisors can also potentially enable students to realize increased measures of academic self-efficacy and skill mastery. Moreover, when students use feedback to master specific tasks and goals, they are more likely to apply this efficacy and mastery to other similar learning situations (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Hence, it is possible that coaching, mentoring, and feedback provided by developmental advisors can promote several positive outcomes for developmental students.

However, despite these potential benefits and students’ preference for the developmental advising approach, many institutions encounter difficulties with providing this service at an efficient level (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Moreover, in 1994 Winston as cited in Grites (2013) asserted that the verdict on the effectiveness of developmental advising was pending. Winston also questioned whether the desired outcomes were realistic. Overall, he questioned whether this one facet of the institutional context made a difference regarding students’ experiences and performance outcomes. Almost 20 years later, Grites (2013) noted that providing a conclusive response to these questions remains elusive. Therefore, in order to derive more conclusive results, further research and assessment agendas need to be directed at this area of student development. More specifically, additional attention must be paid to the community college and developmental student contexts with the intent to further explore the impact of developmental advising. Studies in this regard must also be extended to the Latin

American and Caribbean contexts so as to acquire an understanding of these services and their functionality in these spaces.

Developmental Support Services and the National Context

One of the factors underpinning increased access initiatives is the belief that post-secondary education can advance career goals and incur positive life experiences (Ribeiro et al., 2013). Such educational pursuits have become a pragmatic means through which individuals can enhance their employability, and realize some measure of social mobility and financial security (Duarte et al., 2014; Garaz & Torotcoi, 2017; Ilie & Rose, 2016; Longden, 2012). Additionally, realizing one's post-secondary educational goals transcends personal gains by fostering increased college readiness in upcoming generations (Currie & Moretti, 2003). That is, within the family context, first generationers are trendsetters responsible for breaking their family's pattern of non-college attendance and post-secondary educational attainment. From a societal perspective, such educational pursuits can contribute to a decline in poverty, welfare bills, and incarceration rates (Serna & Woulfe, 2017). Other societal benefits include the development of society's human capital, a participative citizenry, economic growth, and diminished social inequalities (O'Carroll et al., 2006; OECD, 2015a). These potential benefits are some of the motivating factors influencing governments worldwide to invest vast financial resources into their post-secondary education sectors.

Latin American and Caribbean countries exhibit the lowest rate of income distribution, and thus navigate many challenges aligned with development, poverty, and inequality (Browne & Shen, 2016; Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008). Education, moreso the post-secondary level is one of the primary precursors required to address these social and economic challenges (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Jerrim et al., 2015; Morley et al., 2009). Therefore, broadening access to post-secondary education whereby both academically-prepared and underprepared students

have an opportunity to pursue post-secondary education is but one measure that can diminish the magnitude of systemic inequalities, and promote personal and societal growth.

Individuals participate in post-secondary education with the intent to either improve their lives, advance their career goals, realize some measure of social mobility, and acquire financial independence (Duarte et al., 2014; Ribeiro et al., 2013). Despite attempts to achieve these academic goals, low levels of persistence and high dropout rates occur, especially among the developmental student population (Bailey, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010). Additionally, as previously discussed, while most institutions record retention challenges, this issue is more pronounced at community colleges. From the community college perspective, these outcomes often occur because of factors aligned with institutional characteristics and challenges, academic-underpreparedness, and students' low levels of persistence (Bragg & Durham, 2012; Gilbert & Heller, 2013; McIntosh, 2012). Academic-underpreparedness in particular often occurs as a result of poor academic experiences and insufficient support at the level of secondary education. As a result, these students are insufficiently prepared to succeed with their post-secondary educational pursuits—an issue that derails their desire to thrive and persist academically.

Students' inability to persist oftentimes stymies their attempts to improve familial, financial, and social mobility goals. Moreover, the AACC (2012) notes that community colleges' inability to realize high program completion rates translates into a limited number of graduates that can adequately support society's human resource needs. This fact also applies to the Latin American and Caribbean contexts (Ferreyra et al., 2017; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). The retention issue is also overwhelming because students who withdraw from their programs cost the state and institutions thousands of dollars in unrealized tuition, administrative fees, and alumni contributions (DeBerard & Spelmans, 2004). Additionally, retention rates is one measure

used to ascertain institutional performance and the volume of state funding they receive annually (Hutto, 2017; Ishitani, 2008). Therefore, low persistence and retention rates can result in decreased state subventions. This is particularly worrisome for community colleges as they typically receive less funding when compared to larger institutions (Dowd & Shieh, 2014; Phelan, 2014).

Challenges aligned with academic performance, persistence, and retention, accompanied by thousands of dollars in unrealized tuition, administrative fees, and alumni contributions are also the realities faced by the GORTT and by extension the TTIOO (T. Joseph, personal communication, September, 2020). That is, while the government undertakes the responsibility for funding nationals' undergraduate tuition, the vast sums expended on these fees are not reflected in the graduation rates, particularly relative to the TTIOO. Although specific persistence and retention data relative to the TTIOO is inaccessible at this point, it can be surmised that persistence and retention rates at the TTIOO may be comparable to that evidenced at community colleges located in the United States.

Low levels of academic success and persistence in Latin America and Caribbean countries also connote considerable social and economic effects (Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). In the context of Trinidad and Tobago, the post-secondary participation rate stood at estimated 65.23% in 2016 (Simms et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, prior post-secondary education policies developed by the GORTT focused on increasing post-secondary participation rates (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development, 2015). However, the recent 2017-2022 Education Policy Paper clearly indicates that measures will be taken to increase post-secondary attainment rates from 15.78% to the OECD's prescribed average of 35% by 2030 (The GORTT Ministry of Education, 2017). By adopting this policy shift, the GORTT recognizes that increasing access alone is insufficient, and that institutions must increase their capacity to guide

and support students toward program completion. Moreover, this policy shift also acknowledges that students should have access to additional support that can prepare them to successfully engage their post-secondary educational goals—support at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

The aforementioned factors warrant attention because according to Gale and Parker “In the global phenomenon of widening participation policy in higher education, lower retention rates for students from less advantaged socio-economic circumstances have potential to undermine the social inclusion agenda of HE.” (Gale & Parker, 2017, p. 80). More specifically, many students enrolled at the TTIOO do in fact come from a low socioeconomic background and negotiate many social, occupational, and educational disadvantages (Farrell, 2012). As a result, many of these students are insufficiently prepared to engage post-secondary education. Therefore, one way to reduce the risk of undermining the social inclusion agenda of post-secondary education in this context, is by providing these students with holistic support systems that can motivate skill development, positive attitudinal dispositions, and persistence.

The overall intention behind providing support services is predicated on the view that these resources can engender long-term success, while addressing the shortcomings that students present (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2016; Bailey & Alfonso, 2005). Thus, support services such as developmental advising can potentially positively influence developmental students’ decision to persist with their programs and their personal, academic, and professional goals. Effective support systems can also position institutions to increase retention and graduation rates, which can positively impact institutional funding. From a broader societal perspective, increased retention and program completion rates can aid the GORTT with realizing goals aligned with improving the country’s human and economic capacities, increasing public participation in governance and societal affairs, and diminishing social inequalities. Effective post-secondary

student support systems can also increase Trinidad and Tobago's ability to increase its' participation in the global economy.

The Gap in Literature and the Current Study

It is widely acknowledged that compared to four-year universities, relatively few studies center on community colleges and the students accessing these institutions (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Marti, 2008). However, while in recent years there has been an increase in the scholarship addressing the community college context, very few recent studies address the topic under study.

Moreover, very few studies explore the Caribbean's community college context (Gudapati, 2021). Interestingly, although post-secondary access initiatives abound in Latin America and the Caribbean, very little research explore the support services that post-secondary students in these spaces access, their effectiveness, or their contribution to addressing persistence and retention issues (Munizaga et al., 2018). More specifically, very few studies explore the realities and challenges that developmental students negotiate within Latin America and the Caribbean (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008). Lastly, very few qualitative studies explore students' experiences with developmental advising in the community college context. It is important to address these research gaps as factors aligned with student success and persistence embody significant repercussions for Latin American and Caribbean communities, and for students.

This study attempted to fill some of the aforementioned gaps by utilizing a qualitative lens to determine how developmental Trinbagonian students perceive the TTIOO's developmental advising service. Thus, it focused on developmental students who are enrolled in the TTIOO's Catalyst program and access the resident developmental advising service.

Developmental advising is relatively new to the Caribbean, and in particular Trinidad and Tobago. The TTIOO is one of the few local post-secondary institutions providing this scope of advising. However, it is the only institution utilizing the term "developmental advising". Prior to

this study, very little was known about Caribbean developmental students' perceptions of this service. Therefore, their views were useful for addressing some of the aforementioned research gaps. Particular attention was paid to whether developmental advising promotes the development of essential self-regulated academic skills such as goal-setting competencies, and positive attitudinal dispositions such as academic efficacy. Measures were also taken to ascertain these developmental students' views on developmental advising and its influence on their desire to persist.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design

Academic-underpreparedness can impede development students' ability to realize academic success and high levels of persistence. Moreover, as one of the core pillars of the post-secondary enterprise, many community college students require remedial support. Therefore, concerns associated with students' academic success and persistence levels are particularly pervasive relative to the community college context. Many community colleges provide developmental advising services as a means of enabling developmental students to increase their preparedness for college, promote academic success, and motivate students' desire to persist. Similarly, developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO also have access to developmental advising services, which aim to engender the aforementioned outcomes.

This chapter outlines the steps that were taken to explore how developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO perceived the developmental advising service. More specifically, it was designed to unearth the essence of how developmental students perceived the role of developmental advising in enabling them to harness self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, foster appropriate levels of academic self-efficacy, and influence their desire to persist. The following sections outline the research questions, highlight how the theoretical framework influenced the research process, and provide a description of the study site's institutional context. These sections are followed by a review of the qualitative, ontological, and epistemological approaches that underpinned this study. I then discuss the research design—the phenomenological case study design; and the data collection methods, which in this context included three-series phenomenological interviews, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. This is followed by a discussion on the data analysis process. In the remaining sections I review how I addressed trustworthiness concerns aligned with credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I conclude with sections that focus on the ethical concerns related to the study, my positionality as the primary researcher, and a discussion of the study's limitations.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to ascertain how developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO perceived the developmental advising service. These views were specific to whether developmental advising promoted the acquisition or enhancement of self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, increased students' levels of academic self-efficacy, and influenced students' commitment to persist. The research questions included:

1. What are the major hurdles developmental students encounter while adjusting to the post-secondary environment—especially those aligned with harnessing academic skills?
2. How do developmental students perceive the role of developmental advising in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy?
3. How does developmental students' engagement with developmental advising, and the acquisition of academic self-efficacy and goal-setting skills influence their academic performance and desire to persist?

Responding to these questions were instrumental for providing insight into the experiences the TTIOO's developmental students encountered, their perception of the role of developmental advising in this context, and what they cite as necessary for fueling their academic success.

Applying Bandura's Theoretical Framework to the Study

This study sought to ascertain the extent to which the developmental advising process and by extension developmental advisors prepared students to harness goal-setting skills and increased levels of academic self-efficacy. Determining this was essential as these factors have

been shown to increase students' academic performance and desire to persist toward program completion (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Barrios, 1997; Devonport & Lane, 2006; Multon et al., 1991). Moreso, this study emphasized the role of an institutional resource in relation to promoting student success and persistence outcomes. In this light, Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theoretical framework was instrumental in guiding this research process.

Bandura (1977, 1986) notes that goal-setting skills and high levels of academic self-efficacy can be acquired via an individual's direct experience or performance accomplishment, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion such as appraisals or feedback from others, and one's physiological and affective states. This study focused on verbal persuasion as the primary source influencing the development of goal-setting competencies and academic self-efficacy. More specifically, it assessed the extent to which an institutional resource, namely developmental advising and the feedback and guidance provided by developmental advisors supported students in these regards.

Bandura (1986) asserts that verbal persuasion is a motivating force in enabling individuals to believe that they possess the capacity required to master specific tasks and courses of action. In this light, he emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and feedback during skill and goal acquisition processes. Applying this framework to this context provided an opportunity to explore how essential academic cognitive skills and dispositions can be inculcated with the guidance provided by an institutional support service. This is particularly promising contextually because developmental students often experience a sense of academic powerlessness and doubt that they have the academic acuity required to succeed. Therefore, the feedback and guidance provided to developmental students can potentially aid with skill development, and increase students' chances of academic success and desire to commit to

completing their programs. Thus, this framework was useful for exploring whether the guidance and feedback provided via an institutional resource enabled positive academic outcomes.

This framework was particularly essential during the data collection and analysis processes. In order to capture a holistic view of the participants' experiences, they were required to detail the challenges they encountered adjusting to the post-secondary environment, particularly those affiliated with goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy. Participants were then invited to reflect on and detail their experiences with the developmental advising service, and any improvements they believe were attributable to their engagement with the service. Moreover, they were called on to explore how these experiences contributed to their academic performance and decisions to persist; they were also invited to explore how their future behaviors within the academic sphere will be influenced by feedback and guidance provided during the developmental advising process. Similarly, the developmental advisor participants were called on to explore and reflect on how they perceived their ability to provide feedback and guidance that motivated skill development, increased levels of academic self-efficacy, and promoted increased persistence. Overall, this framework was useful for demonstrating whether the feedback provided via an institutional resource can enable skill development and persistence. It was moreso relevant contextually because it aided with unearthing how student agency can be strengthened and reinforced via these institutional support services.

Description of the Study Site

The TTIOO is Trinidad and Tobago's sole national, publicly funded multi-campus community college that was established in the year 2000. The TTIOO was established by an Act of Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament (Act. No. 77 of 2000). It was born out of an amalgam of seven institutions that were previously responsible for providing vocational training and job

preparation programs in many areas. The TTIOO was established with the intent to contribute to national and regional development; provide programs that meet internationally acceptable standards; prepare the citizenry for professional development, particularly in the areas of science, technology, and applied arts; and promote sustainable personal development.

Currently, the TTIOO consists of one central campus located in one of the country's boroughs, and four satellite campuses strategically dispersed throughout both islands. The TTIOO offers approximately 141 degree, diploma, and certificate programs, and one developmental program.

The TTIOO's emergence was seen as an opportunity to expand access to higher education for a wider section of Trinidad and Tobago's population. Consequently, the TTIOO cites empowering non-traditional and developmental students to acquire the skills required to make meaningful contributions to the nation's economy as one of its primary functions. The TTIOO's website reports that to date 16, 026 students have graduated from the institution. However, data indicating how many students have been enrolled over time—both academically-prepared and developmental, and the overall retention rate is inaccessible to the public. This study centered on the developmental advising service that is provided as part of the TTIOO's developmental program.

The Qualitative Approach and Research Design

The qualitative research design informed this study's data collection and analysis processes. This design is described as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." (Seidman, 2012, p. 4). It is further defined as "...an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world." (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 520). As suggested in these descriptions, the core defining characteristics of the qualitative approach

include its focus on meaning making, use of the inductive process, ability to derive thick descriptive data, and emergent nature.

In addition to the above, the qualitative approach's emergent nature allows for the exploration of topics that are not initially considered by the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This outcome is possible because in most cases the data collection instruments allow participants the room to reveal their particular experiences and perceptions without the encumbrance of highly structured and standardized measuring instruments (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007; Kozleski, 2017). Contextually, these unanticipated responses were useful for prompting further exploration on other areas relative to the topic under study.

The characteristics embodied by the qualitative approach was essential to this study for several reasons. This approach was best suited for this study because I was desirous of applying interpretive techniques to collect data that was reflective of individuals' perspectives and experiences. Thus, the data collection instruments and analysis processes typically utilized with qualitative research enabled me to acquire in-depth understandings of the perceptions and experiences that the participants revealed. This approach enabled me to acquire the essence related to how students felt about developmental advising and its ability to promote the development of academic skillsets and increased persistence. Lastly, as a result of its emergent nature, this approach positioned me to identify areas requiring further exploration.

When using qualitative research, researchers should identify the ontological and epistemological paradigms that will guide their research process. In this context, constructivism served as the ontological paradigm, and phenomenology as the epistemological paradigm.

The Constructivist Ontological Position

Ontology addresses the concerns we have about the nature of reality and how human beings interact with their environments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rallis & Rossman, 2012). The constructivist paradigm is primarily used by social scientists seeking to understand multiple participant meanings, and how meaning is constructed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The constructivist worldview acknowledges that one universal or objective truth does not exist (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It also supports the view that human beings create their reality by virtue of their interactions with others and the environment. From this perspective, the knowledge that individuals believe to be true about the world is constructed and reinforced via interactive processes unfolding in specific social settings (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Constructivists therefore propose that knowledge is co-constructed by the viewer (researcher) and the viewed (participants) (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). They also uphold that individuals are driven to make sense of the world they inhabit and the experiences they navigate, and thus develop subjective meanings of their respective experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). Consequently, our reality and the knowledge we hold can be defined as a function of our interpretive processes, and the meanings we ascribe to our experiences.

Faced with the multiple divergent meanings participants often ascribe to their experiences, social constructivists seek to ascertain the complexity of these views versus striving to determine one universal or objective truth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). It is also noteworthy that shared constructs and meanings are situated in and affected by specific contexts inclusive of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnicity, age, gender—these factors influence individuals' perceptive processes and how they present themselves (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). By acknowledging and understanding the impacts of these varied contexts,

researchers can acquire an understanding of participants' historical and cultural settings, and gain insight into their perceptive processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Equally important is the ontological lens that researchers apply to frame their studies. Contextually, phenomenology was used, and it falls within the purview of the constructivist paradigm.

The Phenomenological Epistemological Paradigm

Epistemological assumptions question our ways of knowing, how knowledge is accessed, and what is taken as evidence or truth (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Therefore, epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. Phenomenology is the study of people's conscious experiences with their "everyday life and social action." (Schram, 2003, p. 71). Husserl (1965) notes that a phenomenological approach is best suited for studies seeking to explore the structures of consciousness related to a particular phenomenon. Therefore, this approach was best-suited to this study because of its focus on exploring the structure of consciousness related to participants' experiences with the phenomenon—the TTIOO's developmental advising service.

Lived experiences form the foundation for understanding phenomena (Seidman, 2012). From this perspective, phenomenological research is undertaken with the underlying view that an overarching essence exists regarding the shared experiences that individuals encounter with a particular phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, individual experiences are culminated to provide an essence of the experience related to a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This highlights one of the most prominent arguments regarding "how we know what we know" and is the main purpose of phenomenological studies. That is, from a phenomenological perspective knowledge about the world is acquired when we use sensory data provided by individuals to form rational views about the world as it relates to a particular phenomenon (Husserl, 1965).

It is noteworthy that phenomenological research is not directed at explaining the “hows” and “whys” associated with experiences, but rather on providing a holistic picture of the experience from the perspective of those interfacing with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Max van Manen, one of the world’s most reputed phenomenologists, “There is nothing unusually ‘rich,’ ‘deep,’ ‘hidden,’ or ‘mysterious’ about the living of lived experience—until we take up a phenomenological questioning—until we ask, ‘What is this (phenomenon) lived experience like?’” (van Manen, 2017, p. 811). Using this lens, I was positioned to enquire about “what were the lived experiences developmental students encountered with the TTIOO’s developmental advising service, particularly as they relate to skill development, academic self-efficacy, and persistence.” Identifying the essence of these experiences served as the basis for this study.

The phenomenological approach requires that researchers suspend all preconceived notions and assumptions about the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, it is essential that researchers utilizing this approach focus on the data as it unfolds within the study context, and the realities related to the phenomenon should be substantially supported (Moustakas, 1994). In this context, many of the studies reviewed about developmental students particularly within the community college context reveal that these students are underprepared for college-level academics by virtue of poor prior academic preparation and experiences, alongside other institutional, socioeconomic, and personal factors (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; O’Gara et al., 2009). In an attempt to support these students, many community colleges install a range of institutional support systems such as developmental advising. As the primary researcher, I would have engaged with students requiring developmental support within my prior professional capacity as a developmental advisor. However, in my quest to apply the phenomenological approach, I was required to suspend or bracket my previous experiences,

views, and assumptions in these regards. By taking this measure, I provided space for students' voices to be aired with regard to their experience with the service, and to moreover provide an essence of their experience from their perspective.

Further to the above, Moustakas (1994) cites the importance of intentionality as it relates to the process of classifying conscious acts and experiential mental practices. He defines intentionality as an individual's internal experience of being conscious of an event. Thus, collective consciousness regarding individuals' experiences with a particular event contributes to fundamental sources of contextual knowledge. Moreover, Moustakas notes that experiences and behavior are not discrete events, rather both are inseparable and co-exist via a subject/object relationship. Therefore, by applying the phenomenological approach to this study, I was positioned to understand how developmental advising influenced the experiences these participants negotiated and consequently the academic-related behaviors they engaged. More specifically, I was positioned to capture the essence of how developmental students accessing the support services provided by developmental advisors depict and ascribe meaning to these lived experiences. This essence was sought regarding the service's ability to enable the development of effective academic self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy, as well as increase students' desire to persist. To achieve these research goals, the following factors were considered during this phenomenological research process.

Identification of a Specific Phenomenon. The phenomenological research process begins with a researcher's focus on and intent to explore a particular phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). As noted by Moustakas (1994), this topic should be rooted in autobiographical meanings and values, and should involve social meanings and significance. Contextually, the phenomenological approach was suited for this study because of its focus on the phenomenon of the developmental advising service, in relation to developmental students. Moreover, it enabled me to explore the potential of this support service to prepare developmental students to harness effective academic skillsets and dispositions, and increase their desire to persist.

Exploration of the Phenomenon with a Specific Group. Phenomenological studies seek to explore a particular phenomenon or event within a group context (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, while individuals are required to provide accounts of their personal experiences with a particular phenomenon, these accounts are used to develop an overarching essence of the phenomenon under study. Moustakas does not identify a particular number of participants that should be recruited for any given study. In his book on phenomenological interviews Seidman (2012) recommends that researchers utilizing this approach should consider factors such as sufficiency and saturation when considering participant recruitment. Creswell and Creswell (2017) suggest that phenomenological studies should include at least 3-10 participants. Six student participants were recruited to participate in the three-series phenomenological interviews. These students were enrolled at the TTIOO, were defined as requiring remedial support, and would have accessed the developmental advising service multiple times.

Fluidity Between Subject/Object. As previously mentioned, one of the assumptions upheld by the phenomenological epistemology is that subject and object are not discrete entities, they are inseparable (Moustakas, 1994). Using this lens, I acknowledge that the

experiences as described by the developmental students are not separate and apart from the developmental advising service. Rather, these experiences were conceptualized as manifesting within the confines of the developmental advising phenomenon, and therefore each has an impact on the other.

Epoché and Researcher Bracketing. In many cases, researchers may have prior experiences with the phenomenon they are planning to study. Therefore, it is essential that they take steps to bracket themselves out of their studies. Husserl (1965) used the term “epoché” to refer to the steps taken by researchers to refrain from being judgmental with regard to the phenomenon under study. An epoché prepares researchers to be bias-free, and to objectively and accurately describe participants’ realities (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, via my positionality statement bracketed my experiences with and assumptions, about the developmental students and the developmental advising service. I also detailed how these experiences and assumptions can influence how I approached this study. Overall, in my attempt to remain mindful of these factors, I strived to be reflexive throughout the duration of this study. This was done to ensure that I was being objective and unbiased regarding the study at hand.

Interviews as the Primary Data Collection Tool. The interview is the primary means through which researchers can acquire the essence of a particular phenomenon or event (Husserl, 1965; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2012). As is generally known, interviews enable researchers to acquire in-depth insights about a phenomenon and understandings of others’ lived experiences in these regards (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Seidman, 2012). These factors are especially important as they relate to phenomenological research. In my quest to learn about how developmental students perceive and experience the developmental advising service, the semi-structured phenomenological interview was most appropriate. As recommended by Seidman (2012), participants were required to participate in three separate

interviews. These three-series interviews provided the depth required to understand the phenomenon and to unearth the essence of the participants' experiences.

Data Analysis and Establishing a Collective "Essence". As previously discussed, phenomenological studies typically explore a particular phenomenon or event within a group context (Moustakas, 1994). In this light, individual accounts are used to form a holistic understanding or essence of the topic under study. Therefore, as the primary researcher I individually analyzed each participant account before making comparisons across the interview data sets. By moving through the process of individual-to-group analysis, I was positioned to provide a holistic view and essence of how participants perceived and experienced the developmental advising service. Following this process, I strived to accurately depict the commonalities across all six participants.

Challenge Associated with Applying the Phenomenological Approach

When utilizing the phenomenological approach, researchers are expected to suspend/bracket all judgements, assumptions, and presuppositions about the topic under study (Husserl, 1965; Moustakas, 1994). By reiterating the importance of this measure, phenomenologists such as Husserl and Moustakas acknowledge that it is possible for these factors to influence the integrity of the data collection and analysis processes. Vagle (2018) also references this challenge and proposes that researchers using a phenomenological approach should utilize "bridling". As previously mentioned, bracketing focuses on researchers' ability to suspend judgements about the phenomena they study (Husserl, 1965). However, bridling is a process of "becoming much more familiar with one's judgements so they do not compromise one's openness to the phenomenon." (Vagle, 2018, p. 14). According to this perspective, bridling is also perceived as an active and iterative process, whereby attention is paid to understanding the phenomenon holistically.

Before and during my engagement with the data collection process, I acknowledged that it would have been difficult for me to altogether bracket my experience as a previous developmental advisor. I was also aware that my experiences and knowledge in these regards could have influenced how I approached the study. To mitigate this effect, I was intentional about being reflexive throughout the study by attending to both bracketing and bridling processes. That is, I directed attention to bracketing my judgements, assumptions, and presuppositions about the study. I also tuned in to my personal biases, and attempted to deepen my understanding of these personal biases and why they existed. All of these personal reflections were documented in my research journal. Lastly, I was intentional about giving students more opportunities to speak on their reality versus interjecting with my experience as a developmental advisor. It was necessary for me to resist any temptation to defend any aspect of the developmental advising service, and thus I strived to maintain a neutral and objective stance. Admittedly, this was challenging in some regards. However, by focusing on providing the space for the student participants to air their truths, I was more inclined to listen than to speak or disrupt their flow.

Justification for Combining the Phenomenological and Case Study Designs

It should be noted that this study was not a full phenomenological study. However, phenomenological tools were used within the case study design. As previously noted, phenomenology focuses on the structures of human consciousness, and the experiences that individuals negotiate within given contexts (Husserl, 1965; Rallis & Rossman, 2012; Schram, 2003). In particular, attention is paid to individuals' points of view, perceptions, and the overarching essence of experiences. Contextually, I was desirous of exploring these facets related to the TTIOO's developmental advising service. On the other hand, case studies emphasize the context of a study, moreso than the points of view, perceptions, and experiences

that individuals define (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). By using the case study design I was able to focus on the context under which the phenomenon unfolded. This design also allowed me the flexibility to recruit a wider breadth of participants, and to utilize other data collection methods in concert with the phenomenological interviews. To summarize, this study incorporated both approaches because I desired to explore the participants' lived experiences with developmental advising, and the essence of these experiences within the TTIOO's context.

The Case Study Design

The qualitative approach draws on multiple methods of inquiry inclusive of interviews, naturalistic observations, focus groups, and case studies. The case study design was used to inform this study's data collection process. The case study design is appropriate for studies seeking to respond to "how" or "why" questions, and for cases that include programs and people, versus events and processes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake 1995; Yin, 2009, 2013). Therefore, this approach was best suited for this study because it focused on an institutional service, and because it sought to respond to how and why questions relative to the participants' perceptions of, and experiences with the developmental advising service provided by the TTIOO. This design was also appropriate because the phenomenon that was explored occurred within a bounded and finite context.

Yin (2009, 2013) and Stake (1995) propose two distinct approaches for conducting case studies; Stake's approach was used in this context. Explained further, although Yin has not explicitly stated that he applies a positivist lens to inform his approach, this perspective is evident throughout his discussion on case studies. Positivism challenges the view that multiple realities exist, and suggests that there is one objective truth (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the positivist approach to data collection and analysis emphasizes adherence to concepts such as generalizability, objectivity, and validity (Guba, 1981;

LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Yin emphasizes these facets as core in the research and case study processes, and his attention to these facets is reflective of his positivistic stance.

In addition to the above, researchers adopting the positivistic worldview attempt to apply rules that govern the natural sciences (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Positivist researchers also support the view that reality is observable. Moreover, they uphold that if research is conducted with appropriate levels of procedural rigor, results can be obtained that can be used to predict outcomes if the study is replicated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Further to this, Yin (2009, 2013) does not distinguish between quantitative and qualitative case studies. He proposes that there are commonalities between both approaches, and that merits can be derived from using both approaches simultaneously. Overall, positivistic research aims to “create accurate descriptions of phenomena, devise valid explanations for observed processes, and increase the predictability of human life by identifying generalizable causal relationships among phenomena.” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 81). Yin attends to all of these facets in his discussion on the case study design.

