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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Community College Transfer Student Access
To Nationally Competitive Awards

by

Cassidy L. Alvarado

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2021

Community College Transfer Student Access

To Nationally Competitive Awards

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By

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This dissertation written by Cassidy Alvarado, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

03/09/2021

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DEDICATION

For Richard Paul Zimmerman

I dedicate my dissertation to my dad who passed away from pancreatic cancer during my second year of the program. In one of our last text exchanges, my dad asked for the name of my doctoral degree. After texting him the degree title, I jokingly called it “long-winded,” to which my dad replied, “Not as long as the length of pride Mom and I have in you!” Thank you, Dad, for your unwavering support and love. I miss you dearly.

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ABSTRACT

Community College Transfer Student Access

To Nationally Competitive Awards

by

Cassidy L. Alvarado

Employing Museus' (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environment framework, this mixed-method exploratory study sought to ascertain what prospective (proTSCC) and current transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) knew about nationally competitive awards and to identify factors that influenced their decision to apply. Beginning with phenomenological interviews of transfer students and alumni, their responses informed the development of an Access to Nationally Competitive Awards Scale, which was then disseminated to currently enrolled community college students who indicated intentions of transferring to a four-year institution.

Transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) make up approximately 19% of enrollment at four-year institutions, yet research has shown that TSCC frequently feel unsupported and lost during and after the transfer process (Schmertz, & Carney, 2013; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012).

Nationally competitive awards (NCAs) fund a variety of opportunities, including study abroad, research, graduate school, and more (Cobane & Jennings, 2017). Currently, there is a dearth of research on NCAs, specifically in relation to access and awareness of these

opportunities (Terri Heath et al., 1993). Furthermore, many NCAs require campus support, generally in the form of an institutional endorsement or nomination letter (National Association of Fellowship Advisors, n.d., Guidelines for Institutions section), which places access directly in the hands of institutions.

Findings show that TSCC and proTSCC were mostly unaware of NCAs, yet they were eligible for at least one of the study exemplars and highly interested in learning more about these opportunities. Moreover, specific external, individual, and campus environment factors influenced their motivation to apply.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Transfer Students from Community Colleges (TSCC)

In Fall 2016, approximately 36% of undergraduate students attended a two-year institution in the United States (Ginder et al., 2017). Of the roughly 6.23 million community college students, around 33% had transferred to a four-year institution (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). Transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) represent a significant population in higher education, yet they experience barriers and challenges that impact their success. Beginning with the transfer application, community college students have found the transfer process confusing to navigate and inefficient (Bailey et al., 2015). One study highlighted the perceptions of campus administrators about transfer students and found that TSCC “appeared to remain in the shadows of more prominent student populations” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012, p. 406).

Research has suggested that community college students may be overlooked and underestimated after transferring to their four-year institutions. TSCC continue to face societal stigmas in higher education, including the negative perception that they “are not academically prepared for the rigor of the course work in the university environment” (Lopez & Jones, 2017, p. 176). In addition to negative assumptions about their academic abilities, TSCC have reported feeling unsupported by their four-year institutions. Transfer students expressed a lack of understanding about their new institution, as well as feeling lost or “like a freshman again” (Townsend, 2008, p. 73). Studies have shown that a sense of belonging for any college student is critical to their academic success (Booth et al., 2013; Hausmann et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2005; Milem & Berger, 1997), and TSCC are no different in wanting to feel like they belong at their

new campus. For example, Townsend and Wilson (2006) interviewed 19 students who transferred to a large state research institution and observed that participants wanted “more help from the receiving institution after they transfer, such as more information about campus resources and outside-of-class opportunities to meet other students” (p. 442). They suggested more opportunities to socialize with other traditional students. Additionally, multiple studies recommend that two- and four-year institutions work together to develop systems of support for TSCC (Blaylock & Bresciani, 2011; Lopez & Jones, 2017; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Nationally Competitive Awards (NCAs)