On the other hand, Stake (1995) utilized the interpretivist/constructivist approach to frame his iteration of the case study design. The interpretivist worldview is often conflated with constructivism, and both focus on how knowledge is constructed via interactive processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This ontological standpoint is pervasive throughout Stake’s discussion on the case study approach, and he also explicitly notes that constructivism is the most appropriate ontological frame for the case study design.

Stake refers to the case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Moreover, a case is further described as “a specific, complex, functioning thing,” and as “an integrated system,” which “has a boundary and working parts.” (Stake, 1995, p. 2). Similarly,

Merriam and Tisdell define the case study as focusing on the complexity of a particular unit of analysis by noting that it is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system.”

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.37). Thus, from these definitions it is clear that one of the case study’s defining features is its focus on the unit of analysis being examined.

Stake (1995) identifies several core components of the case study—it is holistic (an interrelationship exists between phenomenon and context), empirical (the study should center on data collected on the field); interpretive (researcher-subject interactions), and empathic (reflects on participant’s experiences). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also identify similar components by noting that the case study is particularistic (it focuses on particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon); descriptive (it yields a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study); and heuristic (it illuminates the reader’s understanding of phenomenon under study). These factors inform how researchers should approach a case study by clearly outlining what researchers should attend to when using a case study design.

In consideration of the above, Stake (1995) focuses on meaning-making, understanding the perspectives of the case’s “actors”, and interpretation. He also notes that the most central role of the case study researcher is that of interpreter and gatherer of interpretations (Stake, 1995). Consequently, the aim of case study research is to construct a clear and sophisticated reality regarding the phenomenon under study (Stake, 1995). From this perspective, qualitative researchers using the case study approach are seen as responsible for collecting and interpreting data in a manner that highlights participants’ realities. Therefore, unlike Yin, Stake acknowledges that there is no one perspective or universal reality, and thus does not focus on generalizability. Rather he acknowledges that “there are multiple perspectives or views of the case that need to be represented, but there is no way to establish, beyond contention, the best view.” (Stake, 1995, p. 108). Moreover, when striving to achieve an understanding of these

divergent realities, it is essential that researchers acquire thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study, so as to develop in-depth understandings of same (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995).

The Case Study and its' Contextual Role

This study falls within the parameters of a case study because the unit of analysis is bounded, finite, and integrated. That is, the developmental students accessing the TTIOO's developmental advising service constitute a finite number of students at any given point. Moreover, the developmental advising service is also a bounded and finite system functioning within the context of the TTIOO. Therefore, the case relative to the TTIOO's developmental students accessing the developmental advising service can be defined as a specific, complex, and functioning entity.

Moreover, utilizing Stake's (1995) approach to the case study design was appropriate to this particular context for several reasons. The phenomenological epistemological paradigm was applied to this study. Additionally, the phenomenological worldview is situated within the constructivist school of thought. As previously discussed, Stake's (1995) approach to the case study design is framed using the constructivist worldview. Therefore, by using Stake's approach I was positioned to explore with the participants their similar or in some cases dissimilar realities relative to the TTIOO's developmental advising service. By doing so, I acknowledged that although there may be one overarching essence, multiple realities also exist and therefore one objective truth is not always possible. However, it was essential that I captured similarities so as to establish the overarching essence related to the topic under study. By adopting this approach, I was able to embrace the role of researcher as interpreter and gatherer of interpretations. Thus, I was able to identify and focus on the particularities of the TTIOO's developmental advising service and the developmental students accessing this service.

Participant Selection

In his discussion on participant selection, Stake reiterated that researchers should “have a connoisseur’s appetite for the best persons, places, and occasions.” (Stake, 1995, p. 56). Moreover, Creswell and Creswell (2017) assert that one of the overarching premises influencing qualitative research involves researchers purposefully selecting participants and/or sites that can enable them to respond to their research questions. Therefore, to ensure that the best students were selected to participate in this study, purposeful sampling also known as criterion sampling (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010) was the recruitment strategy.

Purposeful or criterion sampling is a non-probability sampling process whereby researchers decisively select participants on the basis that they possess particular characteristics, and can provide information-rich cases and relevant insights regarding the topic under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; LeCompte & Schensul 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, a typical sample (Patton, 2015, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of participants was selected whereby I was able to highlight what is typical, normal, and average regarding these students’ characteristics. It was imperative that I attended to these factors to ensure that I selected participants that possessed the required criteria, and moreover those who could have provided information-rich cases.

For this study, purposeful sampling was used as the recruitment method. Two groups of participants were invited to partake in this study—developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO, and developmental advisors employed at the TTIOO. The best student participants required for this study were those enrolled at the TTIOO, those who were defined as requiring remedial/developmental support, and those who would have accessed the developmental advising service. More specifically, preference was given to those students who engaged with the developmental advising service at least twice. This condition was necessary as I envisioned

that students with more exposure to the service would have been able to provide more depth relative to their experience with the service. To acquire insights into a range of experiences and perspectives, I preferred to have a healthy mix of students who were performing and under-performing relative to the TTIOO's prescribed 2.0 GPA average. While this was not spelled out as a recruitment condition, I employed the use of a Recruitment Survey (described in a subsequent section) to have an idea of the participants' academic performance. Age was also another important selection criteria, and all participants were required to be 18 years or older as per the human subject review (IRB) recommendation. The main criteria informing the selection of the developmental advisors was that they would have served in this capacity for at least one academic year.

With qualitative research, there is no set number of participants that should be interviewed; rather quantity is reliant on the questions being asked, the data being collected, and the resources required to facilitate the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). Creswell and Creswell (2017) also suggest that sample size is dependent on the qualitative design the researcher plans to utilize, and note that phenomenological studies typically involve between 3-10 participants. I recruited six students and two developmental advisors.

Gaining Access to the Site and Participants

When requesting access to participants and a study site, Stake (1995) notes that a formal request should be communicated to the necessary authorities. In this correspondence the researcher should express how and why the site was selected, and the purpose and scope of the study. Stake also notes that researchers should detail their intent to anonymize the content and data that is collected. Contextually, accessing the participants required for this study first involved initiating contact with the TTIOO's administrators. A formal request was sent via email

to the president of the college, and the director responsible for the TTIOO's developmental advising service. In this correspondence, I detailed the study's purpose and scope, and the descriptors that potential participants should possess. I also requested access to documentation that could have provided details on the developmental advising service. For example, the historical context, enrollment statistics, success ratings, challenges, and any other documentation that will be appropriate for me to review. Additionally, Stake suggests that plans for distributing the study should be detailed in correspondence requesting access to a site and/or participants. This was also addressed in the formal request.

In many cases, a study's participants are primarily accessible through the institutions with which they are affiliated (Seidman, 2012). Similarly, this study's participants are only accessible after I acquired the necessary permissions from the TTIOO. Therefore, once the necessary permissions were granted by director responsible for the developmental advising service, I requested that the director assign someone to serve as my institutional gatekeeper and to provide support in these regards. Once this was done, I worked with my assigned gatekeeper to have the recruitment letter emailed to students who were enrolled in the developmental program, specifically those who would have accessed the developmental advising service. In this letter I provided a brief description of myself, the study's purpose and scope, and the requirements for participating in the study. My contact information was also included so that potential participants could have contacted me directly to express interest in participating or to seek additional details. A similar approach was used to recruit the developmental advisors. The following table provides a summary of the participants who participated in the study:

Table 1

The Participants (Students and Developmental Advisors)

Name	Role in study	Age	Year of enrollment in the TTIOO's Developmental Education Programme
"Victoria"	Student	51	January, 2020
"Innocents"	Student	24	January, 2020
"Rebecca"	Student	25	September, 2019
"Sade"	Student	22	October, 2020
"Joyful"	Student	36	September, 2019
"Cassie"	Student	32	September, 2019
"Aniko"	Developmental Advisor	45	Employed during 2009 - 2012
"Khristal"	Developmental Advisor	38	Employed during 2012 - current

Once both groups of participants communicated their desire to participate, I forwarded formal correspondence to these individuals via email inviting them to partake in the study. Similar to the correspondence sent to the TTIOO's administrator, this email highlighted the study's purpose, scope, and distribution plans. I also highlighted my plans to anonymize the content and data that they provided. At this stage of the process, participants were also invited to reach out to me with any questions or concerns they wish to have addressed. In cases where questions were raised, I responded to these in a prompt manner via email, and I also addressed them during the first interview.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative research yields itself to a range of data collection methods. Regarding the case study design, both Stake (1995) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend the exclusive use of methods such as observations, interviews, and documentary analysis. For this study, three-

series phenomenological interviews, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis served as the data collection methods. As previously expressed, the phenomenological epistemological approach informed the processes engaged during this study. Therefore, in order to capture in-depth understandings and the essence of the participants' views and experiences, it is necessary to utilize a data collection approach that can move beyond the surface (Moustakas, 1994). This outcome was made possible via the primary use of three-series phenomenological and semi-structured interviews. However, where possible the interview data provided by the developmental advisors and documentary analysis was used to facilitate the data triangulation process. Lastly, a recruitment survey was used to gauge the student participants' academic performance and their perception of their performance prior to the interviews.

Three-series Phenomenological and Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews are one method through which researchers can acquire in-depth understandings of others' lived experiences, and insight into how and why participants interpret these experiences in particular ways (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Seidman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews include open-ended questions relevant to the study at hand—questions that enable the researcher to respond to their overarching research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Moreover, it is the primary data collection tool that should be used when engaging phenomenological research (Husserl, 1965; Moustakas, 1994). During this study both semi-structured and phenomenological interviews were used.

In his discussion on in-depth, phenomenological interviewing, Seidman (2012) notes that this approach to interviewing is a combination of life-history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing. To achieve this depth, the researcher is responsible for encouraging participants to go beyond surface responses to explore how their experiences relative to the

study are shaped by a range of factors and past experiences. The overarching goal according to Seidman, is encouraging participants to reconstruct their experiences relative to the topic under study. Via this process, the “will be” becomes the “is” and then the “was” (Seidman, 2012, p. 16). Contextually, I was positioned to explore “the past,” “the will be,” and “the is,” relative to the participants experience with the developmental advising service. That is, I was able to explore with participants how their past experiences influenced their engagement with the developmental advising service, their academic performance, skill competencies, and persistence goals. I was also able to motivate participants to move beyond the surface to explore how this service affected their present academic scenario, their future academic goals, and the meanings they ascribed to these facets and experiences.

Further to the above, Seidman (2012) proposes that phenomenological interviewing should be facilitated by conducting three separate interviews with each participant. By conducting three-series interviews, the researchers are better able to explore with participants their experiences, place these experiences in context, and reflect on their meaning. Therefore, according to Seidman, each interview has a specific role—the first establishes the context of the participants’ experience; the second provides an opportunity for participants to reconstruct the specifics of their experiences; the third encourages participants to reflect on the meanings of these experiences.

The above guidelines were instrumental regarding how I approached the phenomenological interviewing process, especially with the aim of acquiring in-depth data that was truly reflective of the student participants’ experiences. During the first interview I sought to become acquainted with the participants, their secondary and post-secondary educational background and experiences, and their general experiences with the developmental advising service. The second interview elaborated on areas discussed in the first interview. Therefore, I

provided the space for participants to discuss their specific experiences with the developmental advising service, specifically related to goal setting skills, academic self-efficacy, and persistence. The participants were also invited to share on other meaningful experiences they encountered with this service. For the last interview, participants were required to reflect on the experiences highlighted during the second interview, and discuss what these experiences meant to their present and future academic journey and success. They were also invited to broadly assess the effectiveness of the developmental advising service. In the case of the semi-structured interviews that were facilitated with the TTIOO's developmental advisors, emphasis was placed on inviting the participants to reflect on their experiences serving the developmental student population, particularly regarding the areas of goal setting skills, academic self-efficacy, and persistence. The request was also made for the developmental advisors to broadly assess the effectiveness of the developmental advising service.

In light of the above, two interview protocols were designed for this study. One interview protocol was designed to capture data from the student participants (see Appendix A), while the second protocol was used to acquire feedback from the developmental advisors (see Appendix B). Stake (1995) advises that where possible, researchers should conduct a pilot test of their interview questions. I facilitated two pilot tests before conducting the formal interviews—one with a past student, and one with a colleague. Via this process and the feedback acquired during the pilot testing phase, I revised two of the questions that were included on the student participants' interview protocol. This was necessary as both individuals seemed a bit confused about these questions, and demonstrated uncertainty regarding how they should have responded to these questions. With their guidance and input I rephrased these questions more appropriately.

Seidman (2012) advises that facilitating informal interactions/interviews prior to the formal interviews useful for engaging with potential participants to enlighten them about the purpose and scope of the study, respond to any concerns or questions participants pose, and identify potential dates and times for the formal interviews. Further, these informal interactions seek to establish familiarity and to allow both researcher and participant to gain some insight into each other's background. Before the formal interviews, informal contact interviews were facilitated via the Zoom virtual platform, on mutually agreeable days and times. Three participants agreed to participate in these sessions, as I expressed that they were not required as part of the data collection process. These sessions lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and I spent the time introducing myself and discussing the purpose of the study. The participants also shared details about themselves during these informal sessions. It is noteworthy that utilizing this virtual format for conducting the interviews became necessary because of travel restrictions due to COVID-19, and the closure of Trinidad and Tobago's borders.

As previously noted, both groups of interviews were conducted via the Zoom virtual platform. As recommended by Seidman (2012), the three-series phenomenological interviews that were facilitated with the student participants were spaced between three days to a week apart, with the majority being spaced one week apart. Seidman also recommends that these interviews should last approximately 90 minutes each. In this context, most of the interviews lasted closer to two hours. This extended timeframe primarily occurred because I did not wish to interrupt the participants while they were sharing, I did not want them to feel as though they were being limited to a specific time. As a matter of fact, I was grateful that they wanted to spend the time sharing about their experiences. I also felt that interjecting with time-related concerns could have curbed their willingness to share, especially during the second and third interviews. The traditional semi-structured were used with the developmental advisors,

whereby they were invited to participate in one interview. These interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each.

Permission was sought from participants to record these interviews using the Otter transcription software. In addition to these recordings, brief notes were taken during each interview. Immediately after each interview, I recorded my observations and reflections regarding each participants' verbal and nonverbal communication, and other ideas/concerns that surfaced during the interviews. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, post-interview. That is, I listened to the audio recordings of each interview, and ensured that the words recorded on the transcript were reflective of what was actually said. These transcripts were forwarded to participants at least three days after each interview. The participants were required to review these transcripts to ensure that they detailed what they meant to convey during the interviews. In some instances where areas of the transcript/interview were unclear, I followed-up with participants to seek clarity.

Documentary Analysis

Qualitative researchers can employ the use of documents as a data collection method (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Further, Stake (1995) notes that documents can serve as substitutes and records of activity that researchers would not have observed. Permission was sought from the TTIOO's administrators to review institutional documentation related to the developmental advising service. The documents I was allowed to review were at the discretion of administrative powers. I received six documents broadly concerned the TTIOO's developmental education program and they included: the proposal prepared to implement the developmental education program, a position paper detailing the purpose and scope of the developmental education program, a staff listing and a staff notice, a brochure on highlighting the developmental education program, and a report of the

developmental education program for the period 2009-2011. These documents all contained aspects specifically related to the developmental advising service. All documents were individually analyzed, and these analyses were used to assist with the triangulation process.

Recruitment Survey

As previously noted, I was unable to purposefully select students displaying differential levels of academic performance. However, a recruitment survey was used to assess the student participants' academic performance and their perception of their performance prior to the interviews (see Appendix C). This survey was useful for providing demographic data and served as a comparison point when analyzing the interviews. That is, it was useful for determining whether students displaying differential levels of academic performance possessed dissimilar views, and negotiate alternative experiences related to the developmental advising service. The survey was also instrumental in providing insight into how students perceived their academic performance.

Analysis and the Data Sources

Both groups of interviews and the documentary analysis provided three distinct perspectives and data sources. The students' interviews were instrumental for allowing me to respond to the research questions and concerns regarding their view of and experience with the developmental advising service provided by the TTIOO. These insights were valuable for exploring how well the program works, especially as it relates to promoting skill development and persistence. These interviews were also useful for highlighting areas that may require adjustments regarding how the service is facilitated. Overall, these phenomenological interviews positioned me to understand the essence of the participants' lived experiences in these regards. Similarly, the interviews conducted with the developmental advisors were also instrumental in providing insights, albeit from the advisors' perspectives. The documentary data was useful for

providing historical context about developmental advising as it relates to the TTIOO, how the service developed overtime, and the successes and challenges negotiated over the years. It provided institutional context versus that provided by the students and advisors. Although the phenomenological interviews served as the primary data collection tool, all three data sources allowed me to facilitate the data triangulation and cross-referencing processes. Moreover, they were all useful in assisting me with addressing concerns aligned with data trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

In the following sections I detail the process I employed while organizing and analyzing the data collected. These include the measures that were taken to transcribe and catalogue the data; an outline of my pre-analysis process; and the steps that were taken to facilitate the coding and theme generation process.

Transcribing and Cataloguing the Data

As previously noted, the interviews were recorded and transcribed by using the Otter software. To ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, I listened to the audio recordings while simultaneously reading the transcripts and correcting any errors that I encountered. Once the transcripts were complete, I member-checked by forwarding a copy of the interview transcripts to respective participants for them to confirm that what was recorded was reflective of what they meant to convey.

In addition to the above, one of the precursors to the data analysis process involves cataloguing the data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Ely et al., 2003; Mills, 2018; Saldana, 2013). In this study, the data sources included two groups of interview recordings/transcripts and the documents provided by the TTIOO's administrators. These datasets were catalogued by using a numbering process, whereby altogether 20 interview transcripts and six documents were catalogued.

Pre-Analysis and the In-Process Memo

Data analysis is defined as “a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations.” (Stake, 1995, p. 71). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe the process as recursive and dynamic, and note that it involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the data collected to facilitate meaning-making. They borrow Flick’s definition of data analysis who describes it as “the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it.” (Flick, 2014, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 195). Further, rather than viewing data collection and analysis as discrete processes, both should be conducted simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2012; Stake, 1995). Therefore, during the data collection process researchers should begin the process of analyzing the data versus primarily engaging the analysis process when all of the required data has been collected. However, Seidman (2012) cautions that in-depth analysis of the interview data should be conducted after all interviews have been completed. Moreover, data sources should be assessed individually, before comparisons are made across all sources (Saldana, 2013; Seidman, 2012).

In keeping with the above guidelines, while facilitating the data collection process, I utilized an in-process memo to record my initial thoughts and analyses before beginning the coding and theming processes. In-process memos allow researchers to make initial connections between the data and a study’s theoretical framework and guiding literature; detail perspectives or ideas that arise during the data collection process; and record their initial feelings, reactions, hunches, interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Overall, these memos are useful for providing insight and direction as the study unfolds,

exploring possible connections between varied events and/or processes, and developing new perspectives (Emerson et al., 2011).

Specific reflections that researchers should address when developing analytical memos include: how the researcher relates to their study's participants and the phenomenon being studied; the study's research questions; the potential codes and operational definitions; emergent patterns, themes, assertions, and possible linkages among them; issues with the study; and future directions for the study (Saldana, 2013). I attended to all of these areas in my in-process memo. I noted my observations of the participants during the interviews. For example, when they hesitated or appeared challenged to respond to a question, versus when they were really excited about a particular aspect of the interview. In this in-process memo I also jotted my initial thoughts about potential themes and patterns as I engaged with the participants and the documents. I was also intentional about recording my thoughts about the student participants, especially in relation to my past experience as a developmental advisor—it was important for me to do this in an attempt to not override or influence the study in any way by virtue of my past experiences. This helped me to stay on track with what the participants voiced, versus my past experiences. During my interactions with the participants I also noted areas that could be developed into a future study as a result of their responses. Throughout the actual data analysis process I constantly revisited this memo to identify those areas that remained constant and those that changed over time. I also used it to assist me with clearly fleshing out the links among the themes. Overall, I used this reflexive memo to detail my thoughts and insights as I interacted with the participants and the documents I reviewed. I acknowledge that some of my initial views shifted throughout the analysis process. However, it was important that I recorded them.

Coding the Data: Open and Focused Coding

Searching for meanings requires researchers to establish “correspondence” and “patterns” among data sources (Stake, 1995). Therefore, by generating codes and themes researchers are able to establish correspondence and meaning, and the patterns these details adopt. A code is a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). Codes are used to assist researchers with developing coherent themes emerging from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). To initiate the process of developing codes and themes for this study, I read and reread (Seidman, 2012) the data transcripts and the documents provided to have a clear understanding of the data, prior to beginning the coding process. In total, I read each transcript a total of 4-5 times. In some cases, I also replayed the audio recordings in an attempt to recall the context of a particular aspect of an interview. These measures were necessary for ensuring that I understood the data being reviewed, and that the codes and meanings were relevant and contextual.

Data can be coded using two distinct approaches—open coding and focused/axial coding (Emerson et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2013). Open coding refers to where researchers develop initial codes by identifying words and phrases that reflect specific analytic dimensions and categories (Emerson et al., 2011). The open coding process enables researchers to identify recurring themes that can potentially respond to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). On the other hand, focused coding entails the deliberate line-by-line analysis of selected data or fieldnotes that correspond to the research topic and questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This intricate process requires researchers to narrow down the wide array of codes they identify during the open-coding process. By using focused coding,

researchers are positioned to develop themes emerging from the data and to identify the relationships that exist among these themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2013).

In addition to the above, in order to arrive at general codes and themes, and the essence ascribed to a lived experience, individual experiences should be analyzed and bracketed before comparisons are made across the data sources (Moustakas, 1994). As a result of this and the aforementioned processes, researchers are able to develop analytical themes that shed light on the data collected in response to the research questions. This process is also necessary for connecting the data to the theoretical frameworks guiding the research and the literature that has been reviewed in the study's context.

Both open and focused coding were utilized to support this study's data analysis process. Each interview transcript and document were individually coded before comparisons were made across all datasets. I saved each transcript as a separate Word document, therefore I was able to make comments and highlight specific areas as necessary while I read. During the open-coding stage, I identified words and phrases that referred to specific ideas, with the intent to later develop recurring themes. For example, some of my codes included unawareness, shame, ownership, and strengths. These were later used to develop applicable themes later on in the analysis process. Seidman (2012) recommends that when coding, researchers should highlight those areas of interest they encounter while reviewing transcripts, especially as they relate to the study's context. Similarly, Moustakas (1994) notes the importance of identifying significant statements from the interview data that could be used for formulating codes and themes, and for serving as sources of evidence related to the participants' experiences.

Therefore, I was intentional about utilizing some of the participants' direct words and phrases to define some of the themes that were developed later in the process. I also identified excerpts that were later used to support some of the findings. To further organize and manage my coding

process, I generally attempted to use similar codes across datasets where possible. I also used a color-coding system so that I could have readily identified and grouped similar codes. To identify the essence related to each research question, attention was paid to whether codes occurred multiple times within one dataset and across all datasets.

Focused coping was utilized to narrow down the wide array of codes identified during the open-coding process. This allowed me to generate appropriate themes that addressed the research questions, provide an overarching essence of the participants' experiences, and make collective sense of the data. During this stage I also highlighted specific aspects of the transcripts that relate to particular research questions. By engaging this step I was positioned to identify and include specific accounts and reference points as provided by the participants when completing the analysis and discussion sections.

Theme Generation: Categorical Aggregation and Direct Interpretation

Once the coding was completed, I commenced the third phase of the analysis process. Stake (1995) outlines two approaches for analyzing data—Categorical Aggregation and Direct Interpretation. Categorical aggregation refers to a process of analysis whereby data is clustered into categories or themes, with the intent to shed light on the meanings participants ascribe to their experiences regarding the topic under study. Multiple data sources are analyzed to develop these overarching categories or themes. On the other hand, direct interpretation refers to a process of data analysis where researchers draw inferences from single instances versus establishing repetitions across the case or data sources. Stake notes that both approaches are sometimes used simultaneously in one study.

Categorical aggregation was primarily used for this study. By utilizing categorical aggregation, I was able to establish common themes across the data sources, and therefore the essence of participants' experiences. However, there were some instances where direct

interpretation was also used. For example, in instances where there were singular cases that revealed divergent perspectives. Even though phenomenological studies focus on the overarching essence expressed by participants, it was important that I honored divergent perspectives as well. By doing so I acknowledged that one overarching reality does not always exist. In these scenarios, I also dedicated the time to explore with participants why they may have had an alternative experience or perspective. By using categorical aggregation, I was also able to identify areas that fell beyond this study's purview, and those areas that can be later explored to chart a path for developing this study in the future.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Researchers are required to demonstrate that the results and analyses derived from their research endeavors are trustworthy. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is concerned with the rigor of the data collection and analysis processes, and therefore the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the data derived as result of these processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Moreover, compared to quantitative research, factors aligned with reliability, validity, and generalizability are conceptualized and addressed differently in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). That is, as noted by Guba and Lincoln (2001), these parallel criteria are defined as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These factors can be addressed using various means, particularly data triangulation.

Data triangulation typically refers to the use of multiple data sources as a measure of data verification, during the analysis process (Mills, 2018). Stake (1995) identified four types of triangulation inclusive of data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Data source triangulation was used in this context. This scope of triangulation is described as "an effort to see if what we are observing

and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances.” (Stake, 1995, p. 113). Therefore, through data source triangulation, researchers can identify similarities and differences regarding the data derived from the multiple data sources in a given research context.

In this study, triangulation was facilitated among the three data sources—both sets of interviews and the documentary analysis. Phenomenological studies typically focus on the interviews as the main source of data. However, this study is a phenomenological case study, and other data sources were included. Therefore, by utilizing data source triangulation, I was able to cross-reference the findings to ensure that (as much as possible) they were reflected across data sources. This verification process was one means of ensuring that the findings were accurate, consistent, and reflective of the participants’ realities and perspectives. Therefore, it enabled me to address concerns aligned with trustworthiness and to ensure consistency across the data sources. To engage the triangulation process, I developed a Triangulation Data Analysis Matrix (see Appendix D) as suggested by Mills (2018). This document enabled me to ascertain how the data collected and the consequent themes could be triangulated. In this light, the matrix also served as a guide for me to ensure that the raw data being selected to support the themes were relevant and contextual. Overall, by using all three data sources, I was able to derive a holistic and balanced view of the topic under study, and thereby the overarching essence. However, I also acknowledged divergences or “negative” cases (Guba & Lincoln, 2001) as well.

As previously mentioned, the triangulation process informed how I addressed some concerns regarding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. However, I also undertook additional steps to address each of these areas.

Credibility

According to Guba (1981), researchers should be mindful of the complexities they encounter on the field, the believability of the findings, and how well findings reflect reality. Therefore, credibility (also known as believability or internal validity) addresses the question of the extent to which research findings are reflective of reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is also referred to as the “truth value” of the data and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). Credibility can be achieved with the use of triangulation (previously discussed), member-checks, the detailing of a researcher’s positionality/reflexivity, prolonged engagement with the data collection process, and peer reviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Attention should also be paid to unearthing contrary explanations or those negative cases that are not patterned after the normal responses in a particular research context (Guba (1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1988).

With this study, multiple steps were taken to ensure credibility—data source triangulation, member-checks, the detailing of my researcher positionality or epoché, prolonged engagement with the data collection process, and peer reviews. The triangulation process was employed as the three sources of data (two groups of interviews and documentary analysis) were cross-referenced to ensure that as much as possible my interpretations of the data were indeed reflective of the participants’ realities. Member-checking was also facilitated to ensure that my interpretations of the interview responses were reflective of the participants’ perspectives. Therefore, all participants were asked to review their respective interview transcripts to confirm the accuracy of what was recorded. I also member-checked with administrators to ensure that my interpretation of the documents reviewed reflected (as much as possible) what was intended by the author/s.

Six student participants were recruited. Data saturation occurred because most of the participants shared similar details, and at the time of the sixth participant's interview, no new data was forthcoming. Therefore, I was not required to recruit additional student participants. This step also ensured my prolonged engagement with the data collection process. The peer review process was facilitated via the feedback provided by my dissertation committee, and colleagues who reviewed my data and analyses. Additionally, attention was not only paid to responses that were consistent with the overarching perspectives. Rather, I also highlighted explanations and negative cases that departed from the norm in this context.