The term nationally competitive awards (NCAs) refer to the broad category of national and international scholarships and fellowships for college students. These awards are typically provided external to higher education institutions, meaning they are offered by governments or other non-governmental organizations and foundations. Depending on the award, NCAs provide “funding for research opportunities, study abroad, internships, language acquisition, and graduate/professional school” (Cobane & Jennings, 2017, pp. 40-41). Numerous NCAs, like the Rhodes Scholarship and Truman Scholarship, also require institutional endorsements or nomination letters (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-c; The Rhodes Trust, n.d.). Furthermore, many NCAs require application support directly from colleges and universities, given “organizing the competitions and preparing the students [takes] time and effort” (Powers, 2013, p. 120). This signifies the important role colleges and universities play in not only supporting students with NCA applications but also in the promotion of the awards, including identifying qualified students.

The benefits of NCAs go beyond monetary compensation. Multiple NCA alumni surveys showed that participants felt their NCA experience helped them clarify their professional goals (EurekaFacts, 2014; Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, 2012). Ilchman et al. (2004) also emphasized how NCAs “advance the acquisition of skills important to building better societies” (p. 1). Lamont (2004) also argued the concept of the “Matthew Effect” applies to NCA recipients. The “Matthew Effect” is the idea that once a person wins one NCA, they are more likely to win another. Yet, winners are not the only ones who may benefit from NCAs. Rushton (2017) found that “simply suggesting that a student think about throwing a hat into the ring by applying for a scholarship changes that student’s sense of self” (p. 7). When a staff or faculty member encourages a student to apply for an NCA, it may boost their self-confidence. Thus, there are many benefits to students who attempt or succeed in applying for an NCA. However, while many four-year institutions provide support in applying for NCAs, “universities vary in how much access students have to those resources” (Terri Heath et al., 1993, p. 417), and the level of NCA support at two-year institutions has yet to be documented.

Statement of the Problem

There is a dearth of research on NCAs, specifically in relation to accessibility and awareness of these opportunities. Rather than documenting the recruitment or application processes, past studies have been largely hagiographic, highlighting the experiences of NCA alumni (Ludovic & Scott-Smith, 2018). Furthermore, there is a lack of research on NCAs and community college students, including prospective transfer students (proTSCC). Terri Heath et al. (1993) noted that otherwise qualified students may fail to obtain an NCA “because the student lacks information about the availability of these resources or because the student lacks knowledge about how to compete successfully for limited funds” (p. 416). While still unknown,

it may be that TSCC do not have NCA support at the community college level or they may be unaware that support exists at four-year institutions, so they may miss the opportunity to apply. Thus, research is needed to determine if TSCC are being excluded from NCA opportunities.

Ultimately, the study was driven by the question, “Who is missing?” from the nationally competitive award applicant pool. All students deserve equal access to educational opportunities (Ryan, 2006). Yet, the discussion around NCA access is only beginning to surface. In a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Jin Park, the first Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient to receive a Rhodes scholarship, and the American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust, Elliot Gerson, penned an opinion piece about scholarship eligibility requirements that restrict undocumented students from applying (2019). The Rhodes Scholarship, one of the oldest and most prestigious nationally competitive awards, funds graduate study at Oxford University. Ultimately Park and Gerson (2019) ended their piece by urging:

nationally coveted postgraduate scholarships for research and education, as well as the thousands of local scholarships administered by religious institutions, schools, and nonprofit organizations, to make the slight change in their bylaws to allow all students in their communities to apply. (para. 7)

Questions of access to NCAs include transfer students from community colleges, many of whom come from multiple marginalized backgrounds. In 2014, 44% of Black and 56% of Hispanic students attended community colleges (Ma & Baum, 2016); and according to 2016 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data around 67% of community college students belong to families who made less than \$49,000 annually (Community College Research Center, n.d.). Research has shown that “poor people are routinely excluded from opportunities” and “they do not have the power or ability to experience what others in better financial positions can” (Ryan, 2006, p. 28). Furthermore, around 42% of community college students are also first-

generation college students or the first in their families to pursue postsecondary education (Cataldi et al., 2018). These vulnerable groups already face innumerable obstacles and challenges in higher education, access to NCAs should not be one of them.