Lastly, practicing reflexivity is an important part of establishing credibility. In phenomenological research, the term *epoché* is used to describe the reflexive process researchers should engage when detailing their personal experiences with the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994). Engaging this practice requires researchers to attend to questions centering on their past experiences, and how these experiences may shape their interpretations of what is being observed or the data collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As discussed previously, I strived to be reflexive, and consistently recorded my thoughts throughout the analysis process, especially those related to my experience as a past developmental advisor and thus my experiences with developmental students. As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) I clarified my position, assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation relative to the study at hand. As recommended by Vagle (2018), I also attempted to engage the process of bridling by becoming familiar with my biases related to the study, and understanding why these biases existed. Lastly, I strived to be mindful of how positionality factors such as my experiences, race, gender, social and educational background influenced how I approached the research process. In this light, I made the conscious

commitment to be attentive to potential power dynamics and “do research with people, not on people.” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 64).

Transferability

In qualitative research, the term “transferability” (also known as external validity) is used as an alternative to generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Guba, 1981). Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings from one study can be applied to other studies or contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Guba (1981) notes that transferability refers to researchers’ beliefs that their qualitative studies are context bound. Therefore, qualitative researchers are not primarily focused on developing “truth” positions or establishing generalizability. Consequently, they are not concerned with the extent to which findings from one study can be applied to another context. However, researchers should focus their efforts on collecting thick and detailed descriptions that can permit comparisons with other contexts.

One of the foremost means for addressing transferability concerns is via the use of thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Guba, 1981). A thick description is a “highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting and in particular the findings of a study.” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 256). Thick descriptions also typically describe a study’s participants and provide detailed descriptions of the findings and evidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As noted by Guba and Lincoln (2001), thick descriptions should provide readers with a vicarious experience related to the study being reviewed. They also allow other researchers and/or practitioners to make assessments regarding the “fittingness” of a particular qualitative study to their/other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1988; Guba, 1981). During this study, I attempted to develop thick descriptions of the participants, the interview process, and the data collected. During the process of developing the findings and discussion section, I included excerpts and quotes that served as evidence in support of some of the findings. However, I did not physically observe the site,

therefore it was challenging for me to provide thick descriptions in these regards. Overall, these measures were useful for enhancing the study's richness. To some extent they will also provide readers with a vicarious experience, and enable other researchers to ascertain fittingness between my study and theirs, or another research context.

In addition to thick descriptions, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also note that transferability can be enhanced when researchers carefully attend to the participant selection process. They therefore recommend that maximum variation in the sample should be sought—however, the decision to select this approach is dependent on the type of study being conducted. While purposeful maximum variation was not achievable at this point, as previously discussed careful attention was paid to the participant selection process.

Dependability

Dependability (also known as qualitative research reliability and consistency) is another measure that is used to increase trustworthiness in qualitative studies. Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time (Guba, 1981). That is, dependability is the extent to which a study can be replicated and yield the same results each time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that given the difficulty associated with replicating a qualitative study, the essential concern should be ascertaining whether the results are consistent with the data collected. As noted by Guba (1981), researchers can establish dependability by employing the use of audit trails. Additional measures include triangulation, peer examination, and a researcher's clear understanding of his/her positionality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As previously mentioned, triangulation, peer reviews, and detailing my positionality as researcher were facilitated. Audit trails were also used in this context to address dependability concerns. Developing audit trails requires that researchers take the time to carefully reflect on

and detail the processes they engage during data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes (Guba, 1981; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills, 2018). Audit trails also describe in detail how categories are established and how researchers make decisions during the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, Guba (1981) recommends that researchers should arrange for dependability audits to be conducted by competent external auditors, whose role would involve focusing on the “process” facilitated during the inquiry. In this research context, I carefully documented my processes at each stage of the research process, described the “hows” and “whys” behind the categories that I proposed, and highlighted the reasons for the decisions made during each process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is also deemed important for fueling a qualitative study’s trustworthiness. Guba (1981) notes that confirmability addresses the need for researchers to be neutral and objective during the research process—particularly regarding the data collection and analysis processes. Guba and Lincoln (2001) state that confirmability seeks to determine the extent to which interpretations, assertions, and facts can be traced to their original data sources. That is, the extent to which evidence exists to support a researcher’s interpretations, assertions, and facts. As detailed by Guba, researchers can establish confirmability via triangulation, audit trails, confirmability audits, and by detailing their positionality. All of these measures have been discussed, with the exception of the confirmability audit. Similar to the dependability audit trail, Guba recommends that qualitative researchers should arrange for an external agent to complete a confirmability audit trail with the intent to certify that there is data that supports the interpretations that the researcher has made, and to ascertain that the interpretations have been made in a manner that is consistent with the available data. For the

purpose of this study, confirmability was established via triangulation, audit trails, and by attending to my positionality as researcher.

Overall, by attending to the data triangulation process, member-checks, audit trails, and by detailing my researcher positionality, I was positioned to address trustworthiness concerns related to the study. To some extent, these factors also influenced how I addressed the study's ethical concerns.

Ethical Considerations

While conducting this study, I attended to several ethical factors and ensured that concerns related to the participants and their well-being were prioritized. The ethical considerations that were addressed included acquiring the relevant permissions from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and informed consent from participants. Other ethical concerns I addressed include factors associated with participant protection and potential risks, participants' rights and benefits, data confidentiality, and plans for dissemination.

Acquiring IRB Authorization and Informed Consent

Before beginning the research process, it is imperative that researchers acquire the necessary permissions for conducting a study from the relevant IRB authorities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). Therefore, before beginning the data collection process, I acquired clearance to do so from the University of Missouri's IRB Board. As outlined by Seidman (2012) and others, my IRB application detailed how factors inclusive of informed consent, participant protection and rights, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality of records, and plans for dissemination would be addressed. The TTIOO does not have an IRB. However, in these scenarios "researchers must be sensitive to local cultural expectations of what is ethical." (Cleary, 2005, as cited in Seidman, 2012, p. 63). As a member of the

Trinbagonian population, I believed that I possessed a clear understanding of the ethics and morals that are valued by citizens inhabiting this space.

After gaining IRB clearance, I began the process of acquiring the necessary permissions from the TTIOO's president and the director responsible for the developmental advising service. As previously discussed, in my correspondence to these personnel, I detailed the purpose and scope of the study, my reasons for selecting the study site, a description of the participants I wished to recruit, and my plans for dissemination. I also followed a similar approach when I requested the documents that were analyzed.

Once permission was granted to access the participants and documents related to the developmental advising service, I then proceeded with sending the letter inviting both groups of participants to participate in the study. Once students and staff expressed their interest in participating, they were provided with the requisite details and guidelines. One of the foremost requirements at this stage was acquiring their informed consent.

When acquiring informed consent researchers address factors such as the steps that will be taken to maintain participants' protection, ensure the confidentiality of records/data, minimize potential risks, prioritize participant's rights, outline possible benefits, and highlight plans for dissemination (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). I designed an informed consent document addressed all of these areas. The first part of this document entailed an invitation to participate. Seidman (2012) notes that this invitation should detail what the participants are being invited to participate in, to what extent, how, how long, and for whom. These areas were clearly outlined for the potential participants to ensure that they understood the scope and purpose of the study, their rights as participants, possible benefits and/or risks, the dissemination process, and their rights to privacy and to withdraw whenever they saw fit. As recommended by Seidman (2012), these details were articulated in

language that was free of academic and/or technical jargon, and was written using standard English.

Participant Protection, Rights, and Benefits

Participants should be informed of their rights relative to the research context. That is, they are entitled to voluntary participation, and have the right to withdraw at any point of the process along with any details they provide (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). Participants should also be accorded privacy, and the right to request anonymous identities (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). These factors were highlighted on the informed consent document and during my discussions with participants.

Moreover, to protect participants' (students, staff, and the institution) identities, the raw data was not shared with anyone. All records were de-identified and appropriately stored on my personal computer. Additionally, participants' names and other personal identifiers were not included in this document or those that will be prepared for publication. Rather, pseudonyms chosen by the participants were used where necessary. The institutional documents were also de-identified.

Further to the above, factors aligned with participants' protection from harm and deception should be carefully considered in advance, although researchers should also address these issues as they arise on the field (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). The Belmont Principles specifically state that research participants must be treated with respect, that researchers should maximize the benefits and reduce risks afforded to participants, and that participants should be treated fairly throughout the research process (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Seidman, 2012). In this context, I am not aware that any of the participants incurred any psychological harm during the process. Rather, based on their

feedback and their engagement with the process, I believe that they saw this as an opportunity to share their insights about a service—insights that can be used to improve the outcomes and experiences that they and other students negotiate at the TTIOO in the future. However, participants were duly advised that if they experienced discomfort or vulnerability, that they had the option of discontinuing the interviewing process.

As previously discussed, and as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017), I took steps to be reflexive and to ensure that power dynamics did not (as much as possible) affect the research process. To this end, I strived to ensure that participants were treated with respect by taking the necessary steps to demonstrate that I valued their perspectives and contextual needs. For example, among other things, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell I enquired about participants' cultural, religious, gender, and other personal characteristics that they wanted me to acknowledge during our interactions. Additionally, to ensure that the door is always open for communication, Seidman (2012) recommends that participants should be provided with the researcher's contact details so that the researcher can be contacted before, during, and after the scheduled interviews. These details were also included on the informed consent document, and I assured participants that I would be accessible whenever the need arose, even post-interviews.

Data Release Authorization and Plans for Dissemination

Seidman (2012) emphasizes that the data collected is jointly owned by both the participants and the researcher. Therefore, researchers are required to acquire an explicit release from participants granting permission for the data to be used. In this light, participants should have a clear idea of how the data they provide will be used and how the study would be disseminated (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2012). In this context, the data was used primarily for preparing this dissertation. However, post-dissertation,

aspects may be used to prepare journal publications or conference presentations. Thus, the participants were advised of these plans as it relates to the potential use of the data.

Token of Appreciation

As a form of gratitude for their participation and for contributing to a study, researchers can provide participants with some form of remuneration or a token of appreciation (Seidman, 2012). All participants were given a token in the form of an Amazon gift card worth twenty-five dollars each. The participants were advised that this token was not meant to coerce participation, but rather it was an expression of my gratitude for their gracious participation.

Ethics and Data Analysis

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, there are also other considerations that researchers should address in order to maintain the integrity of the research process. For example, researchers should avoid falsifying the data or findings, and should not disregard any negative cases they encounter (Stake, 1995). Moreover, perspectives that are contrary to the researcher's views should not be ignored (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Overall, these factors were addressed via the steps taken to attend to concerns aligned with credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Positionality Statement

I approached this study primarily as a researcher. However, I also bear the identity of a past Trinbagonian secondary and post-secondary student who was in some way defined as less-academically able. Moreover, part of my identity is also influenced by my former professional role as a developmental advisor and adjunct faculty at the TTIOO. I was aware that these experiences could have potentially influenced how I approached this study. Hence it was important for me to document these experiences and potential ways through which they could have influenced how I approached this study.

My first direct experience with, and recollection of the classist and elitist side of the education enterprise occurred when I was 12 years old. When I sat the examination that allowed me to transition from primary to secondary school, despite my best efforts I was placed in one of the less-affluent government funded schools. This experience initiated my understanding of the dynamics related to “bright student” versus those defined as “dunce” or “low ability”. I remember family members and friends being courteous, but not ecstatic about me being assigned to this school. I took this to mean that I was designated for some type of failure, and thus my academic performance during my first three years of secondary school was minimal at best. Ability aside, I understand now that this experience reified the classist and elitist structure of some education systems. I also understand how these experiences can inform one’s academic trajectory. Moreover, I realized that I internalized this experience on a profound level, hence one of my underlying reasons for wanting to support students who would have encountered similar experiences.

Luckily, despite my enrollment at this institution, I managed to acquire five CSEC subjects inclusive of math and English. Thereafter, I completed a host of post-secondary certificate programs before completing my undergraduate and graduate studies at the nation’s most prestigious university. As a result of these experiences, I view myself as lucky because to some extent I felt that I had escaped some of the stigma and outcomes that usually apply to those attending less-affluent secondary schools. However, at some deep level, I am always concerned about those that do not make it out—those who feel as though hope has been lost, and those who no longer see education as attainable or within their reach. These experiences and my unresolved feelings deeply influenced my post-secondary education focus and career path. As a result of these experiences, I may be motivated to openly identify with the participants during the data collection process. However, I also acknowledge that the intent

behind this study is to acquire an understanding of their perspectives and experiences, versus infusing mine into the dialogue.

It is easy to take for granted the experiences and challenges that developmental students encounter. It is easy to assume that once an individual has been granted access to a post-secondary institution they are capable of thriving and persisting. This is not always the case, even when a student is described as being academically-able. It is noteworthy that I am a first-generation student, and I am the first to graduate from university on both sides of my family. As a result, even though I was enrolled at university, I remember coming to the stark reality in my second year that I did not understand what a GPA was, and how this could influence my academic standing. I was ashamed to ask my friends, and I definitely could not seek support from family who never before attended university. I had to figure this out on my own. Imagine then a student who is not suitably prepared to engage post-secondary academic life— how do they make it, how do they thrive, where do they find support? These are questions I am always concerned about. Hence my decision to seek a professional helping role as a developmental advisor.

I have been fortunate to wear two hats simultaneously—adjunct faculty and developmental advisor. As an adjunct faculty I was positioned to observe how developmental and non-developmental students fared within the classroom. In many cases the developmental students progressed well. However, there were also many cases where it seemed like they were the proverbial fish out of water and did not know how to begin to process or engage this post-secondary experience. As a developmental advisor, I would meet with some of these students regularly. I would observe their behavior from the background by monitoring their grades, course completion history, and enrollment patterns. Additionally, once again I observed the cruelties that can surface within an educational context. That is, I have heard students express

that they were ashamed to be in a developmental program because of the stigma attached to these types of programs. I have heard lecturers express that they preferred not to teach developmental students. I have seen developmental students be rejected by the program they wished to pursue. These factors increased my resolve to support these students as no one, academically-able or otherwise should be treated in these ways. I believe that once provided with support these students can indeed thrive and persist.

During my time as a developmental advisor, I always wondered if I was doing justice to the purpose of developmental advising. While some students openly expressed that the service was helpful, I never solicited deep explanations about the “hows” and “in what ways” influencing these sentiments. Therefore, after providing this service for over five years I still question whether or not I did a good enough job, and often think about what should have been done differently. These concerns do not discount the fact that students have a role to play in their progress, but I was enshrined with the responsibility to support them to thrive and persist.

As a result of these experiences, I acknowledged that during the data collection and analysis processes I may have felt the urge to defend what I did professionally, even though I would not have been engaging with students I previously served five years ago. I also considered that I would have been cognitively enticed to prove/disprove, or confirm/refute aspects of my past experiences during my interactions with participants and during data analysis. However, I needed to hear the voices of the students in these regards, I needed to capture the essence of their experiences. My desire to fulfill this need in and of itself enabled me to attend to what my participants were saying versus focusing on my past experiences. I resolved to talk less and listen more so as to provide my participants with the space to detail their lived experiences in these regards.

My career interest involves contributing to the development of institutional policy and practice directed at supporting students along their post-secondary academic journey, specifically within the community college context. The idea for this study was thus born out of my in-depth interest in student support systems and the role they play in enhancing student experiences, persistence, and academic success. Given that a perfect system of support is unrealistic, I am invested in working toward enhancing these areas as part of my professional responsibility and my self-assigned goal to do the best to support the students that I serve. In this light, I hope to use the insights acquired from this study to inform some aspects of how I support students in the future. I also hope these insights can assist with developing culture-specific student support and retention policies and practice. Therefore, I acknowledged the need to prioritize the integrity of the research process, I approached this study as neutral and objective as humanly possible.

Research Limitations

Several limitations have been identified regarding this study. One of the foremost limitations is associated with the fact that the majority of the analysis for this study centered on the data that was collected via the phenomenological interviews. That is, because the data collection process was primarily facilitated using virtual means, it was not possible to observe the actual space where the developmental advising service is facilitated. This made it difficult to provide specific details and a thick description of this space. This limitation could not be circumvented because I resided in the United States during the data collection process. As previously mentioned, this was due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While phenomenological studies typically rely on interviews as the primary data collection tool, it would have been insightful to observe how developmental students engaged the developmental advising process, and interacted with the developmental advisor. These observations would have also been useful

for providing a depiction of the physical context in which the service unfolds. Observations could have potentially provided some insights and data relative to the developmental advising service that may not be captured via the interviews or documentary analysis.

The inability to conduct in-person interviews also presented another limitation. Although numerous studies and interviews that have been conducted using virtual means, experts in the field of qualitative research highlight the virtues of conducting in-person interviews. That is, when conducting interviews, researchers are encouraged to attend to what is being said, as well as the non-verbal language that participants engage. When qualitative researchers are able to share the same physical space with participants, they are better positioned to attend to these facets. However, as a result of my inability to conduct in-person interviews, I was somewhat challenged to attend to the nuances related to participants' non-verbal language when using the Zoom platform—especially in cases where participants opted not to use the Zoom camera feature. It is possible that by attending to these non-verbal aspects in-person, I would have been positioned to enquire about why particular non-verbal responses were forthcoming. Such inquiries could have provided opportunities for me to explore these expressions in relation to the question/s being discussed, or to determine if the participants were experiencing any discomforts.

The third limitation is associated with the student participant sample. Developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO who would have accessed the developmental advising service at least twice were selected to participate. I desired to have a mix of students who were performing and under-performing so as to determine whether there were differences in perspectives and experiences in these regards. However, with this particular study it was beyond my purview to use grades as a prerequisite to inform participant selection. Therefore, I was unable to purposefully select students who were performing and under-performing relative

to the TTIOO's prescribed Good Standing of at least a 2.0 GPA average. Alternatively, I used a recruitment survey to acquire a sense of students' academic performance. As reflected in the recruitment surveys, all of the participants were in good academic standing with GPAs above the prescribed 2.0 average. This limitation rendered me incapable of acquiring insights from students experiencing a divergent range of academic performance. It is likely that students' academic performance could have an impact on their views of the developmental advising service and their engagement with same. It is also likely that there would be no differences in this regard. However, this would have to be ascertained in a future study. Another aspect of this limitation is that this study focused on the developmental student population. Therefore, it is possible that college-level students may/may not have similar experiences. Again, this would have to be ascertained in a future study.

The fourth limitation is also concerned with the student participant sample. It surrounds the fact that all of the study's participants were females. It would have been instructive to have males participate in this process as well. However, there was no way for me to achieve this goal because no males responded to the invitation to participate. As previously mentioned, findings derived from multiple studies reveal that compared to their female peers, college males are less-likely to access student support services that focus on mental health and psychosocial facets. Therefore, rather than enlisting help-seeking behaviors or accessing support systems that can positively impact their academic outcomes, males are more likely to engage self-reliance practices as a means to assert their need for dominance and control. From the male perspective, seeking support is often perceived as a sign of weakness, and displays of weakness and vulnerability run contrary to popular patriarchal ideologies regarding what masculinity entails. Against this backdrop, although many developmental male students enrolled at the TTIOO accessed the developmental advising service, it is possible that they did not wish to be open

about the fact that they accessed the developmental advising service, and moreso to participate in a study exploring their experiences in this regard. It is probable that their inhibitions about participating in this study centered around their unwillingness to highlight their academic shortcomings and to concede that they were in fact utilizing institutional support services to aid them with achieving their academic goals. It is also likely that my female gender to some extent dissuaded them from participating. That is, they may have perceived that revealing their academic challenges and experiences to a female researcher would have highlighted their vulnerabilities. From their perspective, such revelations could have potentially usurped their need for dominance and control even within the academic environment.

Overall, the lack of male participants in the study is a limitation because it is probable that male participants may have had divergent perspectives and experiences regarding the developmental advising service. It is also possible that there would have been no measurable differences regarding the perspectives and experiences shared by both male and female participants. However, this shortcoming would be best addressed using an alternative recruitment approach in a future study.

The last limitation is associated with the developmental advisor participant sample. At the time of this study only one developmental advisor was employed at the TTIOO. Therefore, all of the student participants detailed their experiences with this particular advisor. It would have been instructive to have insights into students' experiences with more than one advisor in order to ascertain whether there were commonalities and/or differences with regard to students' experiences and outcomes in these regards. There is no certainty that this particular limitation can be addressed by the researcher in a future study, as this factor is primarily reliant on the TTIOO's hiring practices in this context.

In the event that this study is developed in the future, means would be taken to conduct observations as well as in-person interviews. Moreover, future studies in these regards would also seek to recruit developmental students who are both over and under-performing, students who are defined as non-developmental, and male students. It is envisioned that broadening the participant pool will provide opportunities for more insights to be acquired relative to the developmental advising service provided at the TTIOO.

Methodology and Research Design Summary

This chapter outlined the processes and measures that I employed while conducting this study. Via the aforementioned processes, I was able to articulate the essence of how developmental students perceived the role of developmental advising in enabling them to harness self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, foster appropriate levels of academic self-efficacy, and influence their desire to persist.

The qualitative research design was used to frame this study and the requisite overarching research processes. As a consequence, the constructivist ontology and the phenomenological epistemology were used to guide the data collection and analysis processes. Phenomenological interviews served as the primary data collection tool with the student participants. However, typical semi-structured interviews were facilitated with the developmental advisors, and documentary analysis was also conducted. This study adopted a case study design. Therefore, because of its focus on meaning-making and identifying the essence of students' experiences in these regards, Stake's (1995) iteration of the case study design was utilized. Participants in this case were selected using purposeful sampling.

Data analysis is paramount to the phenomenological approach, thus data analysis processes included coding and theming the data. Open and focused coding, and categorical aggregation were used to develop the relevant themes. Factors aligned with establishing

trustworthiness and by extension credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability were outlined. These areas were primarily addressed via data source triangulation, member-checking, audit trails, and attention to my researcher positionality and reflexivity processes. In this light, I outlined my positionality as the primary researcher. Lastly, I discussed how I addressed the ethical concerns related to the study, and the outlined the study's limitations.

CHAPTER 4

The Findings

This chapter highlights the major findings that emerged during the data analysis process. It consists of three major sections which detail a description of the participants (six students and two developmental advisors), the major themes that were derived in the study, and a summary of the findings. Thereafter, I provide insights into the study's findings. The themes are dissected into three areas: 1) the participants' overarching secondary school experiences; 2) the challenges the participants encountered adjusting to the TTIOO's post-secondary environment; and 3) the participants' interactions with the developmental advising service as it relates to goal setting, academic self-efficacy, and persistence. A summary of these findings concludes this chapter.

Participant Descriptions (Developmental Students)

This section introduces the developmental students who participated in this study, and contextual details are provided about their respective backgrounds. Here I describe the participants in terms of their demographic characteristics and their educational experiences prior to enrollment at the TTIOO—factors that contributed to their academic underpreparedness. These participants were enrolled in the developmental program because they did not possess five CSEC subjects as required by the TTIOO's matriculation guidelines.

As discussed in previous chapters, Caribbean secondary school students are required to complete the CSEC examination before exiting the secondary school system. This examination is administered in subject areas that students pursue during their time secondary at secondary school, and should include math and English. For example, a student who would have pursued math, English, French, biology, and home engineering would be required to sit the terminal CSEC examination in these areas—students may or may not be successful with passing all of

their subjects. These qualifications are used by post-secondary institutions to ascertain whether prospective students could be admitted and enrolled. In this context, all of the participants possessed fewer than five CSEC subjects and thus were required to first complete the TTIOO's developmental education program before transferring to the college-level program of their choice. Additionally, the participants' enrollment at the TTIOO represented their first time engaging with post-secondary education, and all of them enrolled during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Developmental students typically complete the program in approximately two years. However as outlined before, their rate of completion is dependent on the number of developmental courses they are required to complete, the number of courses they complete each semester, and factors associated with withdrawals and temporary leave of absences. These areas are highlighted in the following participant descriptions. Pseudonyms selected by the participants were used to protect their identities.

“Victoria”

Victoria is a 51-year-old female first-generation student. She is unmarried, and has no children—she refers to her two dogs as her children. Victoria currently resides in the Diego Martin area with her mother who needs constant care due to health issues. Throughout her career, Victoria was employed as either a secretary or administrative assistant. However, due to the country's economic downturn and staff layoffs as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Victoria lost her job and has been unemployed for more than a year. After unsuccessfully seeking employment at various companies and employment agencies, Victoria decided to make the best of this unfortunate situation by dedicating some time to upgrading her academic and professional skillsets, so that she could re-enter the employment sector more qualified. As she expressed, “I knew that I had to do something to go back and educate myself.”

Before enrolling at the TTIOO, Victoria was out of the education system for over 34 years. She began the TTIOO's developmental education program as a full-time student in January 2020. The TTIOO was not Victoria's first institution of choice. She made the decision to pursue her post-secondary goals there primarily because it was the only institution accepting applications at the time she decided to return to the world of education. As a matter of fact, she had her eyes set on enrolling at the country's largest university. Victoria also noted that she was lured by two other factors—the TTIOO's convenient location and cost. That is, by enrolling at the Port of Spain campus, she would be close enough to her home. Moreover, the TTIOO's tuition costs were significantly cheaper when compared to that of the university. This is important to note because while the GORTT provides tuition funding to citizens, Victoria is unable to access this financial support because of her age. Being unemployed, these factors were substantial during her decision-making process.

By virtue of the TTIOO's matriculation requirements, Victoria is a developmental student because she only possessed three CSEC subjects, math excluded. When asked to explain why this occurred, she shared that during secondary school she was not very confident or self-assured, and that these factors affected how she approached her studies and consequently her grades. When Victoria completed the college's mandatory college placement test in 2019, the results indicated that she had to complete five developmental courses inclusive of two levels of math, one level of academic writing, life skills, and computer foundation tools. At the time of the interviews Victoria expressed that her GPA stood at 3.62. Victoria is on the homestretch of completing the developmental program. Upon completion she plans to transfer to the college's associate degree in business management and administration. She envisions pursuing this program part-time because she wishes to secure a full-time job. At the time of these interviews,

Victoria accessed the developmental service approximately four times. These sessions were facilitated on-line as a result of COVID-19 and the physical closure of the TTIOO campuses.

“Innocents”

Innocents is a 24-year-old female, she is married, and currently has one daughter who is two years old. Innocents presently lives with her family in the San Juan area. She is an On-the-Job (OJT) trainee at one of the GORTT’s ministry headquarters. Innocents has been there for almost two years, and her contract expires in June 2021. Innocents is also the primary income-earner in her household, as her husband was retrenched from his job as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the fact that she is uncertain about her future job prospects post-June, she decided that in the meantime she would invest her energies toward completing her degree program.

Innocents’s is a part-time student, and her main goal for pursuing post-secondary education is to develop the skills and knowledge required to become an entrepreneur. She has a range of business ideas in mind including dress-making, taxi and delivery services, catering, and upholstery services. As a matter of fact, she is currently in the process of registering some of these businesses. Innocents’s drive is also fueled by the death of her mother 15 years ago. Therefore, she is committed to leaving a legacy that her daughter can access. In her words, “I don't see myself working for anyone for the rest of my life. She [her daughter] mustn't toil as hard as I did, and that is my encouragement at this junction.”

Innocents began her engagement with the TTIOO’s developmental program in January 2020. Her journey there began when she saw an advertisement inviting applications in the daily newspaper; this was followed by another advertisement she saw a few days later on the television. She believed this was a positive sign as at that time she was contemplating doing a degree program. Innocents possessed three CSEC subjects at the point of enrolment at the

TTIOO. She also made the decision to complete two additional CSEC subjects so that she could acquire a full certificate. Overall, she was overjoyed to be given an opportunity to pursue a degree program at minimal cost. That is, Innocents's program will be covered by Trinidad and Tobago's GATE tuition funding program. As previously discussed, this funding is provided to nationals desirous of pursuing post-secondary degree programs. This milestone was particularly important to Innocents because she is both a non-traditional and first-generation student.

Similar to the other participants, this is Innocent's first encounter with post-secondary education. When she completed the college's mandatory college placement test, the results indicated that she needed to complete six developmental courses inclusive of two levels of math, two levels of academic reading, life skills, and computer foundation tools. During the interviews Innocents expressed that she is not performing as well as she hoped because her GPA is currently at the prescribed 2.0 average. Many reasons inclusive of institutional and personal factors have been attributed to this outcome. Her academic performance in the program to date is noteworthy, as this will influence whether she will be able to transfer to her program, and/or how soon. Innocents hopes to transfer to the college's associate degree in business management and administration. In terms of developmental advising, she has accessed the service approximately four times.

"Rebecca"

Rebecca is a 25-year-old female, she is single and has no children. Rebecca currently lives with her family in the St. Helena area. At present, Rebecca works as an intern at a dentist office, a position she acquired in February of this year. Gaining this experience is particularly meaningful to Rebecca because she has dreams of having her own dental practice one day—this is her main reason for pursuing post-secondary education. Rebecca always knew that she wanted to work in the medical field, and dentistry eventually emerged as her preferred option.