In addition, Ilchman et al. (2004) noted that “talent is broadly, even randomly distributed, but only selectively developed” (p. 2). As experienced fellowship foundation directors, they expressed concern over “missing many qualified individuals, often from groups underrepresented” and how “their potential contributions deprives not only them but [society] as well” (Ilchman et al., 2004, p. 2). Knowing that TSCC are a diverse and underrepresented group, they may be a desirable population for NCA funding organizations. However, qualified TSCC may miss the opportunity to apply for NCAs because they might not be aware of the opportunity, nor receive the support needed to develop competitive applications.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand TSCC awareness of nationally competitive awards and determine key factors that influence their decision to apply. In addition to understanding TSCC’s broad awareness of NCAs, this study also focused on five exemplars of NCAs, specifically selected because of their exceptional benefits and suitability for both the community college and transfer student populations. By learning from TSCC, two-year and four-year institutions will be better able to provide support to these students, which will address the call to action to provide more support for TSCC found in the literature (Lopez & Jones, 2017; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012; Townsend, 2008; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Research Questions

Given the under-investigated nature of this topic, the following two descriptive research questions framed this study.

1. What do transfer students from community colleges know about nationally competitive awards?
2. What primary factors impact their decisions to apply for nationally competitive awards?

Here, transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) were defined as students who have transferred from a U.S. two-year institution to a four-year U.S. institution (within the last four years). As referenced above, this study focused on five exemplars of nationally competitive awards (NCAs), to provide a broad representation of this expansive category of opportunities. Moreover, these awards were selected because of specific benefits and eligibility characteristics that have the top potential to support TSCC interests and needs. The five NCAs included: (a) Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, (b) Goldwater Scholarship (c) Fulbright U.S. Student Program, (d) Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, and (e) Truman Scholarship.

The first NCA selected for this study was the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, which awards up to \$8,000 for study (or interning) abroad (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-b). Funded by the U.S. Department of State, since its inception in 2001, over 31,000 scholarships have been awarded, with around 2,900 individual awards annually (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-e). Applicants for the Gilman must receive Federal Pell Grants or show that they will receive a Federal Pell Grant during their study or internship abroad. To be Pell Grant-eligible, students must demonstrate exceptional financial need. During the 2018-19 academic year, 72% of dependent, Pell Grant-eligible students had family household incomes of below \$40,000 (Ma et al., 2020).

Students who receive Pell Grants can apply for the Gilman Scholarship as early as freshman year. Considering around 38% of community college students received Pell Grants in 2011 (Park & Scott-Clayton, 2017), and the minimal additional eligibility and application requirements including that there is no minimum GPA or letters of recommendation required, the Gilman award is an ideal introduction to NCA opportunities. Past research has also shown financial costs are a significant barrier for community college students to study abroad (Amani & Kim, 2017; Stroud, 2010), which further illustrates why Gilman is a great option for eligible community college students. It is also an example of an NCA that is available to students at both community colleges and at four-year institutions since eligible students can apply for the Gilman as early as the fall semester of their freshman year through the end of their junior year (funding study abroad programs during senior year). Another notable fact about the Gilman Scholarship is that it requires a minimum of two campus staff members to certify the application before it is considered complete, one from a designated study abroad advisor and one from a designated financial aid advisor (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-a). The study abroad advisor must attest that the applicant's program meets the Gilman requirements, such as the length of the program and confirming that it is credit-bearing, etc. Furthermore, the financial aid advisor must also attest that the student is Pell Grant eligible and will verify other financial aid information (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-a). This again speaks to the institution's necessary role in the NCA application process.