Rebecca began her engagement with the TTIOO's developmental program in September 2018. Her decision to enroll at the TTIOO was instigated by someone who provided her with advice. Rebecca experienced a sense of hopelessness when she did not perform as well as she wished in her CSEC examinations at the end of secondary school. Therefore, she did not possess the required five CSEC subjects that would have enabled her direct enrollment into a college-level program. However, she felt a sense of relief when she realized that she did in fact have an option that could enable her to realize the educational and professional goals she once imagined. Although this meant enrolling in a pre-college program, she did not perceive it as a setback, but as an opportunity to redeem herself. As stated by Rebecca, "I was getting another opportunity to redeem myself." This milestone was also important because Rebecca is not only a non-traditional student, but she is also the first in her family to pursue a degree.

Rebecca was placed in the developmental program because she only possessed four CSEC subjects at the time of enrollment. When she completed the college's mandatory college placement test, the results indicated that she was required to complete 10 developmental courses inclusive of two levels of math, two levels of academic writing, two levels of basic biology, two levels of basic chemistry, life skills, and computer foundation tools. Rebecca expressed that her current GPA is 3.66 and that she has maintained an average of 3.0 and above since beginning the program. Rebecca is currently a part-time student, and hopes to transfer to the college's associate degree in biology full-time. It should also be noted that Rebecca recently got accepted by two US-based universities to pursue a bachelor's degree in biology. She is currently trying to decide whether she should continue her studies abroad, or complete the associate degree at the TTIOO. In terms of developmental advising, she has accessed the service more than five times.

“Sade”

Sade is a 22-year-old female, she is single, and has no children. She currently resides with her parents and two older brothers in the Chaguanas, Enterprise area which is fairly close one of the TTIOO’s main campuses. Sade is especially proud of her Purple Belt (one of the levels in the karate sport). She is an unemployed full-time student, and is currently financially supported by her parents.

Sade is a full-time, first-generation student, and she began her engagement with the TTIOO’s developmental program in October 2020. Like Victoria, she initially planned to pursue her educational goals at the country’s main four-year university. However, she decided to enroll at the TTIOO because of the institution’s presentation at a career fair hosted by the secondary school she attended. She felt that the TTIOO would have been a better fit for her because of its’ location and program offerings. Sade admits that she does not like school and has opted to take the post-secondary education route as a means to secure a good career and a better life. She also expressed that acquiring a job in the medical field will enable her to overcome her intense shyness. In her words, “A career like this and school, could help me get over my shyness, you know, open up, I’ll be able to communicate with people more freely.” She also expressed her preference for the on-line environment because of her dislike for school. Overall, Sade is happy about being admitted to attend college.

Sade always knew that she wanted to work in the health industry, and recently settled on the radiography career path. She was placed in the developmental program because she only possessed four CSEC subjects at the time of enrollment. When she completed the college’s mandatory college placement test, the results indicated that she was required to complete seven developmental courses inclusive of two levels of math, one level of academic writing, two levels of basic chemistry, life skills, and computer foundation tools. Sade expressed that her

current GPA is 3.0 and that she has maintained this average for the last two semesters. Sade hopes to transfer to the college's associate degree in radiological sciences within a year. In terms of developmental advising, she has accessed the service at least twice.

“Joyful”

Joyful is a 36-year-old female, she is single and has no children. She is also a first-generation student as no one else in her immediate family has accessed post-secondary education, or more specifically, completed a degree program. Joyful currently lives with her adopted mother, who is also her aunt, in the Long Circular area. At present, Joyful is a dental assistant, a position she has held for a number of years. Interestingly, she has no intent of working within the medical field or as a dentist, her dream is to become a counselor. Joyful wants to uplift her family's image in some way and also wants to improve her career standing—these are her motivations for pursuing post-secondary education, and thus for enrolling in the TIOO's developmental education program.

Joyful revealed that she had a troubled past with education. Due to family-related challenges, she did not begin school until the age of six years. As a result of this late start, she was unsuccessful in the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination which would have allowed her to move on to a secondary school. However, she was eventually placed at a three-year junior secondary school. Joyful indicated that she also experienced challenges at the secondary schools she attended and attributes some of this to her late start. Fortunately, she was able to acquire three CSEC subjects.

Joyful was encouraged by one of her friends to enroll at the TTIOO. At this time, she felt she wanted to do something meaningful with her life, however, she was also troubled by the fact that she only possessed three CSEC subjects. Her friend informed her that she could have

gained access to the TTIOO despite this limitation. Joyful welcomed the opportunity to be placed in the developmental education program. As expressed in her words:

It kind of builds a foundation because you don't just want to jump from an education at either junior sec, into a secondary school, and just jump into tertiary. I don't think it's wise. I think there must be some kind of foundation and a building up towards the actual thing, which [the TTIOO] did for me.

She was also happy that the TTIOO is located close to her home—a factor that erased her concerns about transport-related issues.

The associate degree in psychology is Joyful's program of choice. In order to realize this goal, she was required to complete seven developmental courses inclusive of two levels of math, three levels of academic writing, life skills, and computer foundation tools. Joyful successfully completed these requirements and has maintained a 3.0 GPA average. This is indeed a significant milestone! In fact, at the point of this interview Joyful was poised to transfer to her college program. However, during my interactions with Joyful, she revealed that she would be taking a break from her studies at this point, despite being on the verge of transferring to her program. Her reasons would be explored in the context of the findings. During her engagement with the developmental program, Joyfully consistently accessed the developmental advising and has seen her developmental advisor over 10 times.

“Cassie”

Cassie is a 32 year old female, she has two children—a 16 year old girl, and a six year old boy. She resides at Maloney Gardens with her family, and she is also a first-generation and part-time student. Cassie has been employed at a garment factory for over 10 years. She began her career there as a salesclerk, before being promoted to assistant manager. At present, she serves as the assistant to the general manager. However, COVID-19 severely impacted her working

hours and she is currently down to two working days per week. To supplement her income, she works part-time at a toy store. Cassie is desirous of starting her own retail jewelry company, hence one of her reasons for enrolling at the TTIOO. She also wants to serve as a better source of support for her children, as she noted:

When I look at my daughter, you know, when I look at small man [her son] and all you know, even more so my daughter because then is like, I want to be able to help her when she reach a certain level.

Cassie shared that she had a fairly good experience during secondary school, and that for the most part she performed well academically. However, she became pregnant at the age of 15, and decided to keep the baby (her daughter). This pregnancy somewhat affected her performance in the CSEC examinations, and she only acquired three subjects. Despite this, Cassie shared that she never lost hope and held on to her dream of becoming a business owner.

Cassie enrolled at the TTIOO on two separate occasions, 10 years apart. In 2009, a young and uncertain Cassie decided to venture into the world of higher education. She expressed that at this point in her life she planned to use education as distraction from a bad relationship that she was in at that point. However, work-related demands forced her to withdraw after one semester. In 2019, she again made the decision to enroll, promising herself that this time she would complete the program. To date, she is five semesters into the developmental education program.

Cassie was happy about being afforded the opportunity to enroll in the TTIOO's developmental education program. Like Joyful, she felt this program would have gently initiated her into the college environment, versus being immediately thrown into her degree program. She was required to complete six developmental courses inclusive of three levels of math, one level of academic writing, life skills, and computer foundation tools. At present her GPA is 2.75.

Upon completing this program, Cassie wishes to transfer to the associate degree in business management. Regarding her access to the developmental advising service, Cassie reported that she has engaged with her advisor more than five times.

Participant Descriptions (Developmental Advisors)

In this section, details are provided about the developmental advisors who provide/provided developmental advising services at the TTIOO. As previously noted in the methodology section, I initially planned to interview two developmental advisors currently employed at the TTIOO. However, only one development advisor is currently employed. The other participant resigned from this position to pursue other career goals. Pseudonyms selected by the participants have been used to protect these individuals' identities.

“Aniko”

Aniko is a 45-year-old married mother of one. She was one of the first developmental advisors to be recruited at the TTIOO in 2009, a position she held for three years. Aniko has a bachelor's degree in sociology (psychology minor), and a master's degree in work and organizational psychology. Prior to working at the TTIOO, Aniko spent all of her professional life within secondary and post-secondary educational spaces where she engaged activities directed at supporting students in several areas. She indicated that she applied for the position of developmental advisor when she completed her graduate program, and the opportunity to serve students in this capacity was presented.

At the time when she was hired, Aniko believed that she possessed the competencies and experiences that would have enabled her to effectively fulfil this advisor role. Moreover, she acknowledged that she “cared enough about people” especially those that came from backgrounds that society defines as being somewhat disadvantaged—backgrounds that “may have been a factor in where people were at in their life.” In the context of developmental

advising, she saw this as an opportunity to “give back” and she was also “curious to see where the program would lead to for these people.”

At present, Aniko is pursuing other career goals. She is now self-employed as a certified emotional intelligence and gestalt coach. Her services focus on empowering individuals (including students) to develop their levels of emotional intelligence.

“Khristal”

Khristal is a 38-year-old married mother of two. She was hired during the TTIOO’s second and last intake of developmental advisors in 2012—thus she has served in this capacity for almost nine years. Khristal has a bachelor’s degree in psychology, and a master’s degree in forensic psychology. Prior to working at the TTIOO, Khristal spent the first half of her professional life in the legal system, where she served as a probation officer for juvenile offenders. While Khristal initially had her eyes cast on assuming a career in the field of forensic psychology, she decided to explore developmental advising when the opportunity arose.

Khristal expressed that she decided to serve as a developmental advisor because her role as a probation officer positioned her to support individuals that were defined as “at-risk”. Thus, she felt that some of the competencies she acquired in this regard were also transferable to the educational sphere. She cautioned that she did not equate academically-underprepared students to juvenile delinquency, however, she acknowledged that care, diligence, and unwavering support are especially essential in both contexts. In her words, “So I felt okay well it's [both roles] a bit parallel although [it] is in the education field. I still felt like okay, well I could contribute.” Khristal is currently the sole developmental advisor employed at the TTIOO, as a result, she continues to serve a large proportion of the TTIOO’s developmental student population and college-level students who access the developmental advising service.

The Themes

The discussion of the major themes are categorized into seven areas. It is important to first provide a general description of the student participants at the start of this section. These characteristics impacted their initial experiences as post-secondary developmental students, academic outcomes, and engagement with and perception of the developmental advising service. Moreover, these characteristics and prior experiences also influenced the participants' goal-setting competencies and assessment of their academic abilities. The outcomes in these areas also potentially connote impacts for persistence-related concerns. Hence, it is essential to understand the participants' educational background context before exploring how developmental advising impacted the participants' goal-setting competencies, academic outcomes, assessment of their academic abilities, and as a consequence their desire to persist with their programs.

Participants' Overarching Secondary School Experiences

All of the participants in this case study can be described as being non-traditional. In keeping with the definition of non-traditional students, these participants are part-time students who work full-time, all but one participant have dependents such as parents and children, and some are also single parents. They also delayed their entry into post-secondary education and thus began their studies later than the typical college-starting age. Moreover, all of these participants are first-generation students, and thus the first in their families to embark on a degree-seeking mission. In addition to these characteristics, the participants identified specific factors that contributed to their academic-underpreparedness during their engagement with secondary school—insufficient support, subject-related challenges, limited confidence and self-assuredness, and minimal academic-related skills.

Insufficient Support

From a developmental perspective, all of the student participants in this case study detailed experiences at the secondary level that would have contributed to their academic-underpreparedness. At the forefront, with the exception of Victoria, all of these participants attended one of the less-affluent government-funded secondary schools. This is noteworthy because the quality of learning and instruction at these schools is often compromised, and they are often stymied by limited resources required to effectively support students' holistic success. As cited by the participants, their most pronounced recollections and experiences in these spaces centered on the somewhat ineffective teaching practices and access to limited support services.

The participants expressed that they did not feel supported by many of their secondary school teachers, a factor which potentially negatively impacted their approach to academics and thus their performance. Joyful revealed that she almost had a supportive teacher, but this teacher's intervention came at the tail end of her secondary school journey. As she reflected, "When certain teachers see things in a student and they encourage them, but then sometimes their help is offered too late. So that was one of the subjects that I did not do too well in." Cassie also expressed that she did not receive any support from her secondary school administrators at the start of her pregnancy. As she stated:

I had exams in June, and I had her [the baby] in May. And so, I got a bit of a fight with the principal, about me being pregnant and in school. However, my mom called the Ministry of Education and they said once I am in uniform she [the principal] can't stop me from being at school.

Fortunately, Cassie was allowed to sit the CSEC examinations, however, this was with little support from her teachers, as she was not permitted to attend classes—rather each day she reported to the principal’s office where she was left to play catch-up on her own.

However, the findings also suggest that the publicly-funded government schools are not the only ones experiencing some challenges providing appropriate levels of support to students. As previously noted, Victoria attended one of the country’s affluent secondary school, and despite this she reflected, “Come to think of it, it really was a bit non-existent [support from teachers]. I attended classes, but I can’t remember any teacher really reaching out to me to ask me what’s happening or if they can help.” Therefore, although Victoria attended an affluent school, she too experienced factors that are typically negotiated by students enrolled at less affluent public secondary schools.

This overarching sense of not having access to sufficient support systems has to some extent transcended the secondary school space. Consequently, this factor is a potential reason why the participants expressed that they did not wish to burden their developmental advisors by highlighting the challenges they experienced at the TTIOO—this is discussed in an ensuing theme.

Subject-Related Challenges

Most of the participants in this case study cited challenges with particular courses during secondary school as negative influences on their academic preparedness. While math is a required subject, most of the participants detailed that challenges with courses such as math and science hampered their secondary school success. For example, Rebecca recalled:

So I got four subjects, and I needed one more. So the subject that I failed was chemistry. And every time I went back to do the examination for chemistry, I couldn't do it. Because I felt like, you know, I just couldn't do it.

Cassie also recalled:

So at that point in time I did maths, English, social studies, and POB [principles of business]. I did those four and I came out with three. I came out with the three other than maths. Maths was a tough one. And I was at a disadvantage because of circumstances.

Similarly, Joyful reflected:

Well in those days when you came from junior sec, you were allowed six subjects. You either did business or subjects like typing and home ec [home economics] and different things. I did business subjects. Unfortunately for me, school was a bit of a struggle. I don't know if it's because I started off a little late. Anyways, for the CXC [CSEC examinations] I just obtained three passes, and then I repeated math. I did over math three times before I finally got it.

The other three participants recalled similar challenges acquiring math as a CSEC subject. Again, they felt they were insufficiently supported by their teachers, and their best efforts seemed inadequate. These challenges related to the aforementioned subject areas are congruent with the views proffered by the developmental advisors and the documents that were analyzed. Challenges with math and the science-related subjects were also impacted by other personal and self-perception factors. As noted by the advisors, these prior experiences also impact students' performance in the developmental courses. This area is further discussed in a subsequent theme.

Limited Confidence, Self-Assuredness, and Academic-Related Skills

The remaining factors that negatively influenced the participants' academic performance during secondary school involved concerns aligned with confidence and self-assuredness. Insufficient academic-related skills such as goal-setting, time-management, and

study skills were also identified. Sade and Victoria in particular referenced that they were quite withdrawn during their secondary school years and therefore encountered difficulty embracing the secondary school experience. According to Victoria:

In school, I was a shy person. I wasn't very sure of myself. You know, I tend to be very quiet. I did have a few friends. I was not very, you know, bright, as they say. I was slow. I was slow to pick up stuff.

Sade had a similar view of herself and recalled:

So I am kind of shy with people, but I could communicate with people if I want to, like if I get over the shyness and you know, open up, I'll be able to communicate with people freely. But in school, it was hard, so I didn't want to go to school.

Joyful and Innocents also revealed that they experienced this sense of reservedness, felt intimidated by the secondary school experience, and did not perceive themselves as being intelligent. Overall, these participants expressed that their reservedness and low levels self-assuredness negatively impacted their academic performance and influenced their dislike for school. They also shared that they are still trying to overcome these challenges.

Limited academic-related skills inclusive of time-management, goal-setting, and study skills also influenced the participants academic-underpreparedness. Victoria noted:

Studying was hard for me, focusing and studying. I could not keep up with the volume of work, you know that we had to do. It was just difficult academically speaking, and I did not have the support. Even today, I prefer to go straight to work on something rather than have to go and read a textbook or something. It's really hard for me to do, but necessary.

Rebecca also reflected on her limited study skills during secondary by sharing:

At exam time, I probably didn't put in as much work as I should have, so the results were not good. Well throughout school, the results were poor. I didn't get the results that I wanted to get.

In discussing the academic skills that developmental students typically display, Khristal, one of the developmental advisors observed:

They lack skills such as proper study habits. So they also require a lot of counselling support. I've discovered that over the years. Because of this I would say the major hurdles that they encounter, well, number one, because of their underpreparedness, they lack the basic habits, and they must be taught these skills. So they also have to deal with that challenge.

As such, the student participants noted that they more or less revised their subject content prior to an impending examination, which often resulted in unfavorable levels of success. It is possible that they encountered difficulties engaging their subject content in a manner that would have promoted higher levels of academic success.

With regard to time-management skills in particular, four of the participants expressed that they did not prioritize time-management skills before interacting with their developmental advisor. The developmental advisors also shared that developmental students often encountered difficulties acquiring this particular skillset before they began their post-secondary journey. As a result, they are often required to coach students in these regards. When questioned about the reasons influencing these shortcomings, all of the participants expressed that they were not taught how to effectively utilize these skillsets while at secondary school.

Beyond the customary parental demands to revise, study, and manage their time well, the participants also shared that they did not receive much guidance within their respective households about utilizing these skills. Addressing these areas continue to be a work in progress

for the participants, and these areas will be further explored in ensuing sections. However, to some extent their competencies in these areas and the aforementioned challenges impacted the participants' performance and experiences when they enrolled at the TTIOO.

Participants' Views and Experiences Regarding the TTIOO

This theme highlights the participants' views and experiences in relation to some of the academic and adjustment-related encounters they would have negotiated when they enrolled at the TTIOO. In particular, emphasis is placed on the challenges the participants in this case study encountered adjusting to this novel post-secondary environment. In this light, it is also important to highlight the participants' limited understanding of the breadth and scope of the developmental advising service, as this impacted how they accessed the service in relation to the challenges they encountered.

Challenges Encountered at the TTIOO

It is important to highlight the challenges that the student participants negotiated during their initiation into college life. While the participants were able to overcome some of the challenges they encountered at the point of enrollment at the TTIOO, in some contexts they continue to battle with addressing some of these areas. It is also noteworthy that some of the areas are a continuation from the secondary school phase. The major areas identified include shame and embarrassment aligned with being a developmental student; concerns about being burdensome; difficulty keeping up with math course requirements; and personal and financial factors.

Shame and Embarrassment. Two participants expressed that they felt intense shame about being defined as developmental students, and that this label impacted how they engaged with their program, peers, and courses. They were mainly ashamed because they felt that they were failures as a result of their underperformance at the secondary school level. Even though

they wished to improve their academic standing and other aspects of their lives, this sense of failure and the accompanying shame was reinforced when they were admitted into the developmental program. Victoria expressed this sense of shame by noting:

Okay, I wouldn't say shame. I was a bit embarrassed because I'm the eldest of four. And of course, you know, to tell my family that I now have to go and do everything that I didn't do in Providence [the secondary school she attended], which was math and English.

Similarly, Rebecca shared:

When I first entered the program, I would be honest, I was battling with the shame of you know the lack of requirements that I had. So I was still battling with that. I didn't want people in my class to find out that I didn't have the five required subjects or whatever the case may be. I was still battling with that shame, even though I was grateful, and I was happy that I was in college, and I was getting an opportunity to get the education, I was still battling with that shame of my situation and with doing developmental ed.

To a lesser extent, the other participants expressed that they were sometimes ashamed about their developmental status. However, feelings of gratitude often overrode those feelings of shame and embarrassment, and they generally felt that they should embrace this opportunity in order to improve their future academic and career outcomes. The shame also ebbed away when the participants performed well academically.

The developmental advisors also referenced this sense of shame that developmental students tend to experience. Aniko explained it in terms of the stigma that is usually attached to this particular student population, as well as age-related factors. Thus, she noted:

And I guess the stigma attached to being of a particular age and not having five CXC's [CSEC] or whatever, there's a certain stigma with that. So there's a stigma associated with the program, even though the students were brave enough to come in without five CSEC subjects. However, somehow when they are enrolled, I think the idea of being placed into a particular category causes some discomfort for these students.

This view aptly reinforces what Victoria expressed regarding age and maturity-related factors.

Aniko also suggested that this shame was tied to students' inability to reframe failure in an effective manner. As such, she stated:

So I think because in his [a student Aniko referenced as an example] mind failure may have this idea of being the ultimate failure, you know. For me [Aniko] failure now means that there is a gap. While I know this aspect, this is how much I need to know, so I have to try to find a way to fill the missing gap. Let me find out what is missing. And it's not that you are horrible, it could have been the teacher didn't teach the way that would have gotten through to you. And that's okay. It means that if I fail the course, I am missing something. It's an opportunity for me to go back now and try to find what the missing link is. And to me that was really important, being able to do that. I think that's important, helping them to reframe what failing a course meant. They have to get to this point of understanding that failure is not the end all, you know.

Therefore, students' perceptions regarding failure related to their academic performance could hypothetically restrict their efforts. This seems to be especially pronounced in the context of developmental students because of their prior experience with academic failure at the level of secondary education. The student participants' sense of shame and perception of failure in these regards also impacted other areas of their experience and engagement with the program.

Most prominent was their reticence about seeking support from their assigned developmental advisor.

“You Don’t Want to be a Burden.” Participants generally felt discomfited if they required support to assist them with coping with this new post-secondary experience. Moreover, some of them expressed reservations about seeking support, especially within the college community. Most of the participants shared that they did not feel supported during their secondary school experience. They also shared that this had an undeniable impact on their academic performance. In fact, they wished that more attention was paid to them during that time, as they felt their academic outcomes would have been different. Moreover, coupled with the feelings of shame aligned with being in a developmental program, it was interesting to hear these participants use the term “burden” to explain their unwillingness to seek support—support that they craved during secondary school. That is, when questioned about why they did not approach their developmental advisor for support with addressing some of the challenges they faced, they often mentioned that they did not wish to be a burden or bother to the advisor. Innocents explicitly expressed:

I haven't reached out to really access that type of service from [the developmental advisor] because sometimes, you know, you don't want to be a burden. That's how I think at times and then I also look at the responses I get. There are certain things I generally wouldn't reach out for help with. So no, I never really approached [the developmental advisor] with these concerns. I really don't want to bother anybody, you know. Cuz to me, I felt as though it wasn't anything pertaining to advisement.

Cassie shared similar sentiments and stated, “She [the developmental advisor] does play a major role, but I think too I don't always say, cuz you know sometimes I not trying to throw my burden

on you, you have your life, you know.” Also concerned about not being a bother, or contributing to the developmental advisors’ workload, Victoria also shared:

My feeling is that, you know, the developmental advisors here have a lot of students to oversee. That's my feeling. And it's kind of tough to handle all of the students that they have to oversee so they tend to focus on the students who really need the help. That's what I think.

To some extent these views influenced the extent to which the participants sought the developmental advisor’s counsel, and thus the matters they chose to highlight during these individual sessions.

There is no denying that the perception of burdening the developmental advisor was a genuine concern. However, it was interesting that the developmental advisors perceived students’ reticence to reach out to them for support as a lack of ownership of the developmental advising process on the part of the students. For example, Aniko reflected:

The decision is yours [the decision to access and participate in the developmental advising process]. You then know, this is what it is. I'm [the developmental advisor] here to guide you if you need it, but what suggestions can you [student] make? Because you have to take ownership of it, it has to be yours. You have to express interest, approach me and tell me what’s going on and what you want as well.

Khristal also shared this view, and emphasized that this reticence is also an outcome of other factors inclusive of students’ limited access to external sources of support and insecurity about their academic ability. She stated:

These students are a bit reserved, they are not willing. I mean the literature has stated that because these students are considered first generation in a sense, they do not have that support or family support, you know, to help them navigate the college

environment. They do not usually want to reach out for assistance. This is the reason why in our orientation sessions we have to make it a priority to inform them about college procedures, let them know what is expected of them, my relationship with them, you know, the services available, the resources, right. So, I think, in interacting with them, they are a bit, I would say, afraid or just a bit reserved. It could be also their insecurity with their academic ability.

The developmental advisors generally felt that the concept of being a burden could be positively addressed if students also took ownership of the developmental advising process by also initiating contact—versus placing the burden of initiating contact squarely on the developmental advisors' shoulders.

Contrary to the views proffered by the developmental advisors, the student participants shared that they would appreciate it if their developmental advisors initiated more contact. This does not negate the fact that they did not appreciate the efforts that their advisors put forth. However, they generally expressed that they would feel less of a burden and more willing to seek support if their advisors reached out more. As Victoria succinctly shared:

Outside of the compulsory meetings that I had to do with my developmental advisor I really didn't see or hear from her in between that. They should strive to meet more regularly with the students, because a student might want to reach out, but, you know, it would be helpful if it's not just one meeting per quarter, but if you can schedule and reach out more.

This suggestion conflicts with Aniko's view that students need to exercise more ownership of the developmental advising service and thus seek to initiate more contact outside of the behest of the advisor. However, even though all of the participants confirmed that their developmental advisor initiated most of the contact, they expressed that they would appreciate even more

contact—that way, they would not feel as though they are burdening the developmental advisor with their challenges.

Difficulty Managing Course Requirements. Another core challenge highlighted by the student participants is associated with keeping up with course requirements. It is possible that in some instances, this area is in fact a spill-over from the secondary school experience. With the exception of Rebecca, all of the participants referenced keeping up with the math syllabus as a core challenge. It is also noteworthy that their experience in this regard was amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic because all classes were conducted virtually during 2020. For example, as shared by Cassie:

I am a kinesthetic learner. So the online environment is a bit tough for me, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown when I was in middle of my life skills course. We initially did face to face classes and then we had lockdown. That time was easier for me because you know I was home, I wasn't working, and most times I'd have to get up like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to do whatever writing and so forth, so at least then the place quiet and stuff like that. So that course wasn't bad and I still managed to get an A, so that wasn't tough for me. But last semester I did 096, a math course. And I barely passed the course, because it was Zoom classes. When Zoom classes in progress, my son distracts me sometimes, you know. But things like math, I think I need to be in the interaction to hear what other people are saying. Okay so sir doing it this one way, I may not understand, and there's somebody who might be like "Sir what if we do this?", and I may more understand it you know with the interactions, hearing other people's ideas and stuff like that. So it has been tough.

Victoria reflected that she was and still is terrified by math, similar to her time in secondary school. She noted:

It was math, it was the Algebra I was scared about. I, I was terrified when he started writing all these figures and letters on the board and my God, I was terrified I was frustrated. I was asking myself “Why am I here? Why am I doing this?” It wasn't easy at first. But that changed over time, because I had no choice but to stick with it. So it is a little better now, but I'm still terrified. You know, I made a decision to do this.

Overall, the student participants expressed that math was the one course that made them question their ability and potential to succeed in the post-secondary environment.

The developmental advisors in this case study also shared that math and some levels of English were usually challenging courses for many developmental students to engage. In this context only one of the participants referenced concerns about English. As such, as detailed in the documents reviewed, these are the overarching reasons for the developmental program and these courses in particular—to sufficiently prepare developmental students to harness the skills and knowledge that could empower them to successfully engage their college-level courses. Moreover, as shared by the developmental advisors and as reflected in the documents reviewed, this is also the reason why the TTIOO provides tutorial support in these specific subject areas.

Personal and Financial Factors. A report provided by the TTIOO indicated that the primary personal challenges that developmental students enrolled at this institution negotiated typically included difficulty balancing commitments, psychological challenges, work-related issues, family-related factors, financial issues, and lack of external support. Likewise, the participants in this study cited personal and financial factors as challenges that they have difficulty circumventing. As mentioned above, these difficulties are often aligned with work-related factors, child-care, and family related responsibilities. Therefore, despite their best efforts, it was somewhat difficult for these participants to prioritize their academic

responsibilities. For example, Victoria is solely responsible for providing care to her ill mother, and sometimes she is rendered totally unable to study. Both Innocents and Cassie had childcare responsibilities, and Cassie in particular was a single parent. Cassie revealed what she shared with her developmental advisor:

And my last course, I did tell her [developmental advisor], I said the GPA is going to drop. I really haven't [reached out to the advisor], but she has been supportive. The reason why I haven't is because I know my schedule. I'm going to have to change a lot of things around [work, childcare, and family-related factors], and I don't think I could do that right now. That is why I decided that it may be better to do a writing course this semester than to do a math. But it's really a lot, it is a lot to manage, you know.