The second NCA for this study was the Goldwater Scholarship, which awards up to \$7,500 for tuition, and room and board annually. Established in 1986 by the U.S. Congress, the Goldwater Foundation has awarded over 8,000 scholarships (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-b). Prior to 2019, the Goldwater Foundation

awarded around 200 scholarships per year (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-b). However, after receiving additional funding from the Department of Defense National Defense Education Programs (NDEP), the Goldwater Foundations awarded 496 scholarships during the 2019-20 academic year (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-b).

Students can apply for the Goldwater Scholarship as early as sophomore year, but they must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA and intentions of pursuing a research career in eligible science, mathematics, and engineering fields. Given that around 17% of community college students are STEM majors (Van Noy & Zeidenberg, 2014), this is another NCA that is potentially available to both eligible community college students with sophomore standing, and college juniors attending four-year institutions, including those who have recently transferred from community colleges.

As with the Gilman Scholarship, the Goldwater Scholarship requires institutional support in the form of a nomination. Institutions are also limited to a fixed number of nominations depending on the applicant's status as a traditional college student or transfer student (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-a). Beginning in the 2020 competition, in addition to accepting nominations from two-year institutions, four-year colleges and universities may nominate a fifth candidate for the national competition if they are designated a "transfer student" (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2020b).

The third NCA selected for this study was the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. This Department of State initiative is the largest U.S. exchange program, offering approximately 2,000 grants annually in over 140 countries (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-c). While the

earliest an undergraduate student can apply for this award is during their senior year, the application is time-intensive and students must develop experiences and skills (e.g., teaching or teaching-like experiences for the English Teaching Assistant grant) well before senior year. Furthermore, Fulbright has no minimum GPA requirements and has stated its mission to recruit “candidates from the widest possible pool of high caliber individuals” (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016), which includes TSCC. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program also “strongly encourage[s]” applicants to apply through their institutions, which results in an institutional endorsement submitted by the campus Fulbright Program Advisor (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-b, para. 2). Although transfer students from community colleges cannot apply to this award until senior year, most four-year institutions establish their own campus deadlines, which are much earlier than the national October deadline (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-b). This means students begin the application process sometimes as early as junior year or shortly after TSCC arrive on campus.

The fourth NCA for this study was the Harry S. Truman Scholarship. The Truman Scholarship provides around 65 awards annually, of up to \$30,000 to college juniors who have intentions of working in public service-related careers. The \$30,000 scholarship is earmarked for graduate-level study, instead of undergraduate education costs. According to the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation’s Congressional Justification request for the fiscal year 2014, the foundation was established with a \$30 million appropriation by the United States (Rich & Iglesias, 2014). Congress in 1976. However, beginning in 2009, due to a decline in revenue, the foundation began requesting (and receiving) “small but essential appropriations from Congress to address this shortfall” (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-b, para. 10). Thus, the Truman Scholarship is partially taxpayer funded.

This award is one of the only NCAs that students must apply to during their junior year of college, and they typically can only apply once. However, given the competitive nature of the award, with selection criteria that includes “extensive record of public and community service” and “outstanding leadership potential and communication skills” (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a), this necessitates the development of these qualities well before junior year.

Like the other three NCAs listed above, the Truman Scholarship requires an institutional nomination process. The Truman Scholarship Program website (n.d.-a) noted, “Some schools have a rigorous application process that can begin as early as the sophomore year. Other schools require early completion of the application or an interview.” This illustrates the potential for TSCC to miss out on applying to the Truman program, simply because of their transition to a four-year institution. It also reinforces the role of four-year institutions in relation to NCA access.

Yet, similar to the Goldwater Scholarship, Truman allows four-year institutions to nominate additional candidates if they began their studies at another institution, including two-year community colleges, stating, “Each accredited four-year institution may nominate up to four students. . . . Four-year institutions may also nominate three additional students who completed academic work at another institution” (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a, para. 6).