The other participants did not have childcare responsibilities, but they mentioned that other personal factors oftentimes impeded their ability to engage their academic tasks.

Financial factors were also noteworthy in the context of these participants in particular. For example, although the GORTT provides tuition funding to citizens, this policy only applies to citizens under the age of 50 years. Therefore, Victoria was unable to access any type of tuition funding because of her age. Moreover, in an attempt to clamp down on the funds allocated to fund post-secondary tuition, at present the GORTT only funds one undergraduate program per citizen. Consequently, the developmental education program is counted as separate and apart from the college-level program. These participants therefore have to either fund the developmental program or their degree program. Khristal explained this by sharing:

They have a lot of financial struggles, especially now with the GATE. The new GATE states that the government is only funding one course up to the undergraduate level. So students are going crazy now, because they can no longer apply for GATE for their

[developmental education program], and apply for their degree, they have to choose one.

This in itself is challenging because some of the participants are unemployed, while others hold menial jobs. For example, Aniko noted:

And the fact that they are dealing with so many other issues, because these are not wealthy students. These students are thinking about their economic circumstances as well, and even their work circumstances, because you have employers who say "I'm not about that [granting students time-off and flexibility to attend school]." So, many times they have to sneak, or they have to tell somebody that they are coming to classes. You don't want to get in trouble for it, you know. Just imagine that, that you have to hide to develop yourself, that's terrible.

Therefore, in addition to concerns aligned with finances and funding, the participants are also concerned about keeping their jobs so that they could earn income, while trying to improve their academic and future career outcomes. Unfortunately, the recent pandemic has not made things easier, as four of the participants either lost jobs or working hours due to this situation. Of course, as noted by the developmental advisors and the student participants, these concerns were core in motivating students to withdraw from the program.

In sum, these are the major challenges that the participants in this case study encountered since beginning their program at the TTIOO. When questioned about the measures that they took to address these areas, most of them referenced personal efforts. That is, according to Innocents these efforts involved "reaching deep within self." Some of the participants also shared that they would try to engage other resources that they believed could be helpful. In addition to these challenges, the participants also recorded difficulty with time-management and goal-setting skills—challenges some of them also recorded during their

engagement with secondary school. The developmental advising service is intended to support students with overcoming these challenges. However, realizing this goal is also contingent upon students' understanding of the service and its' utility in supporting their academic ambitions.

Unawareness of the Scope of the Developmental Advising Service

This theme regarding participants' unawareness must be mentioned primarily because it influenced the reasons why they approached their advisor to acquire assistance addressing particular issues, and excluded others. That is, even though most of the participants engaged with the developmental advisor on multiple occasions, they also shared that the majority of these sessions focused on course selection and registration processes versus the challenges they experienced. The developmental advisors also shared that students were more likely to schedule sessions when they involved attending to these areas. Moreover, rather than seek support from their advisors at the onset of a problem, students oftentimes waited until the situation intensified over time before approaching their advisor for support.

When asked about this pattern of behavior, in addition to the previously discussed concern about being burdensome, the participants in this case study shared that they were unaware that their developmental advisors could in some way support them with addressing some of the issues they encountered. For example, Victoria explained:

Well, no, because the two terms are used interchangeably [developmental advisor and academic advisor]. I didn't realize, to be honest, this was more of a support role. But then I guess I should have realized because [developmental advisor] did assist me during the course of my first semester. You know, when she asked me how things were going, and I told her that I was having this issue with math and she guided me along certain areas. I didn't realize at the time that it was meant to be a hold your hand sort of

relationship, really. But I don't know, maybe I did, maybe I didn't. I didn't know I could have really gone to her and asked for help per se.

Innocents likened the developmental advising service to the traditional prescriptive advising approach. In her articulation of what the service entailed she noted:

Well I think their role really is to guide you when you finish your course or the semester, they tell you what's next. So, no I never really approached [the advisor] with these concerns in terms of like my issues because I didn't understand her role and I did not want to be a bother. I felt as though my challenges did not pertain to advisement.

Similar views were shared by the other participants as well. This view was interesting to record as the advisors expressed that they explicitly highlighted their roles during orientation sessions and subsequent meetings with students. However, they are aware that students perceive both the academic and developmental advisor as being one and the same. For example, Aniko noted, "I think students just saw it was one and the same." However, Khristal shared on the efforts that the advisors engaged to ensure that students were aware of the type of support they can access via developmental advising:

During the initial contacts that we have with students they are well informed of what is expected of them. They are informed about what the service is about, my role, and what is expected of them. We make sure of this so that they feel comfortable and know that there's someone here that that is willing to assist them. So that they know that there's a support service in case they run into any problems. We distinctly make it clear in our PowerPoint presentation, that I am both their academic and developmental advisor. We, we make that clear to them, that because they're in the [developmental education program], it is necessary to receive academic advisement every semester, that is part of the process. They are also told that because they are developmental

students, they are required to meet with me so that they can have an opportunity to discuss their challenges with me. We explain all of this during the orientation sessions with every student.

There is no doubt that great pains are taken to ensure that students are appropriately advised about what the developmental advising service entails. However, the participants generally expressed some uncertainty about the types of services and support that can be accessed contextually. Despite this limited awareness, the ensuing themes suggest that the participants were able to derive some benefits as a result of their engagement with the developmental advising service.

Developmental Advising

Developmental advising is a support system that is designed to prepare students to successfully engage the post-secondary environment. As such, it enables students to develop various skills, competencies, and dispositions that can engender academic success. This section therefore highlights the participants' experiences with and perceptions of the developmental advising service in relation to areas inclusive of goal-setting skills, academic self-efficacy, and persistence. This section culminates with the participants' insights regarding the usefulness of the developmental advising service in their quest for academic success.

Goal Setting

This section details the findings related to the participants' goal-setting competencies. The participants shared that setting effective goals related to their academic lives often surfaced as a challenge which inadvertently affected the levels of success they sometimes achieved. This challenge was recorded in the documents provided, and was also identified as a shortcoming by the developmental advisors. In this light, the sub-themes related to this topic center on students' goal-setting competencies prior developmental advising and enrollment at the TTIOO;

the academic goals participants identified; and the role of developmental advising in relation to goal-setting skills and the participants' competencies.

Goal-setting Competencies Prior to Developmental Advising. When asked to reflect on their goal-setting competencies prior to accessing the developmental advising service, the participants generally expressed that they were comfortable identifying goals that they wished to achieve. For example, Joyful detailed that her goal-setting competencies prior to developmental advising was an outcome of her strong will. She stated, "I think I was competent enough, because I was real strong minded, strong willed, and determined, and I said I'm going to do this [the program]." Similarly, Innocents shared, "I was able to put on paper what I had in my mind, and what I felt I could have achieved." Cassie recalled that she was better prepared to set and stick with her goals the second time around:

But now that I came back in 2019 to present, I said to myself that I could do this. I didn't say exactly that this is goal-setting, like a long-term or short-term goal or whatever. But I did say to myself, "Hear what [Cassie], you going to stick to this and you going to make this happen."

These participants therefore believed that they enrolled at the TTIOO with a general idea about setting goals, although they were sometimes unable to effectively execute the measures required to realize these goals.

However, there were also participants that revealed that they did not know to set goals effectively prior to their enrollment at the TTIOO. For example, Victoria noted "I was never able to function under a set set of goals." Rebecca reiterated her challenges with this area by sharing:

During that time [prior to developmental advising], like setting goals, I don't think I acquired that skill as yet to be honest, because I was still trying to get into the environment, figure stuff out, you know, just adapting to the new normal of being in

college and pursuing tertiary education. So, my goal-setting skills at that time, it wasn't as strong as it is right now. I will say that.

The developmental advisors also shared the view that developmental students typically required support developing this competency. Consequently, Khristal noted that most of the students she served were unable to set practical and realistic goals. She also noted that if they were able to set goals, their competency ranged from basic to medium, but mostly resided at the lower end of the spectrum. As she stated:

I would say most of them set goals at a more basic to medium level, rather than intermediate. There might have the one-off, but very few who I feel confident that they know what they're about and they can effectively carry out their goals. The majority are basic to medium, they have to be taught how to do it.

This view was confirmed by the participants as they shared that their work life, childcare responsibilities, and other personal, situational, and environmental factors negatively affected their ability to manage their time effectively, and thus hampered their ability to achieve the academic goals they set for themselves. As highlighted in the documents provided, this was one of the reasons for ensuring that a major component of the developmental education program involves providing guidance and support in the area of academic-related skills. The developmental advisors also noted that this was their reason for emphasizing these areas during their individual sessions with students. Khristal reified this by stating, "The major hurdles students encounter is one aspect of their underpreparedness, they lack the basic skills and these, these skills, must be taught. So they have to deal with that challenge also." However, while the developmental advisors support students in these areas, the participants believed that their goal-setting competencies improved moreso as a result of their engagement with the life skills course and to a lesser extent their interactions with the developmental advisor. The

reasons for this are further explored in an upcoming sub-theme. Moreover, it was also instructive to identify the academic goals that the participants were desirous of achieving.

“Pass Each Semester.” The participants in this case study identified goals that were important to their academic lives, and thus necessary for their success. These goals primarily centered on passing their courses, maintaining their GPAs, and eventually transferring to their college-level program. In this regard, Victoria reminisced:

Every time we dealt with it [goal-setting], it sounded as if I needed to have a big goal. And then I needed to categorize the goal, and under the big goal I needed to have certain categories of goals. Basically my goal is just to pass my semester, pass each semester, eventually until I passed my course. Okay, so basically that's it.

Innocents also focused on passing her courses and maintaining a healthy GPA:

Cuz one of one of my major goals, was to keep up my GPA and I did that. Cuz I think when I finished my first semester, the GPA was up to three or four, the lowest you could have had was two or something like that. So I had two point something, so I was a little above the two. And I felt good within myself to know that I could have set that goal and still accomplish it.

Rebecca also shared that her efforts were directed at passing her courses and maintaining a good GPA:

Oh, for me it was to get A's in all my classes. I wanted to get A's and just do generally really, really well in my classes. It wasn't enough to pass the class, but to do really well to get an A or B, and I was able to actually accomplish that, throughout every semester in each class. Because of that, because I was able to go forward and set that goal and that standard, every class I went into I just to set a high standard for it, not just going into the class to pass, but to do extremely well, and I was able to achieve those goals.

Cassie focused on setting long-term and short-term goals related to the time she planned to spend in the developmental program:

Since 2019 to now I have set specific short and long-term goals to accomplish within a certain period of time. I did this before COVID, you know, so I would have said "Hear what, 2021 September I would be starting my degree, I make up my mind." Because when you count the semesters, I was like "[Cassie] you not repeating any courses." When I counted the courses [the developmental courses she was required to complete] I would have been able to finish them by 2021 September. I didn't have to repeat any courses, but because of COVID you know I got pushed back a semester. So I am aware of the goal setting. Right now my short-term goal is finishing [the developmental program], and I would say the next short-term goal is finishing my degree you know, and my long-term goal on the next hand is something with income, is like a monthly plan to save money, that's my long-term. You know because every month I have to remind myself "[Cassie] don't forget this, and don't forget that."

Joyful articulated her goals in consideration of financial factors and time wastage, and noted:

I want to do well. I don't want to fail anything, or have to pay to repeat any courses. To me that will be time wasted, and time is precious. So I told myself I am here, I have an aim, I have a goal. I am going to do this, I'm going to do well, I'm going to get through this. That was my mentality and that's how I would speak to anybody, my friends, my mom. I just had strong will at that time.

It can be surmised that these goals were all directed at successfully completing the developmental education program by maintaining good grades, with the ultimate aim of transferring to the college program of the participants' choice. Most of the participants have been successful with achieving the aim of maintaining good grades, and envision that they

would soon be able to transfer to their college-level programs. However, they all continue to work toward increasing their ability to effectively engage goal-setting skills.

Getting to the “How”. As discussed in a previous chapter, a major component of the TTIOO’s developmental education program entails providing opportunities for students to harness effective academic-related skillsets. Hence, the workshops, life skills course, and developmental advising sessions are structured to complement each other. The workshops are non-mandatory and are offered each semester. As highlighted in the documents reviewed, these workshops cover areas inclusive of textbook reading, memorization techniques, note-taking skills, and managing math anxiety. On the other hand, the life skills course is mandatory for all developmental students. This course aims to improve students’ college readiness by preparing them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can stimulate personal development, well-being, and success. Several intersections exist with regard to all three areas, especially between the life skills course and the developmental advising service because they are both mandatory. There are also specific elements that are emphasized during the workshops and life skills course versus the developmental advising sessions.

As revealed by both groups of participants, the developmental advising sessions primarily focused on time-management skills, while the goal-setting component was predominantly addressed in the mandatory life skills course. Consequently, Cassie reflected, “I was really introduced to long-term goals and the short-term goals through my life skills.” The other participants also shared that the goal-setting area was minimally addressed during their individual developmental advising sessions, and moreso in the life skills course. In reiterating this view, the developmental advisors also shared that focusing on goal-setting skills is not prioritized during their interactions with students. Rather, they emphasize the time-

management component and underscore the importance of the processes that developmental students are required to fulfill. For example, Aniko shared:

Interestingly enough, I'm not sure that I would have done that at all [focus on goal-setting during interactions with students]. Because I mean, how do I move from the [developmental program] to get into the college level program? To me the pathway to that was clear. That was pretty straightforward. But even though that was straightforward, I'm not sure a lot of them [the students] understood that well. I think a lot of it [the individual sessions] was more about explaining why particular steps and processes were necessary. I think these sessions centered on helping them to understand the reason for the process. I think it may have been more valuable to just help them to just get through the semester. We may focus on goals in terms of course selection and determining how quickly they could move through the program by the number of courses they take each semester.

Khristal also provided insight on what occurs during her individual sessions with students versus the workshops:

We have adapted the workshops to include goal-setting and self-esteem factors. We have also beefed up our mind-mapping, SSQR. Of course, time-management is there but it's not really part of the E-classroom [the platform used to host the workshops]. Time-management, we tend to do in the one-on-one sessions.

However, despite this focus, a relationship exists between goal-setting and time-management practices whereby they both balance each other.

Goal-setting is not always explicitly addressed during the developmental advising sessions. However, students are in fact advised to develop study plans which outline their study goals for each semester and to some extent this can be considered goal-setting. Students are

invited to share these plans with their developmental advisor to seek guidance and feedback. Therefore, although these areas are addressed in separate spaces, students are required to consider their goals in order to develop practical study plans and effective time-management practices. In this light, both groups of participants agreed that an inherent link exists between time-management and goal-setting activities, and although they cite the developmental advisors' role as essential in promoting increased competencies specifically in the area of time-management. Consequently, when asked to recall memorable experiences they encountered with the sessions, they all referenced the time-management and timetabling sessions. As Victoria recalled:

One thing that sticks out is when she [developmental advisor] told me to do, to create a timetable, and try and stick to it as much as possible. And I did do that. I did create timetables. One thing that [developmental advisor] has said to me is that setting a timetable will be effective.

Innocents also referenced the importance of these sessions and the tools provided:

Well after the advisement, it more or less boosted me to know that I was given tools to work with in terms of whether it was setting a schedule, or putting in at least three hours of revision a day. So I was given tools that I still have with me up to this day that I use. So now it is not like secondary school where you wait until exams to revise. So that was one of my errors so to speak. So you do the work during the term, but then you wait at the end, then to go over everything, which didn't really make sense. Now I have to adjust from that. So that was one of the tools I took from my advisor. I started an hour a day. Whatever we did within that topic, I took an hour a day, and I did that for a week until the next class. Whatever we did, I revised it for a week, and included it with the previous topics. So that is how I started my new routine in terms of revision.

Joyful also recalled a specific memorable experience related to time-management:

One of the things that I would have appreciated with [developmental advisor] in specific, would have been, she said “[Joyful], you're a part-time student. So you have to work harder compared to a full-time student, where they don't have much hours to put into revision, cuz I mean they're in school whole day. But as a part-time student you have to put in much more revision time.” For a minute putting in at least three hours of revision a day seemed impossible. But then it was a new challenge for me. You know, I took it as a challenge. Although it seemed difficult, it was a great challenge to see how far now I could stretch my mind within all the tiredness from work.

Innocents and Rebecca were the only participants that recalled memorable experiences in relation to goal-setting. Innocents reflected on the importance of these time-management and goal-setting sessions in helping her to move toward the “how”—practical means to achieve her goals:

For example, one of my goals was to keep my GPA at least at two. The advisor was able to explain how to go about it. So in other words, she filled the gap of the "how". Cuz you know we could set goals, but sometimes we don't know how to tackle it. So that was me, then. I knew I wanted to keep this GPA at two and above. But I didn't know how. The developmental advisor would have then given me tools in terms of you know setting revision schedules. She would have advised me to keep practicing what I learned rather than waiting for it to accumulate. Those are some of the things that stuck with me even up to today... In essence, she [developmental advisor] would have broken down the how, and with breaking down the how, she helped me to break down this big goal into a more practical realistic goal. And then, of course, the whole idea of

challenge, you know? Setting goals to help you to overcome that challenge that you're going to experience.

Rebecca shared similar sentiments and reflected on the role of the developmental advisor in this regard:

I would say I had that internal drive, and the fact that I wanted to redeem myself. But the developmental advisement also helped me with setting goals, because every time I would go to advisement the guidance that they gave kind of encouraged me to do better every semester. So every semester one of the things that I will do is set a goal that I would get an A in each class. Because of that, because of the guidance from the advisor and classes, I try and do well in the classes. I would try setting the goal of just getting an A in each class. So it was a collaboration of both of these things, me trying to redeem myself as well as the support from how supportive [developmental advisor] was. Those two things definitely improved my goal setting, up until this day actually. It really did improve my goal setting skills, not only in school but just like for my life in general.

Therefore, while the broad goal-setting concepts were addressed in the life skills course, the developmental advisor sometimes assisted students with dissecting their goals into discrete processes and practical steps that could potentially promote goal-realization. Consequently, it is evident that all the participants appreciated the interventions of the developmental advisor in the context of time-management, and to a lesser extent goal-setting. They believed that these tools were useful and could in some way inform their academic performance. However, some of them also referenced challenges sticking to it for a sustainable period of time. Interestingly, while Sade and Victoria were appreciative of the efforts on the part of the developmental advisor and the content covered during the life skills course, they did not record any change in

their competencies that can be attributed to either the life skills course or their interactions with the developmental advisor. Victoria stated:

No, there hasn't been any change really. If it [the accountability piece of having to meet with the advisor] increased the willingness, I wouldn't say so. Okay, I have two goals— completing my course of studies and getting a job. I don't understand how you structure that you just need to get to work and do it. So no, I can't say that there have been any meaningful impact.

However, this view is not primarily a result of shortcomings on the part of the developmental advisor or the life skills course as Victoria continued:

I did create timetables. One thing that [developmental advisor] has said to me is that setting a timetable will be effective. I did try to set it and what happened is I would set a set of timetables and then I would have to do it over because something changed. I don't know if I'm explaining it right to you but an appointment might come up. You know that would throw it out. And I would have to, you know, look at the timetable and re-do it. But I think where I went wrong is I modeled it up after my school timetable, and I wasn't able to stick to those specific time allotments. I should have been a little more flexible with myself. Going forward, I will try to continue to stick with a timetable. But generally what I had was a general idea of study times that worked for me. And you know, and that is what I was working with, and continue to work with.

Thus, to some extent the developmental advising sessions may have been impactful, even albeit on the minimal side of the spectrum.

The advisors both agreed that they could not directly determine whether students' competencies in these areas increased as a result of their interactions with students. However,

Aniko shared that she used students' academic performance and their continued willingness to access her services as an indicator that the intervention potentially worked. She noted:

For me, it would have been a greater willingness [on the part of the student] for us to meet and talk. I think I saw the ones who were doing well more than I would see the ones who were not doing well. So I think there was more willingness to connect to get more advice when they were doing well, they were more willing to take some advice. I found the ones who were doing better were more willing to ask for help sometimes. So in those kinds of ways, a more willingness to become more involved in the process of it, to take ownership. So those are the ways I think it might manifest [the change in students' competency levels], a willingness to connect and to take ownership. The ones who weren't doing well, especially if they came in with zero O' levels [no CSEC subjects], and then their GPA is under two, it's just that shame all around. So you mightn't see some of them who have this experience. There were those who would come in and say that they were trying to do well, but I don't think you saw much difference in terms of their academic performance or their skill sets.

Khristal also indicated that she was unable to determine the impact of her interventions regarding students goal-setting and time-management capacities. She also noted that students were more likely to commit to their plans during the first semester of enrollment by sharing:

Most of them actually do create their study timetable or study plan and they send it to me. I will usually get this only in the first semester, they don't follow through with it as the duration of the program progresses, but they will usually do this in the first semester. They are very eager in the semester to take the tips and attend the sessions.

Further, Aniko highlighted when students were more likely to seek advice regarding goal-setting:

I think the goal-setting part came in when students realized that they were in trouble. And when I see that they not doing well and then we have to call them to say “Your grade point average is under two.” That's when we would see them to talk about planning. Because I guess before you would say to students, “Come in and check in with me ever so often.” However, even this simple request was challenging for many of them. So there was no follow through in these instances. But then I think some of them took it a little more serious when they were failing. In these cases we would try to help them overcome these obstacles and some students would have gone into great detail with that.

In summary, although goal-setting skills was not extensively addressed under the purview of the developmental advisors, exposure to the time-management and timetabling sessions seemed to have a positive impact on the students’ approach to their studies, how they structured their time, and how they implemented measures to achieve their academic goals. Therefore, it can be surmised that both the developmental advising sessions and the life skills course complement each other, and thus the participants are better positioned to use the skills acquired from one area to inform how they approach other areas. Moreover, the participants’ increased goal-setting competencies also positively impacted their levels of academic self-efficacy.

Academic Self-Efficacy

The findings related to the participants’ academic self-efficacy are discussed in this section. It was imperative to ascertain whether the guidance and support provided via the developmental advising service boosted the participants’ confidence regarding their academic abilities. It was also important to highlight the mutually dependent relationships that exist amongst goal setting, performance, and academic self-efficacy. As such, the sub-themes related

to this area center on the participants' academic self-efficacy levels prior to developmental advising; the role of feedback as an essential element of academic self-efficacy; the role of lecturers in building participants' academic self-efficacy levels; and the intricate relationship amongst goal setting, performance, and academic self-efficacy.

Academic Self-Efficacy Levels Prior to Developmental Advising. The participants in this case study were asked to reflect on their academic self-efficacy levels prior to accessing the developmental advising service. With the exception of one participant, all of the others shared that they came into the developmental program feeling somewhat unsure about their academic abilities. Therefore, they expressed that their academic self-efficacy levels were generally low. It is important to note that in most cases, these low levels of academic self-efficacy were influenced by these participants' past secondary school experiences. As shared by Innocents:

I was really unsure, because of the fact that I know I was not an academic in secondary school. So I told myself that I was getting a second chance to really show myself. I was really excited because I was able to put on paper the goals I had in mind and what I felt I could have achieved. I rated myself one, I didn't rate myself too high, because I didn't know exactly what I was getting into.

Joyful shared similar experiences regarding her view of her abilities by stating "Well I always looked at myself kind of low, and felt that I was not good enough and that I wouldn't succeed." Rebecca also recalled that her academic self-efficacy levels were low when she started her program, and shared about her anxiety in these regards:

So after that [failure in secondary school], I honestly didn't know what else to do, my confidence was really low, I was really depressed, I was really sad, because I felt like a failure honestly. I just didn't know what to do at that point in time. I was really nervous. I remember one time I was actually dealing with anxiety, because I was still dealing with

anxiety from secondary school. I remember on occasions I wouldn't even show up for the exam, because the anxiety was that bad. So now that I was placed in this situation, I was still dealing with anxiety. I was very nervous of because of the pressure of wanting to do well. I actually remember going to see the counselors that was at school during my first year, just to deal with that. So that was one of the major things that I was dealing with during that time, the anxiety and nervousness of just being in the environment for the first time having to deal with everything, and the pressure on myself to do well, and especially when exam time came around. So I was still dealing with that during my first semester and I think a good bit of the first year I was dealing with that.

Cassie's perception was also similar to those highlighted above. However, she also reflected that she eventually realized that most of her developmental counterparts experienced these feelings of low confidence related to their abilities and role in the post-secondary environment. She shared:

I was unsure. And even now, sometimes I still feel unsure. I'm not sure if it's normal. You know, because I have had challenges, and not just school. Sometimes you're dealing with just life on the whole. And then I question, "[Cassie], you really want to do this now?" You know sometimes I hear people speak and just the way they speak, you could tell that this person is educated. I have even found myself in situations where I avoid conversations, because I don't want to use a word out of context. So it's like, I have had my little challenges and stuff, but I also have met persons in classes and I realize it's not just me. Everybody face their stuff, they probably just deal with it differently. And you know, they would also tell me that they are unsure. So then I know is not just me.

Unlike these participants, Victoria was the only one who expressed that she was confident in her academic abilities, and therefore felt that she would be successful. In her words, "Yes knew I

could do it.” Sade noted that although she initially felt unsure about her abilities, this soon changed. As she recalled:

I was doubting myself. It had times I felt like you know I’m not ready for this. Can I really do this, can I handle the work? When I came into the program, I thought it would have been hard. So I kind of put a mental block in my head, that it would have been hard and that I would not have been able to cope, and that I would have needed help a lot. But when I saw the work that I had to, that block went away and I was motivated to do more work.

Most of the participants experienced some degree of uncertainty regarding their academic abilities and their potential to come into the post-secondary space and succeed. As shared by the participants, these perceptions were often influenced by their past secondary school experiences and the failure they encountered in those formative spaces.

Further to the above, the developmental advisors also shared that they did not directly engage conversations with students regarding their perceived sense of ability or anything related to their academic self-efficacy levels. Rather, they relied on their observations of the students, and felt that developmental students’ confidence levels were generally low. For example, Aniko expressed:

We would have never had any straightforward question about their ability to perform or do well, I don't think we've ever had those conversations. Any thoughts I have about it would just be based on my own observation. So it's just my own judgment, right. I would say most of it would be, I think the lower end, and I'm not sure that it's something that they would have thought about. But, but yet still they were present.

Khristal also shared a similar view pertaining to Aniko’s perception:

For developmental students, their confidence is at the lower end, because almost all of them will have to repeat some level of math and English. So when they come in is, "Oh God, I don't know if I could do this, I wasn't in school since 10 years ago!" or whatever. So yes, it is at the lower end.

The developmental advisors purported that developmental students' self-efficacy levels normally reside at the lower end. They also agreed that discussions focusing on students' abilities are not facilitated during individual student sessions. However, the commonality between both groups of participants point to the low levels of academic self-efficacy that that developmental students experience when they begin their journey with post-secondary education. In this light, it was instructive to inquire about the developmental advisors' process in this context. Moreover, it was necessary to determine whether the participants felt that this service was instrumental in increasing their academic self-efficacy levels.

Both developmental advisors agreed that there were no formalized approaches or workshops directed at supporting students with increasing their academic self-efficacy levels. However, they strived to support students in these regards by providing encouragement, guidance, and unwavering support. For example, Aniko expressed:

To the best of my ability I will try, especially if their GPAs were under two. There would be the calling, I'll send an email, I'll just remind them that they still have to try, or that same thing about "So why don't you just repeat this one, so that you can get to do more?" So for me, it was more trying to call and connect with them, letting them know where they were, advising them of what was available. So trying to do workshops on study skills, and trying to do the assessment on their learning styles, encouraging them to go to the tutorial center, and calling, and emailing.

Khristal also shared that to facilitate the goal of increasing students' academic self-efficacy levels, she also incorporated the administration of a career assessment tool, provided space for students to take ownership of the process, and prioritized giving feedback where required. She stated:

At the forefront, providing encouragement is what I base everything on. We have some interventions that we use to help students increase their level of self-efficacy. First and foremost, with the RIASEC (career assessment). This is done because we are faced with students at the first meeting saying, "I'm not sure if I could actually complete this degree." So, we give them the RIASEC, which is a career assessment, to make them aware of their interests. Once they see that their personality matches what they want to do, it kind of boosts their confidence a bit. Because they are able to see that there's a reason why they chose a particular degree program. So we initially start with that to help them see that their personality matches with what they want to do. Usually, that's one of the questions we ask when they come to us "Why did you choose this career or hope to do this career?" So we do that, as one way to motivate them. We also try to encourage students to make their own decisions to as well. Of course we will guide them. So when we do the study plan, and we set the goals, it's not about me telling them what they should do, I guide them yes, but I let them take that responsibility. I would see that they feel that they are in control, that they can do this, and I boost their confidence levels. And of course, the constant feedback and interaction, the constant calling, the following up, the sending the emails, you know, just letting them know that I am there, I am willing to support, you know just to encourage them. Because we send e-mails but they don't read it, very few will respond. And so that relationship, that building part is important.