It is also important to note that the four NCAs described above are partially or fully taxpayer funded by the U.S. government, making the question of access even more vital, as all U.S. citizens (and in the case of the Goldwater Scholarship, U.S. permanent residents) should have the opportunity to compete for these awards.

The fifth and final NCA selected for this study was the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS). This final exemplar is specifically designed to support transfer students from community colleges. While only around sixty scholarships are available each cycle, Jack Kent Cooke Scholars receive up to \$40,000 annually, for tuition, living expenses, and other fees, until they complete their bachelor's degree (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, n.d.). Although this award does have a higher minimum GPA requirement of 3.5 than other NCAs in this study, applicants must also demonstrate significant financial need (e.g., family income under \$95,000), making many prospective transfer students (proTSCC) eligible to apply (Park & Scott-Clayton, 2017).

Unlike the other four exemplars for this study, JKCUTS does not require an institutional endorsement or nomination, but the foundation established a system of faculty representatives at most community colleges who “serve as an important resource to applicants and are encouraged to offer guidance during the application process” (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, n.d., Application Process and Deadlines section). Given this award targets and supports TSCC, it was important to include JKCUTS in this study.

Theoretical Framework

To better understand the factors that impact a transfer student's decision to apply for an NCA, this study utilized Museus' (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model. Building from Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) student integration theory and Astin's (1984, 1999) student involvement theory, Museus (2014) asserted that student success was directly tied to: (a) external influences, such as family, finances, and employment, (b) pre-college inputs, such as demographics and academic preparedness, (c) individual influences, such as self-efficacy, a sense of belonging, and academic performance, (d) and culturally engaging campus

environments, which include nine factors including holistic support and cultural validation (Museus, 2014).

Unlike previous models of postsecondary student success, the CECE model is based on the idea that the more a campus is culturally engaging, especially regarding diverse student populations, the more likely students are to succeed on that campus. The CECE model was created in response to the criticisms of traditional theories, such as Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1984, 1999), which some studies argue had left out diverse student perspectives and experiences (Hurtado et al., 2012; Museus, 2014; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). Therefore, the CECE model was appropriate for application in this study, given that the TSCC population tends to consist of students of color from low-income communities (Ma & Baum, 2016; Community College Research Center, n.d.). In fact, the National Institute for Transformation and Equity, which subsumed CECE-related research in 2017, offers five distinct CECE surveys, including one designed specifically for populations at two-year institutions (National Institute for Transformation and Equity, n.d.).

In the CECE model, Museus (2014) asserts that factors such as cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness, play a role in a student's sense of belonging on campus, academic disposition, and ultimately, academic performance. Similar to college student development theories by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1984, 1999), the CECE model defines student success as college completion. Yet, these same factors may explain what motivates students, especially marginalized groups such as TSCC, to apply for NCAs.

The CECE model (Museus, 2014) shows how external influences, pre-college inputs, individual influences, and culturally engaging campus environments all impact student success. Given that the purpose of this study is to uncover the factors that influence TSCC to apply for

NCAAs, the CECE model provides a starting point for identifying factors that are likely to affect this diverse population of students. The model takes into consideration a TSCC's pre-college life experiences as well as the conditions of the campus environment and may shed light on what is factoring into the decision to apply for an NCA.

While this was a new application of the CECE model, examining factors motivating TSCCs' application to NCAs, rather than the model's typical application to understanding college student success, the components of the model fit well, given student demographics and common factors that affect college students. Specifically, for the purpose of this study, the CECE categories of cultural responsiveness, which emphasizes how campus environments support diverse students, as well as individual influences that impact student success (e.g., sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance), were applied to understand what might influence TSCC's application to NCAs (Museus, 2014).

Method

Research Design

To address the research questions, this study used a mixed-methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative components, to provide "a more complete understanding of a research problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The exploratory sequential qual-QUAN design began with qualitative interviews, followed by the development of a survey, and finished with the dissemination of the newly developed quantitative survey instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), which allowed the voice of TSCC to inform the design of the study.