Apart from the feedback, support, and guidance they provided, the developmental advisors did not recall any other interventions that they facilitated with the intent to increase students' academic self-efficacy levels. However, as discussed in the following sub-theme, these interventions were in fact impactful.

“You’re Not Alone in the System.”: Feedback and Academic Self-Efficacy. As mentioned above, the developmental advisors in this case study provided guidance and feedback as a means to assure students that they were capable of performing well academically, and to boost students' confidence in their academic abilities. In this light, Khristal shared how she engaged this process with one of her advisees:

We do these things, but we like also to give them feedback, right. So whatever they do, and they send to me, I really try my best to give them constructive feedback about how they can do it better. [Name of student] was on the verge of leaving the college. She came in a morning, and she was ready to quit. She was sending me a lot of emails, she's not getting through with this, she was also messaging the lecturer who taught the course. She complained about a lot of challenges with this lecturer because the lecturer was not assisting her or not answering her questions, you know, and sometimes that, that really affects them and harms their persistence. And you know, she came to me and she said all she wanted the lecturer to do was show her where she went wrong or whatever, and I tried to do it for her and guide her. She felt so relieved after that attention. She was able to submit her paper, or whatever. My point was, you know just giving them that feedback, the constructive feedback, it helps them. I can say in that case, and boosted her confidence to finish her paper and submit her paper.

Further, although more credit was paid to lecturers regarding the participants' capacity to increase their levels of academic self-efficacy, these participants cited meaningful things that

their developmental advisor did that empowered them to boost their levels of academic self-efficacy. As Joyful recounted:

I would say yes [there has been a positive impact], because you're talking to her [the developmental advisor] and she knows a lot. When I say she knows a lot, she knows how to guide you, so you feel confident, well okay, "I have somebody who has my back, who can guide me and give me some advice, what to do, what not to do, how to do this, and tips." So if you're probably falling behind or falling short, you know, she could tell you know "[Joyful], you ever tried doing this? Or you could do this." So you felt good. You have somebody there encouraging you, and giving you advice, so that's good for me. So I always liaise with her and keep in touch with her. So you're not alone, completely alone in the system, you know.

At another point in the interviews Joyful also recalled the encouraging affirmations that her developmental advisor often proffered during their individual sessions:

She [the developmental advisor] always said "I believe in you [Joyful], I believe that you could do it. I see the potential. And you have come so far." Sometimes I'll tell her about, you know, life, and you know, she always encouraged me that "Okay, so you reach this far, so you will make it." Always words of encouragement that I would get from her.

Innocents also recalled an experience she had while engaging one of her courses, by highlighting how the guidance and feedback provided by her developmental advisor supported her during that difficult time, while also providing the confidence-boost that she needed:

I could remember the first time I had issues with [name of course]. I was really lagging behind. I remember frantically contacting her [the developmental advisor] and explaining to her what was taking place, you know. Time drawing near, I think it was for

the finals. And she offered to help tweak the work for me. So I sent the work, which I would have already done. I would have sent it to her, she would have left little footnotes where she thought would have needed more expansion, or where she thought would have been too much information. I think that was good for me because she wasn't just advising me in terms of the subjects to choose, but she was also lending that extra hand where the lecturer would have sort of failed me, she kind of stepped in there and got resources for me, she contacted who she remembered would have done the course, she got materials for me. That was really useful, and that is what caused me to pass. So whoever she got the material from, really broke it down bite-sized for me. That was what I appreciated, because you expect a lecturer to do that for you and not so much an advisor. And when I saw that I had that kind of support, it real motivate me, and it also make me feel good to know that I could do the work, even if it means getting some help sometimes, you know.

The other participants also shared similar sentiments. In particular, they referenced the guidance and feedback provided during the individual time-management and goal-setting sessions they had with their developmental advisor. These factors built their efficacy levels related to their goal-setting and time-management competencies. For example, Rebecca recalled:

I would say because of the support and the guidance, as well as the goal setting. After my first semester when I saw that those factors really helped and I was able to do really well as the semesters progressed, that helped increase my confidence. Like seeing that my academics, was increasing, kind of increased my confidence. So I would say because of the goal-setting, and the support and just the guidance that I received from [developmental advisor], that really helped in terms of my academics, and it reflected in

my academics really highly. And I continued taking advantage of that every semester.

Like I continued utilizing the services every semester. And just going to miss

[developmental advisor] for the guidance and that continued to reflect in my grades.

Cassie referenced the feedback provided with regard to timetabling, and the use of other study implements such as flashcards:

My high points were that her advisement would have basically been sending me like a timetable to complete so that we could adjust along the way. She also showed me how to study. So she suggested like probably the little flashcards, will be useful, you know, you just have it there and you keep using it. And even to access the extra tutorial support offered. Because you know it's like okay, she went to the extra mile to tell me to create a timetable. Cuz you know most times you go about it, like hear what, I'll study now and you know end up doing nothing. She went the extra mile to tell me to get the timetable done, and I sent it back to her. So we reviewed it to adjust some of the times and areas that we could work on. Overall the intent was for me to develop a system that worked for me.

Joyful also reflected on the guidance and feedback provided with regard to time-management and program choice:

Because [developmental advisor] actually did up a timetable for me, you know. We went through and she just made sure that this is really what I wanted to do, Psychology. So we went through some questions, just pertaining to what area or what field that I would be comfortable with, before we actually start all of this with the [developmental program]. She let me know that I had support and I went from there. When I say she knows a lot, she knows how to guide you, so you feel confident, well okay, I have somebody who has my back, who guides me, who gives me some advice, what to do,

what not to do, how to do this, and tips. So like if you're probably falling behind or falling short, you know, she could tell you know "[Joyful], you ever tried doing this? Or you could do this." So you felt good. You have somebody there encouraging you, and giving you advice, so that's good for me. It was good, so I always liaised with her and kept in touch with her. So you're not alone in the system, not completely alone in the system, you know.

These findings suggest that the developmental advisor had an indisputable impact on the participants' efficacy levels related to their time-management capabilities, moreso than their purely academic competencies. Additionally, they referred to the developmental advisor's ability to offer words of encouragement and guidance as the most meaningful aspect of the advisee/advisor relationship. The participants were generally appreciative of having someone to support them along the way. They attested that the guidance and support have been influential in helping them to succeed academically. For most of the participants, these factors in some way contributed to their increased levels of academic self-efficacy. However, they cited their lecturers as their primary sources of motivation as it relates to their increased levels of academic self-efficacy.

Lecturers and Academic Self-Efficacy. All of the participants in this case study agreed that the support and guidance provided by their developmental lecturers played a major role in empowering them to stay on course and motivated them to succeed. As noted before, in most instances the role of the lecturers in this regard was revered moreso than the developmental advisors' interventions. For example, Joyful indicated:

I think basically it's not so much the developmental team support, but it's the lecturers and, you know, their willingness to see that their students pass the course, that their students do well in the course. Because I had more interaction with them.

Victoria also recalled how one of her lecturers motivated her to build her confidence within the classroom space:

And then again I had a teacher, a lecturer who said, “Don't be afraid to ask questions, don't be afraid to ask, don't just sit down there and get scared.” Because he said that, he said don't just sit down there and get scared because he probably saw it on my face. So at the end of the class I remember listening and I said, “Don't just sit down in the class and don't say anything. Ask, get up and ask questions.”

There is no denying that the support and guidance provided by the developmental advisors have been helpful and were appreciated by the participants. It is also evident that the lecturers are invested in ensuring that their students succeed, and thus take the necessary steps to increase students' academic self-efficacy levels. However, as Joyful explained, it is possible that participants prioritizing the influence of the lecturer is potentially due to the frequent interactions they have with their lecturers, when compared to the less-frequent contact they have with their developmental advisors. It is also possible that the students perceived the role of their lecturers as more influential in this regard because the guidance and feedback provided within the classroom context are often directly related to purely academic content, and the participants' goals in these regards.

Despite the above, it can be surmised that increased efficacy levels related to time-management and goal-setting competencies also had a positive impact on the participants' academic self-efficacy. That is, by applying their improved time-management and goal-setting competencies to the classroom context the participants were better prepared to realize their academic goals—factors that holistically contributed to an increase in their levels of academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the developmental advisor provided some of the tools, guidance, and

feedback that were useful for supporting the participants with realizing their goals pertaining to the academic context, which in turn helped to influence higher levels of academic self-efficacy.

Goal Setting, Performance, and Academic Self-Efficacy. In addition to the role of the lecturers, the participants' performance in their academic tasks were also instrumental in these regards. That is, the results and outcomes that the participants realized were also motivational in helping them to improve their academic self-efficacy levels. As previously discussed, the participants' goals included maintaining a GPA of 2.0 and above and generally performing well in their classes. Therefore, when they were successful in achieving these goals, the consequent outcomes influenced their perception relative to their academic abilities. For example, Innocents exuberantly revealed:

One of one of my major goals, was to keep up my GPA, and I did that. The first thing that runs to mind is what I accomplished. So my GPA was up to three or four, the lowest you could have had I think was two or something like that. Right, so I had two point something, so I was a little above the two. And I felt good within myself to know that I could have set that goal and you know, still accomplish it. So when I passed, is like alright [Innocents], you got this, you got the skill.

Rebecca in particular shared that her good performance enabled her to overcome the shame she experienced with regard to being enrolled in a developmental program. As she explained:

After a while when I started seeing progress and stuff, the shame went away. I was able to work through it, and as the program progressed I was able to get more comfortable. And by making sure I excelled in my classes, I got confident. So the shame gradually went away.

Aniko, one of the developmental advisors also indicated that students' performance did in fact affect their levels of academic self-efficacy by stating:

Even in instances where there were those persons who came in with a low belief in their academic abilities, when they did well at even those foundation courses, I think there was a certain level of confidence, I think it really helped to raise their confidence. While they may have started off unsure of what was going to happen, I think that any little success would have encouraged them to want to continue to try.

These findings suggest that the participants' levels of academic self-efficacy increased when they achieved goals aligned with maintaining a GPA of 2.0 and above and performed well in their classes. Therefore, it can be inferred that one influences the other and that an inherent relationship exists among goal achievement, performance outcomes, and the levels of academic self-efficacy that manifest.

Overall, the participants in this case study affirmed that there were some increases in their levels of motivation and levels of academic-self-efficacy. These increases were mostly owed to the experiences they encountered with their lecturers. Therefore, none of the participants prioritized the role of developmental advising in this regard. For example, in her assessment, Joyful stated, "She [the developmental advisor] built it a bit. A bit, a little bit I guess, a bit of a confidence-booster. That I can do this, that I can handle this." The other participants also shared the view that although they were appreciative of the developmental advisor's intervention and guidance, it did not impact them as much as their lecturers' support and scaffolding. Therefore, all of them used descriptors similar to Joyful's term "a little bit" to refer to the extent that they were impacted. As Victoria succinctly stated:

I will put it this way. It [academic self-efficacy level] has stayed in the same range but it has improved slightly. I wouldn't say that it improved. It was good to hear [the affirmations and guidance provided by the developmental advisor]. But I guess because of my background, I was still a bit... Okay, to answer your question, no, I did not feel that

it particularly made me feel that I can, that I could really do this. But it's always good when somebody is positive towards you, and you know, tries to encourage you. So I am really grateful for that. And I'm really grateful that she [developmental advisor] was supportive.

In summary, the lecturers' support played a bigger role in promoting the participants' increased levels of academic self-efficacy. It is possible that other factors also contributed to this. One of which as discussed before centers on the fact that the participants spent more time with their lecturers than the developmental advisors. Another possible consideration is that the developmental advisors did not explicitly address this area during their interactions with students. However, despite the developmental advisor's minimal influence, these factors jointly influenced the participants' academic outcomes and their desire to persist.

Persistence

Developmental post-secondary students often withdraw from developmental education programs at high rates. Similarly, a report provided by the TTIOO revealed that as at the end of 2011, the developmental program retained approximately 55% of the first cohort. This trend was also observed in subsequent years and cohorts. Therefore, students' program engagement were often punctuated by their frequent withdrawals (formal and informal) and temporary leave of absences. This report also purported that the number of CSEC subjects students possessed, directly impacted their ability to persist. For example, data collected by the TTIOO suggests that students who possessed no CSEC subjects were more likely to withdraw when compared to those who acquired at least two to four subjects. In this context, all of the participants possess more than three CSEC subjects. However, it is still imperative to ascertain their views regarding their ability to persist with their program. It was also essential to consider how increased goal-setting competencies and academic self-efficacy levels influenced their

desire to persist. Thus, this section is categorized into sub-themes that address the participants' persistence levels pre-developmental advising; their reasons for/considering withdrawing; and the participants' persistence levels post-developmental advising.

“I Am Going to Complete It.”: Persistence Levels Pre-Developmental Advising. The documents reviewed and the opinions proffered by the developmental advisors reflect that developmental students are more likely to withdraw when compared to their college-level counterparts. Moreover, the majority of these students do not approach their developmental advisors to discuss their reasons for wanting to withdraw, and some would have had no interactions with their developmental advisors prior to withdrawing. These students are also more likely to withdraw during their first and second semesters. As Aniko observed, “I think many of these students withdrew between that first semester and second semester, by the time September rolled around you weren't seeing half of those students anymore.” This pattern of withdrawal did in fact occur with one of the participants. Cassie first started the developmental program in 2009. However, after the first semester she withdrew. Cassie recalled that she did not share her challenges with her assigned developmental advisor at that time. Fortunately, she returned to the TTIOO 10 years later in 2019 with a renewed commitment to completing the program this time around.

Like Cassie, the other participants explicitly stated that from the point of enrollment they were committed to completing their programs—both their developmental and their college-level programs. As Victoria noted:

I did know that regardless of if I had to do a course multiple times I was going to see the program through to the end. To the end, not just the end of [developmental program] but I was going to see through to the end of the Office Administration program. Okay, I did decide that I am going to do this. And this has remained static. It has remained, it

hasn't changed. I mean, in my mind, yes, I have thoughts about dropping out. I think about it all the time, but I'm not going to do it I am going to complete it.

Rebecca also shared a similar view:

Oh, I was very persistent. At no point in time I wanted to withdraw or dropout, because in the back of my mind this was a second chance, you know, I was getting another opportunity to, you know... I know I keep saying to redeem myself, but that's kind of how I looked at it. I was getting another chance, another opportunity so I wasn't going to drop out or leave, I was going to push through and complete the program.

Overall, all of the participants enrolled at the TTIOO with the intent to complete both of their programs. With the exception of one participant, all of them have been successful in these regards. During her interviews for this study, Joyful indicated that although she was committed, she felt that she needed to take a step back and regroup before continuing with her program. This is further discussed in the following section.

Reasons for Withdrawing. The developmental advisors outlined that the developmental students they served withdrew for several reasons inclusive of financial and work-related challenges, difficulty fulfilling their course requirements, course performance, and personal and family-related factors. For example, Aniko pointed out:

Is work that would have been challenging, that was huge. Work, financial issues, not getting time off. Sometimes you're not working, and that prevents you from coming to class. Sometimes you have children that you have childcare issues. So I think a lot of it would have been reasons why. So for me that first semester students would have had, depending on how that went, and how well they were able to overcome whatever that was, that would determine if they were going to come for the second semester. And after that, if it didn't happen after that second semester, that's it.

Khristal also shared a similar outlook:

Students usually withdraw because of low GPAs. Because if the GPA falls below two they have to pay for the courses until the GPA increases. GATE always funds the first semester. So, when second semester comes around, if their GPA falls below two, and they can't figure out how to pay for it, they will withdraw. And, of course they have personal factors with work and all of that too as well, there's a whole host of factors that cause them to withdraw. But off the bat is "I have to pay for my courses now!" and they can't figure out how to get the money so they will skip a few semesters or take a leave of absence.

As discussed before, these challenges were also referenced by the student participants in this study. Therefore, although the participants were committed to completing their programs, some of them sometimes harbored thoughts of withdrawing along the way.

The views provided by the student participants coincide with what the developmental advisors have observed over time. For example, Victoria expressed that she often thought about withdrawing because of her course workload. However, she resisted this temptation by focusing on the fact that she was desirous of getting a good job post-degree completion. Likewise, in explaining her reasons for withdrawing in 2009, Cassie explained:

It wasn't too long after I started working at [name of company], and because I was a new employee, I faced a lot of challenges with the working hours and school and stuff like that. So I told myself I would take a semester off, and the semester turned out to be... I started back in 2009, no 2019 sorry. And since then I have been going strong.

Cassie also shared that during that time she was dealing with personal relationship-related challenges. Therefore, both work and personal factors affected her ability to persist with her

program. However, she indicated that she is better-prepared to continue with her program at this point.

Joyful also encountered challenges during her time at the TTIOO. However, while she tried to manage these factors, it eventually came to a point where she decided to withdraw. She is also uncertain about whether she would return to continue with her program. Joyful revealed that constant battles related to her academic performance, lack of support, and her work-related responsibilities forced her to make this decision. As she shared:

I was frustrated, because it was a lot, you know, it's not something I'm accustomed to, other than the 8 to 4 job. Then I had to juggle all of these courses and the assignments, and to me it was overwhelming. I think it was so many things. One, I didn't feel like I had the support, because I had no study group, and everybody was busy. I also don't really have anybody in my family who I can ask a question or maybe say "What you think about this?". They'll be like "Oh you're asking the wrong person, I knows nothing." So I was kind of on my own, although I tried. And then there was work. I don't know, so many things... I don't know, I mean I was trying, but somehow I felt maybe I'm not equipped enough. I just feel sad thinking about it.

It is unfortunate that Joyful was unable to continue her program. The other participants have however committed to persisting toward completion, despite the obstacles they face. Aniko asserted that the students who stay in their programs are the ones she defines as being resilient. As she stated:

The ones who stayed for sure, the ones who weren't overcome with other challenges that may have stopped anybody. Those students were resilient, they may not have known it that time, or they may not have even thought about it, but the mere fact that they kept coming back, and were willing to take the long route to get to something.

Consequently, it was important to determine how the developmental advisors supported students with harnessing the resilience they require to persist with their programs, and how the participants valued these interventions.

Persistence Levels Post-Developmental Advising. The developmental advisors were asked how often they were required to pre-empt students' decisions to withdraw, and how they typically addressed those scenarios. In response to this question, Aniko shared:

There were students who would say that they are withdrawing. There were those who would come and say "I'm taking the semester off" but some might never, you wouldn't see half of those again. But for those who will come and say you know, "I'm going to withdraw." you will try to engage them in a conversation about why they want to do it.

And sometimes it really is in their best interest to take a pause.

However, although Aniko did in fact intervene in some of these matters, she also noted that she did not feel sufficiently skilled to address areas related to persistence:

But I don't know if I would have been skilled enough to sit down with them to say, "Have you explored all the options to try to make this work? And what is really at the root of your wanting to withdraw from the program?" I honestly don't know if I would have tried hard enough to say to them stay and continue. And then as a development advisor I always tried to some extent to stay in my lane because I know I'm not a counselor, I know what you shared and what I could relate to. So I would say, "You know, maybe you should talk to this one because that is the person who has the skills and tools to help you with this particular problem." And so to me I was always trying to tread very lightly.

Similar to Aniko, Khristal also indicated that pre-empting students' decisions to withdraw was not a direct role of the developmental advisors. However, she outlined the process that she engaged when faced with these withdrawal scenarios:

We're not really required [to pre-empt students' decisions to withdraw], but we intervene because the withdrawal forms come to our department for approval and sign off. On the form they need to state why they are withdrawing. If the reason is outside of personal or financial issues we intervene. I will call them, and if it's something academic, sometimes it might be just a matter of frustration. They are always frustrated with the registry. They are always frustrated with some teacher, although during orientation we inform them that they should reach out to their lecturers. During orientation there's a whole host of areas that we try to make them aware of. We want them to be aware of what is expected of them, and reaching out to their lecturers with whatever challenge they're having is one expectation. And sometimes two semesters may go by, and then they want to withdraw. When we question why they wish to withdraw, they may respond by saying "Because it's so frustrating with the teacher, and I have to get them again for math, and I just can't take it, and [TTIOO] this, and [TTIOO] that." I would ask whether they reached out to the lecturer and in most cases they will indicate that they did not. So we have had cases once it's not personal or financial we will intervene, and we try, we do our best. Some may go on to another institution to do whatever else or a change of program. But we try to intervene and see how we could assist.

Therefore, the assumption can be made that the developmental advisors in this case study primarily addressed reasons for withdrawals that are not personal or financial in scope, and support students with reasons aligned with course-related factors. As a result, it was instructive to determine how the participants felt about these interventions.

It is noteworthy that only two participants approached their developmental advisor to express their thoughts about withdrawing from the program—Innocents and Joyful. Innocents recalled her frustrations in these regards at the start of her program:

That was the end of the road for me. I felt as though this was not making sense. You know? I felt as though I was trying to fool myself into thinking that I could finish this program. Although I tried to encourage myself, at the same time I felt as though I was fooling myself. Out of the blue this feeling hits you like a ton of bricks. So yes, there were times when I felt as though I could call it quits.

Innocents shared that expressing these feelings to her developmental advisor to some extent curbed her desire to withdraw. She indicated that they both talked through her issues with her courses and that this helped somewhat. Joyful indicated that she was grateful for the developmental advisor's referral to the counselling service when she highlighted her challenges:

One time I felt like I wanted to give up and that this [the program] was not for me. I felt like it was not working out, and I reached to her [developmental advisor]. When I reached out she led me to a counsellor. I remembered that, because I really felt like almost to my breaking point. I was frustrated, because it was a lot, you know, it's not something I'm accustomed to, other than the 8 to 4 job, and then you have to juggle all these courses and the assignments and, to me it was overwhelming... And she said "[Joyful], I'm really glad you reached out. We do have counseling sessions at [the TTIOO] for free." And she told me, "I will connect you with someone who can help you along, so that you don't continue to feel frustrated and stressed, and you'll get that help that you need." So I remember that very much.

However, although Joyful embraced the opportunity to seek counselling support, and had multiple sessions, she felt that she needed to withdraw.

As previously mentioned, some participants sometimes felt like withdrawing, while there were others who did not share this experience. However, they all shared that as much as possible they tried to use the advice provided by their developmental advisor, especially those

in relation to time-management and goal-setting skills. They believed that these pieces of advice helped them to stay enrolled in the program. They also drew on inner will and determination in order to persist. For example, Rebecca recalled:

Um, no, I don't think I had any thoughts of withdrawing. I never really had those thoughts of withdrawing I remember I did have instances where I was overwhelmed, but it never got to a point where I wanted to withdraw and just quit, because after my first semester I saw that things were progressing. And I wasn't really struggling with my classes. And because of the support I was receiving from [developmental advisor], I didn't really feel like withdrawing. I believe if I didn't have any support then I probably would have thought about it. If things were too demanding and I couldn't handle it, then probably I would have withdrawn. But because I had the support and I saw how things were progressing academically, it didn't really cross my mind to withdraw.

Cassie also recalled:

There was no time where I thought that I needed to withdraw. But last semester I did had the urge to, I felt overwhelmed a bit. But with everything taking place, I really did not reach out to get that extra support or anything.

With the exception of Innocents and Joyful, these participants expressed that they did not approach their advisor to discuss their potential withdrawal, because they are committed to persisting. As a result, apart from the general encouragement provided by the developmental advisor, the student participants were unable to recall any meaningful experiences with their developmental advisor relating to persistence.

The student participants in this case study shared the general view that the developmental advising service did not have a large impact on their desire to persist. They were appreciative of the support and guidance provided. However, as previously mentioned most of

them did not approach their developmental advisor with factors pertaining to program withdrawal or persistence. Of the two participants who approached the developmental advisor in these regards, one continued with her plans to withdraw. Additionally, the developmental advisors also indicated that they were unable to determine the effectiveness of their interventions in this regard. Consequently, Aniko stated:

At this point, no [there is no way to determine the effectiveness of interventions in relation to students' persistence levels]. I think if it is something that we would have been checking on an annual academic basis, asking questions, then yes, we would have been able to get that kind of information. To me the only way you might be able to do that is if there is an annual check-in with students to ascertain why they're still there. We would also need to find out the number of developmental advising hours they would have received, how often they interacted with their developmental advisor, what kind of support they required, and that sort of thing. I think you just have to plan to capture those details.

However, Khristal recalled data from a departmental study conducted in 2014 on the developmental advising service and noted:

I would say we do have the data, well it's old data from our study in 2014. It's not an updated study. However, we saw that the students who persisted or accessed the developmental service over time for two semesters showed an increase in their persistence. So we know that there is some type of relationship. Okay, once they have accessed it for more than two semesters or two sessions or so, although there were external factors, we saw a level of academic improvement.

Thus, the TTIOO is in possession of evidence in support of the view that a relationship exists between the number of developmental advising sessions students access and their levels of

persistence. It is also purported that a relationship exists between the number of interactions students have with their developmental advisor and their academic performance. It should be recognized that all of the student participants accessed the developmental advising service at least three times, some as much as five times as at the point of this study. However, although Joyful accessed the service multiple times, she followed through on her decision to withdraw. At this point and in reference to the other participants, it could not be ascertained whether this intervention is sufficient enough motivate them to at least complete the developmental education program.

“Tools in my Backpack on the Journey”

In this case study, the participants were required to reflect on their experiences with the developmental advising service in relation to their goal-setting competencies, levels of academic self-efficacy, and desire to persist with their programs. They were therefore asked to detail why these experiences were meaningful to them and to assess the extent to which they influenced their current academic-related behaviors and outcomes. As highlighted before, a fact that remained constant was the participants’ appreciation for the guidance and support provided by the developmental advisor. As such, they all felt that this support service was useful, and prepared them for achieving success in both their developmental and college-level programs. Five of the participants referenced that this support service was particularly important because they were the first in their families to embark on a degree-seeking journey, and because of the limited success they realized during the secondary education phase. The following reflection Innocents provided aptly captures this overarching essence:

It [the developmental advising service] impacted me. One, it opens up my mind to a different level of thinking. It takes you from one level of life or one level of operating to another level. And you know, it's uncomfortable yet still I embrace it, because it more or

less takes you out of your comfort zone. You know it's not like in primary school or secondary school where you will just talk it and leave it, you now have to talk it and actually walk the walk of getting the goal that you really want. And you know hearing from other people, you know, yes I went to university I have my degree or so forth. But they do not provide any depth regarding courses, or whether the experience was difficult. In most cases you receive surface responses. So now that I am in the position where I am navigating through higher education, this is a new challenge for me. I already mentioned that I don't have anybody in my background or in my family that would have been through university or college. Most of them would have dropped out after primary school, or would have done a trade, or evening classes, and these different things. So now that I have reached this stage at such a young age it is an uncomfortable and challenging experience. It drags you out of your comfort zone. And I embrace that about it, because it is not only about the program, the experience prepares you to confront real life scenarios. So I really see the experience, and the guidance, and the skills as my tools in my backpack on the journey. You know, even when it's time to transfer over into actually getting into the degree, I intend to use them as tools. You know you set bigger goals, but you also have to set the minor goals that you can achieve day by day, towards the bigger ones.

Although Joyful withdrew, she also reminisced that "Acquiring these skills in my academic journey for me made me recognize my potential which helped me to overcome challenges in my life goals." The other participants also shared similar thoughts regarding the developmental advising service. However, while Victoria also acknowledged the service's usefulness, she felt that it was not very impactful in her context. As she reflected:

So I think it can be helpful. Yes, I think there are people who need it, and it can be helpful. I don't want to say no that it's not going to be helpful. But I do think it is, but it's just that it, it didn't really impact me. I didn't really need it as much.

Victoria explained that factors such as her age and extensive working experience situated her to function effectively without having to rely on the developmental advisor for support. However, it is noteworthy that she agreed that this support service can be useful to other students—a view that has been affirmed by the other participants. Therefore, to varying degrees the developmental advising service has been impactful. However, the level of impact may be influenced by the experiences and skillsets that students present at the point of enrollment.

Findings Summary

This chapter depicts the findings that were derived from the case study which was conducted at the TTIOO. In particular, the case constituted the developmental student population who would have accessed the developmental advising support service provided at the TTIOO. The first part of this section focuses on the student participants' characteristics and their experiences with secondary school. As such, all of the participants in this case study were non-traditional, first-generation students. Moreover, all were part-timers, while some occupied full-time jobs and were responsible for dependents inclusive of parents and children. These participants also identified specific factors that contributed to their academic-underpreparedness during their engagement with secondary school—insufficient support, subject-related challenges, limited confidence and self-assuredness, and insufficient academic-related skills.

During the initial stages of the TTIOO's developmental education program, the participants negotiated challenges inclusive of the shame and embarrassment aligned with being a developmental student; concerns about being burdensome; difficulty keeping up with math course requirements; challenges adopting effective time, study, and goal-setting skills; and

personal and financial factors. To varying degrees the participants have been able to work through these challenges on an individual level, and with the support provided by their developmental advisor and course lecturers. However, some participants also shared that they continue to battle with addressing some of these areas.

Some participants did not approach the developmental advisor with the intent to highlight and work through the challenges they encountered. Their reticence in this regard was tied to concerns about being burdensome, as well as their unawareness of the scope of the developmental advising service and the type of support that could be accessed. However, while this unawareness was highlighted by the student participants, the developmental advisors shared about the measures they took to enlighten students about the developmental advisor's role and thus the services that could be accessed. Despite these efforts, the participants expressed uncertainties regarding the scope and breadth of the service—a factor that impacted how they engaged with the service and thus their perception of developmental advising.

With regard to the student participants' goal setting competencies, the participants in this case study generally felt that setting effective goals related to their academic lives often surfaced as a challenge which inadvertently affected the levels of success they sometimes experienced. The participants' academic goals at this stage focused on passing each semester with a good grade and thus maintaining their GPAs. In assessing their goal-setting competencies, the participants believed that this skill improved over time. However, these improvements were primarily attributed to their engagement with the life skills class, and to a lesser extent their interactions with the developmental advisor. The main reason for this centers on the fact that goal-setting is primarily addressed via the life skills course versus the individual sessions between students and their developmental advisors.

The findings related to the participants' academic self-efficacy highlighted that they initially felt somewhat unsure about their academic abilities. In most cases these low levels of academic self-efficacy were influenced by the participants' past secondary school experiences. While the participants valued the feedback, support, and guidance provided by the developmental advisor, they did not recall any interventions with the developmental advisor that increased their academic self-efficacy levels. Rather, they felt that their lecturers played a more instrumental role boosting their academic self-efficacy, while the developmental advisor was instrumental in increasing their efficacy levels related to their time-management skills. One possible reason for this aligns with the fact that the participants spent more time with their lecturers versus the developmental advisors. Therefore, the encouragement, affirmations, and support provided in the classroom space had a more profound effect.

In terms of persistence, the participants all agreed that they enrolled at the TTIOO with the intent to persist and to complete both their developmental and college-level programs. However, they also shared that they sometimes thought about withdrawing when the challenges they encountered became unbearable. At the point of this study, one participant withdrew. As highlighted by the developmental advisors, developmental students usually withdrew because of reasons inclusive of financial and work-related challenges, difficulty fulfilling their course requirements, course performance, and personal and family-related factors. The student participants also agreed that these factors often influenced their thoughts about withdrawing. However, most of the participants implied that they did not approach their advisor to discuss their potential withdrawal, because they are committed to persisting. Consequently, most of the student participants were unable to recall any meaningful experiences with their developmental advisor relating to persistence.

Several aspects of the findings derived through this case study are applicable to other post-secondary educational spaces, particularly those that serve a developmental student population such as community colleges and technical/vocational institutions. At the forefront resides the fact that the participants in this case study displayed similar characteristics to developmental students in other international spaces. However, while some similarities exist, in many regards the participants' secondary school experiences in relation to their preparedness for college would have been slightly different compared to their international counterparts. For example, schools within the North American system typically provide programs and support services that can work toward preparing students for college-level pursuits. Unfortunately, this practice is not yet widespread within the Trinbagonian secondary school system. Therefore, students' preparedness for college-level pursuits are impacted by this factor, institutional and policy-related shortcomings, and insufficient resource provisions. In this light, the divergent experiences and the challenges recorded by the participants in this case study can be used to inform an understanding of developmental students enrolled across Caribbean and Trinbagonian post-secondary institutions. This transference is possible because many of these students would have encountered similar experiences and challenges that would have contributed to their less than favorable academic outcomes and limited preparedness for college life.

In addition to the above, the participants' perceptions and evaluations of the developmental advising service in the case of the TTIOO can be applied to other educational spaces, especially those within the Caribbean and Trinbagonian context. Such an application can foster an increased awareness regarding how post-secondary students perceive similar support services, and thus the areas that are required to improve these student support deliverables. Applying these findings to understand students enrolled at other institutions can be particularly

useful for illuminating factors related to students' academic skillsets and outcomes, self-efficacy levels, and persistence-related factors.

Overall, the participants were appreciative of the support, guidance, and feedback provided by their developmental advisor. It is also noteworthy that this institutional support had a more profound effect on some participants when compared to others. However, one of the main recommendations proffered by the participants centered on their desire to have increased access to the developmental advising service. That is, they would like to have more opportunities to engage with their developmental advisor and thus more space to discuss other areas of their academic experience that are not usually addressed. Other areas of the TTIOO's developmental advising service also require attention, and there are macro factors that must also be considered to the intent to facilitate improved service delivery. In this light, these findings can be useful for informing how the service is managed in the future, and they also convey several implications for policy, practice, and research. These areas are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Implications

This chapter addresses the study's overarching research questions in relation to the findings that were derived. In this light, connections are made to the literature and the theoretical framework which both influenced how the study was approached. The first part of this chapter discusses the challenges that the participants encountered while adjusting to the TTIOO's post-secondary environment. This is followed by a discussion that focuses on the participants' perception of developmental advising in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated goal-setting skills and academic self-efficacy. Concerns aligned with the participants' unawareness of the breadth of the developmental advising service are also discussed in this section. The question of whether the participants' engagement with the developmental advising service enhanced the participants' levels of academic performance and desire to persist is then explored. This chapter culminates with a discussion on the implications of this study for policy, practice, and research.

Challenges and Hurdles Encountered

This section addresses the research question that sought to highlight the major hurdles the participants encountered while adjusting to the post-secondary environment. Students across institutional types often experience emotional, psychological, and personal challenges (Cotton et al., 2017; Forbus et al., 2011). Additionally, community college and by extension developmental students enrolled at these institutions are more prone to experience economic, academic, and social hardships (Bahr, 2008; Barhoum, 2018; O'Gara et al., 2009). Hence, in addition to their academic underpreparedness, developmental students often navigate all of these other challenges concurrently. Some of these challenges were identified by the participants in this study. Contextually, emphasis is placed on the challenges directly associated

with the participants' academic-related skillsets and competencies. However, it is also important to discuss the shame and embarrassment the participants aligned with being a developmental student.

Difficulty Utilizing Academic Skillsets: Goal-Setting, Time-Management, and Study Skills

While not exempt to the developmental student population, utilizing effective time, study, and goal-setting skills is usually a fundamental challenge that these students encounter (Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005). In terms of their academic skillsets, most of the participants shared that they enrolled at the TTIOO possessing limited competencies in these areas. For example, during the early stages of the program the participants were prepared to identify specific academic goals. However, in many cases they were ill-equipped to specify practical steps for achieving these goals, and commit to following through on these steps.

In addition to difficulties engaging effective goal-setting practices, achieving a manageable work/school/life/ balance also surfaced as a great source of difficulty for the participants. This resonates with insights shared by Hollis (2009) and Miller and Murray (2005) relative to the developmental student population. In this context, utilizing effective time-management practices was particularly challenging given the addition of course requirements to existing work-life demands, childcare responsibilities, and other personal, situational, and environmental factors. Similar to the area of goal-setting, the participants expressed that they were not exposed to sufficient support/instructional services that could have enabled them to harness their time-management skillsets.

It is possible that the participants' limited competencies in the aforementioned areas were influenced by limited access to support systems during the secondary school phase—support that could have enabled the participants to harness these skillsets. This shortcoming is noteworthy because effective goal-setting abilities often influence the levels of success

individuals realize and consequently one's efficacy levels (Bandura, 1986, 1995). Additionally, multiple studies show that self-regulated learning, goal-setting, and planning activities are significant predictors of academic achievement (Alotaibi et al., 2017; Morisano et al., 2010). Thus, the participants were somewhat disadvantaged because of their limited competencies in these areas. This hurdle can in fact be a continuation of what occurred during secondary school, and is now amplified by adulthood and its accompanying responsibilities such as child/family care, work, and other personal factors. This indicates that factors directed at improving the support systems that secondary school students access should be considered with the intent to improve their skillsets in these areas. These considerations can potentially increase aspects of students' readiness for post-secondary pursuits.

Shame, Embarrassment, and Limited Ownership

Often times community college students experience a shame-based sense of self because of their limited prior academic success (Flynn, 2015). In many cases these prior academic shortcomings would have fueled these students' entry into the community college system, and more specifically their enrollment in developmental programs—hence the reason for the shame they experience. This shame and sense of limited academic ability promotes low self-esteem, poor self-concept, self-doubt, and insecurity (Flynn, 2015). They also constrain students from making connections to support systems that could potentially improve their outcomes (Kaufman, 1989 as cited in Flynn, 2015). Contextually, the participants recorded challenges aligned with the shame they experienced as a result of prior academic failures and being labelled as post-secondary developmental students. This label impacted how they engaged with their program, peers, courses, and campus environment. For example, they revealed that they often disguised the fact that they were not enrolled in a college-level program, and in many instances limited their engagement with their peers and institutional

support services. It can also be surmised that the participants' sense of shame also resulted in self-doubt, insecurity, uncertainty, and reticence toward reaching out for assistance even when presented with support options. As a consequence, this shame restricted their involvement with the developmental advising service and their limited ownership of the process. Fortunately, the participants overcame this sense of shame when they performed well in their coursework, and when they processed their developmental status as a means to improve their future academic and career outcomes.

These participants' reticence toward accessing the developmental advising service and taking ownership of the process is reflective of Flynn's (2015) view that community college students in particular are often wary of accessing support systems that can potentially increase their academic outcomes. This reservedness is amplified in the context of the developmental student population because these students are often insecure about their status, and fail to reflect on their presence in and interaction with the post-secondary world (Hollis, 2009). This finding was particularly noteworthy because although the participants wished that they had access to similar institutional support systems at the secondary school level, they were now cautious about accessing the support systems provided at the TTIOO. It can be inferred that the participants experienced some degree of uncertainty and did not fully reflect on what their presence meant in this new academic space. As such, they did not fully consider how they could have utilized the opportunities that were presented with the intent to bolster their academic profiles and levels of success.

Interestingly, one of the reasons proffered by the participants to explain their reasons for not fully utilizing the developmental advising service centered on their desire to not be seen as a burden by their developmental advisor. Although they often required assistance and guidance, they felt that their issues were not related to advising, and that the developmental

advisor had too many students under her purview. To some extent this resonates with Hollis's (2009) view that community college students are often insufficiently prepared to reflect on their newfound presence and role within the post-secondary educational sphere. Once students can place sufficient value on the meaning of their presence in these spaces, and thus consider how they should engage with the post-secondary environment, they are better equipped to take ownership of how they utilize support services to bolster their success.

In summary, the major challenges encountered by the participants included financial and course-related challenges, difficulties harnessing effective academic skillsets, the sense of shame and embarrassment aligned with being a developmental student, and concerns about being burdensome. In some cases, these challenges arose because of the prior experiences the participants encountered during the secondary school phase and their insufficient preparedness for college-level academic pursuits. Other factors such as limited support, guidance, and personal factors were also contributory. The ensuing section addresses the second research question which sought to determine how developmental advising aided the participants in these regards.

The Role of Developmental Advising: The Participant's Perspective

Developmental education programs prioritize providing mandatory advising and/or counselling support services to students (Boylan et al., 1997; McCabe & Day, 1998). In particular, developmental advising is seen as an interactive support intervention that is directed at providing developmental students with tools and services that can empower them to succeed in achieving their academic, career, and life ambitions. This section responds to the research question of whether the participants perceived the role of developmental advising as instrumental in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and whether it increased their levels of academic self-efficacy. Additionally, the issue of

the participants' unawareness of the breadth of the developmental advising service is also discussed because of its influence on their perception of the service.

Developmental Advising, Goal Setting, and Time Management

Developmental advisors typically adopt mentorship roles and are enshrined with the responsibility of assisting students with harnessing the skills required to effectively pursue their academic goals (Frost, 1993). In order to fulfill this aim, providing consistent feedback is a pivotal aspect of this advising approach (Bland, 2003; Hollis, 2009; Schwebel et al., 2012). Broadly speaking, guidance and feedback are instrumental for empowering students to bolster their strengths in various areas (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Moreover, these inputs are particularly necessary for inspiring students to develop competencies utilizing effective goal-setting, time-management, and study skills (Chris et al., 2007; Gale & Parker, 2017; Smothers, 2012). Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the guidance and feedback provided via developmental advising can enable developmental students to improve their academic skillsets.

As discussed before, the participants in this study experienced challenges utilizing academic skillsets such as goal-setting and time-management. In order to achieve positive outcomes aligned with effective goal-setting practices, students should access guidance and enlist self-regulative influences that can support their goal-setting and goal-achieving efforts (Bandura & Cervone, 1983). Administrators responsible for the TTIOO's developmental education recognized the importance of providing guidance to developmental students in these areas. Thus, they sought to mitigate the impact of students' shortcomings in these areas by including goal-setting as part of the life skills course curriculum, while time management was primarily addressed via the developmental advising sessions.

Although goal-setting was primarily covered in the classroom environment, some of the participants attested that the developmental advising sessions were in fact helpful in assisting

them with identifying manageable means for achieving their academic goals. Therefore, while the students prioritized the role of their lecturers in this regard, they were also appreciative of the influence the advisor had in relation to getting them to the “how” regarding goal attainment. The intimate nature of the developmental advising sessions created a sense of ease whereby the participants felt comfortable discussing areas related to goal-setting that they did not openly address in the classroom setting.

It is noteworthy that the developmental advisors played an instrumental role in the context of time-management—another important self-regulated skill necessary to thrive in the academic environment. From the participants’ perspectives, the feedback provided positioned them to improve their competencies in this area. That is, they felt that the developmental advising sessions enabled them to value how they spent their time and to develop practical time-scheduling systems that assisted with keeping them balanced. Although the participants shared that in many cases they were unable to maintain their use of the time-tables they developed in partnership with their developmental advisor, they were appreciative of the guidance and feedback provided in this area.

Given that the life skills course seemed to have a more pronounced effect on the participants goal-setting skills, the participants generally perceived the developmental advising service as being instrumental in assisting them with increasing their competencies related to engaging effective goal-setting and time-management practices. Increased competencies in these areas also directly influenced the participants’ academic-self efficacy.

Developmental Advising and Academic Self Efficacy

Developmental advisors are seen as educators and facilitators that enable students to develop an awareness of their values, personal characteristics, aspirations, and needs (Gordon, 1994; Jordan, 2000). Similarly, they also have the potential to motivate students to develop

positive academic self-concepts (Crookston, 1992; Frost, 1993; Grites, 2013; Hollis, 2009). This is especially important because many developmental students do not perceive themselves as being powerful, capable of successfully navigating the post-secondary trajectory, and are often insecure about their status—factors that affect their academic performance and desire to persist (Almeida, 1991; Hollis, 2009). In this light, the participants in this study shared that their confidence in their ability to thrive academically at the TTIOO resided at the lower end when they first started the program. Individuals demonstrating low levels of self-efficacy usually feel overwhelmed and are easily threatened when required to traverse difficult situations (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Additionally, individuals possessing low levels of academic self-efficacy are less likely to commit to set goals and where possible often avoid setting cognitively-oriented goals and tasks. In many instances these facets were evidenced in the participants where they sometimes became overwhelmed, initially did a poor job of setting practical and realistic goals, and were often unable to follow through with the steps required to achieve set goals.

Moreover, individuals with lower levels of self-efficacy do not perceive failure as an opportunity to grow and master specified tasks, and lack the ability or desire to persevere when faced with adversities (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Comparably, to varying extents the participants expressed that they sometimes saw their failures as stumbling blocks rather than as opportunities to grow. One reason for this could be associated with their past academic failures during secondary school. To improve these poor perceptions related to students' academic abilities, developmental advisors are bestowed with the responsibility of inspiring students to develop positive views of their academic selves, and to ultimately realize academic success (Crookston, 1972; Hollis, 2009).

The participants valued the motivation and guidance provided by the developmental advisor. However, they believed that their lecturers had a more profound impact on boosting

their confidence in their ability to succeed. Several factors can be used to explain this outcome. From Bandura's (1977, 1986) perspective, verbal persuasion positions students to harness the capabilities required to master specific tasks and to hone the requisite skills that can increase their ability to thrive academically. As such, self-efficacy is specific to particular contexts and spheres. Explained further, the support, guidance, and motivation provided by the developmental advisors are usually in reference to students' general abilities. However, the support, guidance, and motivation provided by lecturers are often specific to the course/subject content under the purview of the lecturer. The high value the participants placed on the investments made by their lecturers in these regards is not surprising. In fact, this is expected because non-traditional, and thus developmental students typically accord high values to the interactions they engage with faculty members (Forbus, et al., 2010; Newbold et al., 2010). It is also likely that the participants placed a higher value on their lecturers' influence because they correlated the support, guidance, and motivation provided in the classroom space with their positive course-related performance outcomes.

Overall, while the developmental advisor provided generalized commendations that impacted how the participants assessed their academic abilities, those provided by the lecturers were specific to the courses the students engaged and were valued more highly. The role of the developmental advising sessions in regard to self-efficacy were more pronounced in the area of time-management, versus the participants' academic abilities. However, while developmental advising conveyed a lesser impact, it is possible that all the academic-related skills the participants acquired cumulatively influenced their academic self-efficacy. This became evident because the participants' ability to realize their academic goals and balance their time, also worked toward increasing their levels of academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the role of the developmental advisor is quite noteworthy in this context by virtue of the support she provided

to the participants with the intent to strengthen their academic skillsets. It can be surmised that the feedback and appraisals influenced the participants' academic self-efficacy similar to that evidenced in the formal teaching context, albeit to a lesser extent. Moreover, these inputs had a direct impact on the participants' academic performance and their desire to persist. However, a greater awareness of the role and scope of the service must be carefully articulated, so that students can fully utilize the service to their benefit.

The disconnect in reference to the participants' understanding of the role of the developmental advising process inhibited them from taking a high level of ownership of their respective advising process. That is, their restricted understanding of the scope of the service limited their participation and ownership relative to other areas that fall under the purview of developmental advising. To some extent, this limited understanding disrupted the successful unfolding of what King (2005) refers to as "movement and progression" in the context of developmental advising and academic success. It is also likely that the participants' limited ownership of the developmental advising process and limited understanding of the scope of the service also contributed to their perception of how the developmental advising service impacted their goal-setting skills and levels of academic self-efficacy. Effectively engaging this type of support requires that students are acutely aware of the provisions in this regard. In this way, they may be more receptive to accessing the service to address areas apart from academic/course related issues, thereby increasing their ownership of the process. This in turn can potentially positively impact their academic outcomes, fuel improvements regarding their academic skillsets, and increase their commitment to persist with their programs.

Impact of Developmental Advising on Academic Performance and Persistence

This section responds to the last research question which explored how the participants' engagement with an institutional support system—developmental advising, and their

acquisition of academic self-efficacy and goal-setting skills influenced their academic performance and desire to persist. Bandura's model promotes the view that human functioning is grounded in triadic reciprocal relationships among one's behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986). In this light, the findings derived from studies conducted by Heller and Cassady (2017) and Wright et al. (2014) showed that while behavioral and personal factors were useful for predicting students' success, environmental factors were the most significant predictor of student success within the community college context. Relatedly, this study's findings highlight the significant impact that institutional factors can play in advancing student success.

It is evident that a relationship existed among the participants' personal factors and experiences, their engagement with institutional support services, and consequently their behavioral outcomes. That is, the participants enrolled at the TTIOO having negotiated their individual secondary school and personal experiences, some of which negatively impacted their prior educational outcomes. However, both the developmental advising service and the lecturers' instructional approach assisted the participants with moderating their respective behavioral and personal factors that could have negatively affected their academic performance. The following sections highlight the specific ways through which developmental advising as an institutional resource helped to position the participants to succeed academically. Emphasis is placed on improvements relative to the participants' academic outlooks and performance, persistence levels, and readiness for college life.

Improved Academic Outlooks and Performance

At the start of their program the participants generally assessed their academic-related abilities and preparedness for post-secondary education as being at the lower end of the spectrum. For example, most of the participants felt unsure about their academic abilities and

potential to come into the post-secondary space and succeed. These perceptions were primarily influenced by their past secondary school experiences and the academic failure encountered in those formative spaces. Individuals' beliefs about their abilities in any given context influence how they think and feel, their motivational levels, and consequently their actions (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Therefore, to some extent the participants' outlooks had a direct impact on their initial approach to their studies, motivational levels, and actions. The participants' access to the developmental advising service prepared them to revisit and revise these initial negativistic perceptions and outlooks.

Students who perceive that they have access to institutional support systems usually exhibit higher levels of efficacy in both the academic and career spheres (Heller & Cassady, 2017; Wright et al., 2014). In this light, educators play essential roles in motivating students to develop positive self-perceptions by providing consistent feedback on students' performance (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Hollis, 2009; Schunk, 1995). As discussed in preceding sections, developmental advisors are required to provide constructive feedback that can motivate students to develop positive academic self-concepts (Crookston, 1992; Frost, 1993; Grites, 2013; Hollis, 2009). Likewise, in this context both the course lecturers and the developmental advisor were pivotal influences in empowering the participants to develop positive perceptions related to their academic abilities. Via the provision of feedback, positive reinforcements, and affirmations, the participants' perceptions about their academic abilities improved. This outcome corresponds with the theoretical view that feedback is often necessary to fuel success, and that success and mastery emboldens individuals to develop healthy efficacy levels in given milieus (Bandura, 1977, 1986). It should be reiterated that the developmental advisor played a minimal role in this regard as the participants prioritized the role of their course lecturers. Notwithstanding this minimal impact, positive outcomes were derived as a result of the

interactions the participants had with their developmental advisor as it relates to their academic self-efficacy and their academic performance.

It can be surmised that developmental advising had a positive impact on the participants' perceptions related to their academic abilities, and consequently their academic performance. The participants expressed that their ability to realize their academic goals increased their academic self-efficacy which in turn increased their commitment to perform even better and persist with their programs. This outcome occurred although developmental advising was not solely responsible for the participants' improvements in these areas. Therefore, both the lecturers' and developmental advisor's support were instrumental, albeit at disparate levels of influence. Positive outcomes in these areas also increased the participants' commitment to persist with their programs and readiness for college-level pursuits.

Increased Desire to Persist and Improved Readiness for College Life

The last primary impact of the TTIOO's developmental advising service refers to its contribution toward increasing the participants' desire to persist with their programs. Several studies suggest that developmental students are less likely to persist with their programs (Bailey & Cho, 2010; Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Grimes & David, 1999). As aforementioned, this is often the case as this particular student population is typically insufficiently prepared to adopt the skills and dispositions that can enable them to succeed academically and/or complete their programs (Hollis, 2009; Miller & Murray, 2005). Moreover, retention and persistence levels are particularly low at community colleges that more so cater to a developmental student population (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Bailey, 2009; Boggs, 2011). The TTIOO reported that they retain approximately 55% of each of their developmental student cohorts until the students complete the developmental program. Many of these students also successfully complete their college-

level programs. However, many students also withdraw as a result of the pressures they encounter while pursuing their academic goals.

The participants expressed that factors related to financial and work-related challenges, difficulty fulfilling their course requirements, course performance, and personal and family-related factors motivated thoughts about withdrawing from their programs. Despite the pressures that students face, their decision to withdraw can be preempted when institutions implement systematic and individualistic intervention plans, and effective monitoring measures to gauge when students are at risk of withdrawing from their programs (Duarte et al., 2014; Ferreyra et al., 2017; Ishitani 2008). In this light, advising (and by extension developmental advising) services are institutional sources of support that students can access to engender a higher commitment to persist and academic success (Bahr, 2008; Failing & Lombardozzi, 2020; Gore, 2006; Hatch & Garcia, 2017; Kolenovic et al., 2013; Kot, 2014). Most pointedly, the interactions that students have with developmental advisors can potentially increase their involvement in institutional programs, activities, and services (Hollis, 2009; Laskey & Hetzel, 2011; Schwebel et al., 2012). This is evidenced in this study's context whereby when the participants received support from their lecturers and accessed the developmental advising service, they were more prepared to remain enrolled. These factors also helped to increase the participants' engagement with their programs and other campus resources such as tutoring services and psychological support systems.

To reiterate what was mentioned before, human functioning is predicated on triadic reciprocal relationships among one's behavior, personal factors, and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1977 1986). Similar to the previous areas discussed, this fact once again surfaced in relation to the participants' engagement with the developmental advising service and the increase in their desire to persist with their programs among other things. Therefore, it can be

concluded that environmental factors by virtue of the developmental advising service and the support provided by lecturers helped to increase the participants behavioral outcomes as it relates to persistence. These interventions were also useful for increasing the participants' readiness for college.

Developmental advising can enable students to effectively adopt the role of higher education student and strengthens their ability and commitment to meeting institutional expectations and requirements (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Pearson, 2012; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). It can also potentially expose students to several psychosocial, academic, and personal benefits. These outcomes are made possible by means of the interactions, feedback, and appraisals provided by developmental advisors. This study's findings reflect that developmental advising did in fact enable students to become more prepared to engage their post-secondary academic pursuits. Most pronounced were the inculcation of essential academic skillsets and opportunities to learn about the TTIOO's student-related procedures and processes. By learning about these areas, the participants were better prepared to assume a higher level of independence when navigating the campus environment and resources, and when facilitating the various processes and procedures classically expected of college students. However, the participants also called for more time to be allocated to addressing these areas as they felt there were several areas that were left unexplored in this regard.

While the participants' interaction with the developmental advising service derived some positive outcomes, the precise level of the service's effectiveness remains inconclusive, as there was also the influence of the lecturers. This sense of inconclusiveness coincides with both Grites's and Winston's view that the verdict on the effectiveness of developmental advising remains pending (Grites, 2013; Winston, 1994 as cited in Grites, 2013). Both of these practitioners questioned whether the desired outcomes associated with developmental advising

were realistic, and whether this one facet of the institutional context made a difference regarding students' experiences and performance outcomes. In this context, a difference was made, but the extent cannot be precisely ascertained. However, the fact that the participants requested more time with the developmental advisor is an indicator that there is some usefulness to the service. Therefore, in order to derive more conclusive results, further research and assessment agendas need to be directed at this area both generally and specific to the TTIOO's service. Overall, the developmental advising service has the potential to contribute to student success—an outcome that can augur well for students, institutions, and society alike.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

This section addresses the implications of this study for research, policy, and practice along with some practical recommendations that can be applied to bolster service delivery in this regard. It is envisioned that these insights can work toward improving students' performance and persistence outcomes, institutional retention goals, and national goals associated with improving Trinidad and Tobago's human resource and economic spheres.

Policy

As this study's findings indicate, several policy-related factors need to be revisited with the intent to effectively support developmental students and improve the developmental advising service. These policy considerations are required at the secondary institutional level, the TTIOO, and at the level of the GORTT. It is important to mention both macro and institutional policies. This is necessary as a trickle-down effect often exists whereby macro governmental policies impact those that are implemented at the institutional and program levels. In this light, policy revisions at the macro level can positively impact students and the developmental advising service. The implications for policy include sensitivity to, and improvements directed at areas inclusive of co-curricular revisions, training, hiring, and funding.

Secondary School Co-Curricular Policies

It is worth reiterating that these participants attended publicly-funded secondary schools. As discussed before, many of these schools are shrouded by insufficient resources alongside other challenges. These institutional shortcomings by virtue of the provision of limited support had an undeniably negative impact on the academic success the participants achieved in these spaces. Moreover, they also resulted in a trickle-down effect that initially posed deleterious outcomes for the participants' post-secondary academic pursuits and ability to utilize essential academic skills. Therefore, institutional shortcomings at the secondary school level was one of the factors that inhibited the participants' preparation for college-level studies. This outcome implies that robust support systems are required at secondary schools (particularly those that are publicly-funded) in the area of academic skill-development and in other areas that can prepare students to succeed at both secondary and post-secondary academic pursuits.

To rectify the above, secondary school co-curriculum policies should be revised with the intent to prepare students to harness effective academic skillsets such as time-management, goal-setting, and study skills. Such exposure can enable secondary school students to acquire an awareness of the importance of these skills in relation to their academic lives and other aspects of their daily functioning. Moreover, by acquiring the ability to utilize these skills during their formative years, students will be better prepared to increase their academic performance as well. Additionally, as revealed via the findings, support and guidance can play instrumental roles in preparing students to acquire and master various skills and competencies, and these outcomes can also boost students' morale and efficacy levels. Therefore, once students are exposed to an enhanced co-curriculum in these regards, they will be better prepared to enhance their academic skillsets and realize increased efficacy levels. These outcomes can have a

profound effect on students' academic success during the secondary school phase and when they transition to the post-secondary arena.

Exposure to an enhanced co-curriculum during the secondary school phase can contribute to several positive student outcomes in the context of post-secondary education. That is, they can work to bolster students' levels of preparedness for college-level work and provide a much-needed foundation that students can build upon once enrolled at the post-secondary institutions of their choice. Similar to the secondary school phase, students' ability to effectively apply these skills to their college-level pursuits can positively impact their academic performance and engagement with the post-secondary experience. Overall, these considerations can aid with reducing the number of academically under-prepared students that transition out of the secondary school system and into the post-secondary sphere. Policy revisions in this area will also instigate policy changes related to training and hiring policies at both the secondary and post-secondary contexts.

Training and Hiring Policies

Expanding the secondary school co-curriculum to address academic-related skill development will require the increased hiring of complementary staff such as guidance and career counsellors. It is envisioned that staff responsible for these co-curricular areas will facilitate instruction and activities that address these areas. In concert with revised co-curriculum policies, increased hires can provide support to secondary school students outside of the purely classroom context. By encouraging students to access this scope of support, they can also become more acquainted with and receptive to utilizing institutional support systems as a means to enhance their academic performance. As such, accessing support systems at the post-secondary level will be less of a novelty, but would be routinized as part of students' academic journey.

The findings also bear inferences for the TTIOO's hiring policies. That is, in order to effectively serve a developmental student population, adequate human resources must be readily available. At the time of this study, one developmental advisor was employed at the TTIOO. This limited yet essential human resource is required to serve both the developmental student population and underperforming college-level students. As a result, both the participants and the developmental advisor revealed that students' access to the service was restricted by the vast numbers of students accessing the service. Moreover, the participants also expressed that they did not wish to be a burden as they acknowledged that their advisor was required to share her time with a large number of students. Consequently, oftentimes they did not raise some of their challenges with the developmental advisor. To some extent this also limited the participants' ability to explore and engage with the full offerings of the developmental advising service whereby most scheduled sessions were directed at course registration processes. This focus departs from the intentions behind the developmental advising process. However, with increased developmental advisor hires, this shortfall can be addressed.

By hiring additional developmental advisors, space would be created for advisors to attend to other core areas of developmental advising versus the current primary focus on course and registration processes. For example, more time could be spent exploring who students are, and their needs and challenges in relation to their post-secondary journey. Increased attention should also be paid to students' academic, career, and life goals. Intentional exploration of these areas can work toward increasing students' awareness of their academic selves in relation to their life goals, and thus can instigate a deeper understanding of their functioning in the post-secondary space. Overall, additional hires are required so that

developmental students would be positioned to have increased access to the service which can potentially expand their ability to pursue their academic, persistence, career, and life goals.

In addition to the above hiring considerations, attention must also be paid to the gender dynamics related to hiring policies and practice in the educational sphere. Females are more likely to assume support roles within educational institutions. Similarly, in the context of this study, male developmental advisors were never hired by the TTIOO. Attention must be paid to these areas as increased numbers of male educators and support staff within secondary and post-secondary institutions can potentially enhance the level at which male students engage with their educational environments. These hiring considerations can also aid with rewriting the narrative that males are expected to be totally self-reliant, and can therefore positively impact the way in which males access institutional support services. Overall, male students across all educational tiers should be positioned to have access to male-centered systems of support and positive male role models in these regards. Moreover, increased male hires and presence can derive positive outcomes by assisting with dismantling extant injurious gender stereotypes and reducing the gender academic achievement gap.

This study also has implications for the TTIOO's training policies. The need for training became apparent in several instances. Contextually, the developmental advisors expressed that they felt ill-prepared to address some of the issues that students presented, and were desirous of acquiring training that would be useful for improving how they served students. For example, they did not feel comfortable addressing areas focusing on exploring students' abilities and efficacy levels, and challenges aligned with persistence. These areas all within the remit of the developmental advising service. Therefore, efforts must be made to prepare developmental advisors to address these areas. Training in these regards could be useful for informing policy

changes related to the developmental advising co-curriculum and thus the areas that are covered during these advising sessions.

Training must also be extended to other key campus stakeholders and support staff that are required to support developmental students. This is necessary to ensure consistency, and to position staff to have a clear understanding of these students' needs and the ways through which various units can provide impactful systems of support. As discussed in the findings, the participants were generally wary of accessing campus services. Therefore, increased training across key campus stakeholders and support staff can help to inform the ingraining of a campus environment that is more receptive to and supportive of a developmental student population—an environment that could bolster students' academic performance and persistence goals.

Funding Policies – Secondary and Post-Secondary

The findings derived through this study suggest that tuition funding policies should be revisited in order to better support developmental students. The GORTT has instituted many educational funding policy revisions over the years in its quest to uphold holistic individual success, societal growth, and sustainable national development. These include revisions to post-secondary access policies, and funding policies that sought to increase inclusion and equity by providing financial support to all citizens. However, more is needed, particularly in consideration of the needs of a developmental student population.

More financial support should be allocated with the intent to give developmental students a fair chance. As explained in previous sections, the developmental students enrolled at the TTIOO are placed in a quandary whereby they are required to use personal funds to pay for their developmental or college-level program. While this may be achievable for some, students' inability to make these payments often fuel their decision to withdraw from their programs. If post-secondary access is being granted to a developmental student population, it

should be expected that these students would require additional financial support when compared to their college-ready counterparts. Therefore, tuition support policies should be revisited as the guarantee of financial support can increase these students' levels of persistence and allay fears related to financial and tuition concerns. This can also translate into positive outcomes for the TTIOO, as increased funding can improve institutional retention, and consequently increased income. Providing increased financial resources comes at a cost to the GORTT. However, positive outcomes can also be achieved as increased retention and persistence can enhance societal and economic growth, while simultaneously expanding the country's work-force capacity.

Overall, sensitivity to the aforementioned policy areas should be considered with the intent to improve the experiences and outcomes that developmental students negotiate. These policy considerations will also have a direct impact on the developmental advising service, students' outcomes, and the TTIOO's retention goals. From a macro perspective, they can also position the GORTT to increase its human resource capacity thereby promoting increased economic and social growth. Policy changes will also have a direct influence on practice in these regards.

Practice

The findings from this study and the afore-identified implications for policy have a direct influence on practice as it relates to the developmental advising service in several tangible ways. These implications center on service delivery at the TTIOO, and they can also be applicable to the broader post-secondary context. In particular, emphasis should be placed on facilitating opportunities to acquire in-depth insights about these students and their needs; reassessing the focus of the advisement sessions; and creating a sense of community among the developmental student population. Additionally, implications are also referenced regarding the changes that

are necessary regarding how students are supported within the secondary school system. Lastly, practice informing how males are supported in both secondary and post-secondary educational spaces is addressed.

Acquiring In-depth Insights

A significant part of developmental advising sessions should center on intentionally learning about students. In this light, early sessions should center on learning about students' apprehensions, sense of ability, and the challenges that are accompanying them as a result of prior experiences. Capturing these details will prepare developmental advisors to ascertain how they can best support respective students, and the interventions that may be required. These conversations will also create in students an increased awareness about self as it relates to their entry into and engagement with the post-secondary space. This awareness also requires that students fully understand the role of the developmental advising service in relation to their academic underpreparedness and academic journey.

Effectively facilitating the above-described conversations require that students have a thorough understanding of the role of the developmental advising service. However, despite the guidelines and descriptions provided by the developmental advisor, a disconnect existed regarding the participants' understanding of what the developmental advising service entailed. This indicates that more needs to be done to clearly convey what the role of the developmental advisor embodies, and to as much as possible dissect the role of the academic advising component versus the developmental advising component. An increased awareness can encourage students to be more receptive to accessing the developmental advising service to address areas that do not primarily focus on purely academic processes. Consequently, students and developmental advisors can be sufficiently apprised of any challenges or concerns that students encounter, in addition to their developmental needs. By enhancing students'

understanding of the service, it is possible that students will be less reticent to access the service. Their increased willingness in this regard can also empower them to access the service with the intent to support and sustain their academic efforts.

Reassessing the Focus of Developmental Advisement Sessions

The developmental advisors shared that they require training to effectively fulfill their advisory role. This view was also reflected in the opinions proffered by the participants which alluded that some areas were not fully addressed during individual sessions with advisors such as goal-setting, persistence, and self-efficacy. As mentioned in the policy section, these factors indicate that more training is needed. Additional training could equip the developmental advisors to enhance their practice by addressing the various areas that could be covered during developmental advising sessions. Moreover, the developmental advisors should be coached about addressing those sensitive areas they did not feel equipped to address at the time of this interview. Training in these areas can influence how developmental advisors engage their practice, and can positively impact the outcomes that students derive from accessing this service.

In the interim before the above training needs are met, the developmental advisors should consider revisiting the focus of their advisement sessions. This is necessary because while the participants were appreciative of the service, they felt that most of the sessions focused on academic advisement. This was also reflected in the participants' call for more time with the developmental advisor to address areas that are not typically discussed. This finding connotes a huge implication for practice because it means that the scope of the developmental advising sessions requires a shift. It also suggests that more sessions are required to fully address the developmental piece of the developmental advising service.

In light of the above, more emphasis should be placed on the developmental component. Developmental advisors should dedicate efforts toward creating space for students to learn more about themselves, especially understandings that apply to their role as post-secondary students. Consequently, developmental advisors should attend to exploring students' experiences, needs, personal values, and their academic, career, and life goals on a more profound level. Practice should also be broadened to include activities/sessions that can enhance students' critical thinking and reasoning skills. By addressing these areas, developmental students will be better equipped to address the challenges and concerns they encounter along their academic journey, as well as some of those encountered in their personal, career, and social lives.

The hiring policy mentioned in the previous section will have a direct bearing on practice in this context. That is, hiring additional developmental advisors can enable advisors to spend more time on the areas mentioned above. In this light, caseload management can be contained and thus the number of sessions that students can access with their assigned advisors could be increased. Additionally, a broadened advising curriculum will be useful for outlining how increased sessions could be scheduled. These considerations can work toward eliminating factors such as students' perception of being burdensome and/or sense of shame. Increased engagement in these regards can also potentially contribute toward students' ownership of their experience as post-secondary students and the developmental advising process. Overtime, students' engagement in these regards can strengthen their academic performance, while also motivating their desire to persist. These measures can also promote positive institutional and societal outcomes.

Creating a Sense of Community

The participants expressed that they experienced a sense of shame about being defined as members of the developmental student population. They therefore sought ways to disguise this fact from their college-level peers, and oftentimes limited their engagement with the broader campus environment. A plethora of research highlight the virtues of sense of belonging as it relates to the campus space—especially in consideration of non-traditional and first-generation student populations.

As one of the core sources of support for the TTIOO's developmental student population, it is incumbent that developmental advisors center their practice on creating a sense of community among the developmental student population. This will require investments directed at facilitating events and creating spaces whereby these students can work toward community-building. Initiatives in this light can only be achieved when developmental advisors are positioned to acquire in-depth understandings about the students under their purview, and thus their needs. These insights will be essential for determining the appropriate measures and initiatives that can accomplish an effective and impactful community-building agenda. A sense of community and belonging will be instrumental for diminishing the level of shame that developmental students experience, increasing their engagement with the campus community, and enhancing their performance and persistence outcomes.

Installing Secondary School Support Systems

Lastly, implications are also referenced regarding how students are supported within the secondary school system. The participants referred to a very salient experience—they believed they did not receive sufficient support while at secondary school, and wished they had access to more support systems during that time. These views are particularly valid because it is

likely that access to much needed support systems could have positively impacted the participants' academic outcomes and experiences.

It is expected that secondary school educators have immense responsibilities related to supporting and more specifically educating the students under their care. Therefore, it is envisioned that it could be challenging and virtually impossible to support all students in the way that they need. However, concerns about this shortcoming must be addressed with the end goal of improving students' academic outcomes and experiences. Attending to practice in this specific context aligns with the need for complementary staff as discussed in the policy implications. Thus, it is incumbent upon the GORTT to provide these much-needed resources which can influence how students are supported while navigating the secondary school system.

Educators in the secondary school system are also required to reassess how they support students, as their interventions can have a direct bearing on students' success outcomes. Moreover, installing requisite support systems, embracing a culture of student support, and exposing students to these interventions during the secondary school phase can promote the understanding that student support systems play a pivotal role in educational spaces. That is, they should be endorsed as interventions that can contribute toward students' academic success. The impact of such approaches can transcend the secondary school space by diminishing the reticence that is observed when students are called on to access similar services in the post-secondary environment.

Male Students and Support Systems

As discussed in the literature review, male students typically resist engaging help-seeking behaviors and thus are less likely to access the student support services available at the institutions where they are enrolled (Barksdale & Molock, 2009; Good et al., 1989). In this vein, no male participants opted to participate in this study. One factor that could have contributed

to their lack of participation is potentially associated with their desire not to be seen as failures—a factor that contradicts the dictates of their masculine identity. However, like their female counterparts, at various points throughout their academic journey males also require scaffolding, and can benefit from accessing institutional student support services. Therefore, more efforts should be made to encourage male students at both secondary and post-secondary levels to acquire an appreciation for seeking help when necessary.

Promoting a culture that validates the fact that engaging in help-seeking behaviors is not a threat to masculinity is necessary. Therefore, male help-seeking behaviors should no longer be articulated as a sign of weakness, but should be valued as a sign of strength. This practice is required within the familial space, and more importantly within formative educational environments. Infusing this approach into practice related to how we serve males in educational spaces can have a direct impact on males' willingness to access help when needed, which in turn can have a direct impact on their academic performance. Moreover, once males are able to harness an appreciation for help-seeking behaviors during their formative years, the more likely they will be willing to utilize support services when they transition into the post-secondary educational system. As discussed in the section addressing hiring policies, additional male hires and presence can work toward providing male students with opportunities to have access to much needed support and role models. These hiring practices can in turn impact male students' academic performance and perception of gender roles and expectations. They can also influence how males function in other areas of their life particularly where their masculine identities surface as a core individual marker.

Similar to the implications for policy, those aligned with practice can position the TTIOO to realize increased rates of retention related to their developmental population. Moreover, they can also assist the GORTT with realizing its goal of increasing post-secondary attainment

rates from 15.78% to 35% by 2030. That is, the guidance, support and developmental scope of the developmental advising service can work toward bolstering developmental students' persistence and completion rates. Positive outcomes in this light can have a progressive impact on the country's human resource capacity and can stimulate increased economic growth. Improvements aligned with practice can also aid the TTIOO with fulfilling its quest to develop a post-secondary system that provides second chances to students at all levels via the provision of effective support and scaffolding interventions.

Research

This study's findings have several direct implications for research and scholarship. It has been instrumental in highlighting how the developmental advising service is perceived, and its effectiveness in increasing the participants' academic self-efficacy and skill competencies, academic performance, and levels of persistence. These insights were instrumental in shedding light on this topic in relation to the Caribbean context, and more specifically Trinidad and Tobago. However, the findings also indicate that much more research is needed to derive a conclusive view regarding the effectiveness of the developmental advising service.

While the service received positive commendations from the participants, it is imperative to ascertain what program elements work/does not work well, and the steps required to make the essential changes to those areas requiring improvement. Research and assessment agendas are useful for highlighting the elements of a program that are working, making programmatic revisions where necessary, and increasing the effectiveness of any given program. However, as expressed by the developmental advisor, research and assessment activities are rarely undertaken with regard to the TTIOO's developmental advising service. Thus, while the service received positive commendations from the participants, it is imperative

to ascertain what program elements work/does not work well, and the steps required to make the essential changes to those areas requiring improvement.

In this context, additional research is required to acquire a more holistic view regarding developmental students' perception of the developmental advising service and its effectiveness in increasing their academic performance and levels of persistence. Thus, attempts should be made to broaden this study. In particular, male developmental students should be recruited to participate in future research agendas, as males did not volunteer to participate in this study. Male insights are also necessary as there is no surety that the views and experiences of males and females in this regard are one and the same. It is also essential to ascertain the particular needs that both male and female developmental students require to thrive and persist. Additionally, once hiring is increased in terms of gender mix and number of developmental advisors that are employed at the TTIOO, it would be instructive to have these advisors constitute part of research process regarding the impact of their practice and service on developmental students.

Lastly, elements of the findings also suggest that a longitudinal study is needed to track the influence of the developmental advising service once students complete the developmental program. Therefore, it would be instructive to engage with these students along their journey with their college-level programs to ascertain the durability of the information imparted during these sessions. It will also be useful to ascertain the extent to which they utilize the feedback and guidance provided during the developmental advising sessions, and to determine the extent to which same influences academic performance and persistence at the college level.

The GORTT is committed to developing a culture of research and development within post-secondary institutions (The GORTT Ministry of Planning & Development, 2016). This is important for several reasons contextually. For example, one of the most pronounced concerns

is that existing student retention theories were developed in response to the experiences that students enrolled at traditional four-year institutions negotiated. However, these perspectives and insights are not always applicable to students pursuing technical or community college degrees in countries outside of the United States (Mendoza et al., 2016). Moreover, Caribbean and Latin American post-secondary institutions continue to be challenged by their inability to provide effective student support systems (Gazzola & Didriksson, 2008; Munizaga Mellado et al., 2019). These factors jointly emphasize the need for more Caribbean post-secondary research agendas to be dedicated to these areas.

The above implies that more research on students in these spaces is needed. Moreover, once this awareness is fostered, Caribbean post-secondary institutions will be better prepared to provide effective retention and student support systems for their students. More specifically, additional attention must be paid to the community college and developmental student contexts with the intent to further explore the impact of developmental advising. Studies in this regard must also be extended to the Latin American and Caribbean contexts so as to acquire an understanding of these services and their functionality in these spaces.

Concluding Thoughts

The pursuit of education, and more specifically post-secondary education is seen as one logical means through which individuals can enhance their employability, and realize some measure of social mobility and financial security. Moreover, a society's engagement with post-secondary education can promote human capital growth, a participative citizenry, economic advancement, and diminished social inequalities. A citizenry's engagement with education has become especially essential to the Latin American and Caribbean contexts. That is, these countries exhibit the lowest rate of income distribution, and thus navigate many challenges aligned with development, poverty, and inequality. Additionally, low levels of academic success and

persistence at post-secondary Latin America and Caribbean institutions also connote considerable negative social and economic effects. This issue is particularly pervasive at community and technical colleges by virtue of their inability to realize high program completion rates. Overall, these outcomes curtail society's human resource needs and stymies social and economic growth.

In recognition of the above, increasing post-secondary access to individuals defined as developmental remains a primary goal for the GORTT, and more broadly Latin American and Caribbean countries. However, successfully embarking on this mission requires the impetus and investment of various stakeholders, and the installation of requisite student support systems. Considerations in this light can serve to ensure that while open access initiatives abound, careful thought is also accorded to providing the requisite support systems that can enable students to thrive. These means can empower students and institutions alike to work toward diminishing systemic inequalities, while promoting personal and societal growth.

An institution's decision to provide robust student support systems is grounded in the view that these resources can engender long-term success, and address the limitations that students present. Support services along the lines of developmental advising can be useful in many regards and can work toward supporting students with achieving their academic goals. For example, as demonstrated in the findings, developmental advising can prepare students to adopt the role of higher education student by increasing their competencies and skillsets, sense of academic-self efficacy, and their desire to persist toward program completion. As a consequence, this service also has a positive impact as a result of its ability to assist students with realizing their personal, academic, and professional goals.

Positive outcomes derived through developmental advising can also impact the institutional and societal contexts. Beyond the personal context, support services such as

developmental advising can position institutions such as the TTIOO to improve institutional retention—a factor that can positively impact institutional funding. On a national front, the provision of such services can assist the GORTT with realizing goals aligned with improving the country's human and economic capacities, increasing public participation in governance and societal affairs, diminishing social inequalities, and increasing participation in the global economy.

The implications for policy, practice, and research can go a long way in improving the developmental advising service. They can also influence work toward minimizing opportunity gaps, developing the country's human resources, creating equitable access to post-secondary education, and enabling sustainable development that can empower personal and national growth. However, despite high levels of commitment at institutional levels, these goals and outcomes cannot be fully achieved without the investment of all stakeholders, particularly the GORTT, and a synergistic relationship between the secondary and post-secondary educational tiers. Lastly, the campus space matters, therefore campus constituents must be motivated to support the developmental student population in novel ways. Developmental advising on its own cannot and should not be responsible for students' success in this context. With these thoughts in mind, intentional measures in this light can work toward enhancing policy, practice, and research in ways that can transform the lives of developmental students, one student at a time.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol – Developmental Students’ Three-Interview Series

Guiding Research Questions

1. What are the major hurdles developmental students encounter while adjusting to the post-secondary environment—especially those aligned with harnessing academic skills?
2. How do developmental students perceive the role of developmental advising in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy?
3. How does developmental students’ engagement with developmental advising, and the acquisition of academic self-efficacy and goal-setting skills influence their academic performance and desire to persist?

First Interview Phase

1. Introductory question - Who are you (secondary educational background, career, family, and any other details you choose to reveal)?
2. What factors prompted your decision to pursue post-secondary education?
3. Why the TTIOO?
4. What factors contributed to your academic-underpreparedness?
 - *Participant’s responses will prompt further exploration regarding the experiences highlighted.*
5. What has your experience been as a post-secondary developmental student?
 - *Participant’s responses will prompt further exploration regarding the experiences highlighted.*

6. What are the major hurdles you encountered adjusting to the post-secondary environment?
 - *Participant's responses will prompt further exploration regarding the hurdles that are identified.*
 - *Why are these factors identified as hurdles?*
 - *How have you attempted to address these hurdles?*
7. Reflect on your self-regulative and goal-setting competencies at the point of enrollment at the TTIOO.
 - *Has this competency level changed since interacting with the TTIOO's developmental advisors?*
 - *If yes, what factors in particular influenced this change?*
 - *If no change has been recorded, why not?*
8. Reflect on your academic self-efficacy levels at the point of enrollment at the TTIOO.
 - *Has this level changed since interacting with the TTIOO's developmental advisors?*
 - *If yes, what factors in particular influenced this change?*
 - *If no change has been recorded, why not?*
9. Reflect on your levels of commitment to persisting with your program at the point of enrollment at the TTIOO.
 - *Has this level changed since interacting with the TTIOO's developmental advisors?*
 - *If yes, what factors in particular influenced this change?*
 - *If no change has been recorded, why not?*
 - *Have you ever considered withdrawing? Why? Why did you revisit this decision?*
 - *Did your developmental advisor pre-empt your decision to withdraw?*

Second Interview Phase

1. Reflect on all of your experiences with your assigned developmental advisor and the service they provide.
 - *Identify what you define as highlights and low points.*
 - *What particular experiences led you to think of these as highlights and low points?*
 - *Have you attempted to address the low points with your advisor? If yes, what was the outcome? If no, why not?*
2. What specific experiences did you have with your developmental advisor that affected your goal-setting skills competencies? Why do these experiences stand out?
3. What specific experiences did you have with your developmental advisor that affected your levels of academic self-efficacy? Why do these experiences stand out?
4. What specific experiences did you have with your developmental advisor that affected your desire to persist with your program? Why do these experiences stand out?
5. Why are these experiences meaningful to you? To what extent do these experiences influence your current academic-related behaviors and outcomes?
6. Overall, to what extent do you use the feedback and guidance provided by your developmental advisor?
 - *Participant's responses will prompt further exploration.*

Third Interview Phase

1. Participants will be asked to reflect on the personal meanings they ascribe to the experiences highlighted during the Second Interview Phase.
 - *What meanings and value do these past and present experiences hold?*

- *What does acquiring goal-setting skills and increased levels of academic self-efficacy mean to you and your post-secondary academic journey?*
2. How do these experiences and ascribed meanings influence your current academic-related behaviors and outcomes?
 3. How can they influence your future academic-related behaviors and outcomes?
 4. In reflection, do you define developmental advising as an ideal source of support?
 - *If yes, why?*
 - *If no, what would an ideal developmental advising service/session entail?*
 - *Why are these elements important to you?*
 - *If incorporated, how can they enhance your future behaviors and outcomes?*
 5. Are there any measures you think developmental advisors should take to improve this service? If yes, what would they entail?
 6. What institutional factors are necessary for enhancing this service?

Appendix B**Interview Protocol – Developmental Advisors**

1. Introductory question - Who are you (educational background, career, family, and any other details you choose to reveal)?
2. How long have you been a developmental advisor? Why did you choose this role?
3. On average, how many hours do you spend with one student during a given academic year?
4. What are your general views of developmental students accessing this service?
5. What have been your general experiences serving developmental students?
6. Are there stark differences regarding how you serve developmental and non-developmental students? If yes, how so?
7. What are the major hurdles developmental students encounter while adjusting to the post-secondary environment?
8. To what extent do you think students utilize the feedback and guidance you provide to overcome these hurdles?
9. What skills are developmental students often required to enhance?
 - *To what extent do you think students utilize the feedback and guidance you provide to enhance their competencies in these areas?*
 - *How is this manifested?*
10. Regarding goal-setting skills in particular:
 - *At what level do students often require this support?*
 - *How do you support students with developing competencies in this regard?*
 - *Why are these measures important to your process?*

- *To what extent do you think students utilize the feedback and guidance you provide to enhance their competencies in these areas?*
- *From your perspective, how do students' competency in this area change post-developmental advising? How is this manifested?*

11. Regarding academic self-efficacy:

- *What levels of academic self-efficacy do developmental students typically demonstrate (low, medium, high)?*
- *How do you support students with increasing their levels of academic self-efficacy?*
- *Why are measures important to your process?*
- *To what extent do you think students utilize the feedback and guidance you provide to enhance their competencies in these areas?*
- *From your perspective, how do students' competency in this areas change post-developmental advising? How is this manifested?*

12. What have you observed regarding the levels of persistence developmental students display?

- *At what point in the program are students more likely to withdraw?*
- *Are you often required to pre-empt students' decisions to withdraw? If yes, how do you address these scenarios?*
- *From your perspective, do students' commitment to persist increase post-developmental advising? How is this manifested?*

13. Overall, does developmental students' engagement with developmental advising enhance their academic performance and increase their desire to persist?

14. In reflection, do you define developmental advising as an ideal source of support?

- *If yes, why?*

- *If no, what would an ideal developmental advising service/session entail?*
- *Why are these elements important to you?*
- *If incorporated, how can they enhance students' future behaviors and outcomes?*

15. Have you identified any measures you should take to improve your service to students in these regards? If yes, what would they entail?

16. What institutional factors are necessary for enhancing this service?

Appendix C
Recruitment Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! Please respond to the following questions before the interviews. Your responses will be useful for providing me with some demographic data, and your views about your academic performance.

1. Name: _____

2. Age: _____ Sex: _____

3. When did you begin the developmental education program?

4. How many times have you accessed the developmental advising service?

1 – 2 times 3 – 4 times Over 5 times

5. What level of MATH did you begin with

MATH 091 MATH 092 MATH 093 None

6. What level of WRIT did you begin with?

WRIT 093 WRIT 095 WRIT 097 None

7. What level of READ did you begin with?

READ 094

READ 096

READ 098

None

8. Since beginning the program, what has been your average grade?

9. What is your current GPA average?

10. Overall, how do you feel about your academic performance?

11. What factors have helped you to maintain good grades?

12. What factors have negatively affected your ability to maintain good grades?

13. If any, what areas do you think require improvement?

14. What do you think you need to help you improve these areas?

Appendix D

Triangulation Data Analysis Matrix

Research Questions	Data Source		
	1 Developmental Students’ Phenomenological Interviews	2 Developmental Advisors’ Interviews	3 Documentary Analysis
1. What are the major hurdles developmental students encounter while adjusting to the post-secondary environment— especially those aligned with harnessing academic skills?			
2. How do developmental students perceive the role of developmental advising in facilitating their ability to develop self-regulated behaviors such as goal-setting skills, and academic self-efficacy?			
3. Does developmental students’ engagement with			

developmental advising enhance these students' academic performance and increase their desire to persist?			
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Vita

Tricia Joseph is a native of the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. She attended the University of the West Indies, where she pursued a Bachelor of Science in Sociology and Psychology, and a Master of Science in Mediation Studies. She began her Ph.D. program in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri (Columbia) in 2017, and completed the program in 2021. Her broad research interest centers on the retention of academically-underprepared students, particularly within the Caribbean context. For over 10 years she was employed at the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) as a Developmental Advisor. She also served as an adjunct faculty providing instruction in courses inclusive of Life Skills, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Skills, and Psychology and Human Diversity. She has significant experience in supporting and mentoring students and specializes in assisting those recognized as “at-risk” and academically-underprepared. Professionally, Tricia aims to serve at a community college context with the intent to develop and implement policies and practices that can improve student retention.