To that end, I first interviewed nine TSCC and one TSCC alumnus who, within the last four years, had transferred to a four-year institution from two-year institutions. The goal was to capture recurring "concepts and potential hypotheses" (Gay et al., p. 485, 2014) related to their

knowledge of NCAs and factors that potentially influence their decision to apply. I conducted 45-minute interviews with ten TSCC from Blue Private University (BPU) via Zoom (Version 5.6.1.61, <https://zoom.us/>), to discuss their current knowledge of NCAs. By speaking to students who had already transferred to a four-year institution from two-year institutions, I gained insight into obstacles or challenges that limited their access, awareness, and knowledge of NCAs. I coded their responses using Dedoose (Version 8.3.47, www.dedoose.com), looking for emergent themes, especially as they related to Museus' (2014) CECE model. The most prevalent CECE categories that emerged in the qualitative interview responses aligned with Museus' (2014) external influences of family and finances; individual influences of sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and motivation; as well as Museus' cultural responsiveness campus factors of collectivist orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, holistic support, and cross-cultural engagement. However, because the cross-cultural engagement campus factor only emerged when discussing two of the five awards that provide funding to go abroad (Gilman and Fulbright), I chose not to include this category in the survey scale, as it did not broadly apply to most NCAs.

Next, using the themes identified in the interviews, I designed a student survey to collect quantitative data to describe trends among current community college students who intended to transfer to a four-year institution (proTSCC). After a thorough review of the literature, I selected and included questions from the previously validated culturally engaging campus environment (CECE) survey (Museus & Saelua, 2017), as well as scale items that measured student motivation to study abroad (Anderson & Lawton, 2015; Aresi et al., 2018). These scales were used among the college student population in previous research and the items aligned with the qualitative findings from interviews with TSCC participants.

The CECE survey measures “elements of optimal campus environments that research indicates promote diverse populations’ sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy and motivation, satisfaction, and eventual success” (Museus & Saelua, 2017, p. 8). One version of this survey was specifically designed for community college students and institutions (Museus & Saelua, 2017). The responses from the qualitative interviews helped narrow down the CECE survey questions to focus on specific factors of motivation as they related to applying to NCAs.

Since there were no existing instruments that measure motivation to apply to NCAs, I adapted previously validated scales that measure motivation to study abroad. Like NCAs, studying abroad is generally optional or something students elect to do, thus studies on motivation may reveal why some students choose to study abroad and others do not. The additional measurement instruments I drew upon included the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) (Anderson & Lawton, 2015) and the Multidimensional Motivations to Study Abroad Scale (Aresi et al., 2018).

Next, after feedback from content experts, I administered the survey to college students enrolled at a two-year public institution to understand their current knowledge of NCAs. Ocean Community College (Ocean CC), a public two-year institution in Southern California with an enrollment of around 12,000 students, provided a list of 3,539 email addresses of currently enrolled part- and full-time students who marked that they intended to transfer to a four-year institution in their community college application. It is important to note that while the students on the list provided by Ocean CC received the survey invitation, responses indicated that students attended multiple community colleges, with 12 community college sites, including Ocean CC, represented in the survey data. The survey asked participants: (a) if they are broadly aware of nationally competitive award opportunities; (b) if they are aware of specific NCAs, e.g.,

the five selected for this study, based on eligibility determined by demographic information; and (c) their motivation to apply, including whether the CECE factors that emerge from the interviews would (or have) influenced their decision to apply.

The survey also tested Museus' (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model by surveying prospective transfer students from community colleges (proTSCC) to determine if the CECE indicators of student success influence their decision to apply for NCAs. By using both qualitative responses from student interviews and quantitative survey data, this study will add to the currently limited research on NCAs.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

I designed this study with the assumption that most community college students will be eligible to apply for at least one of the five NCAs listed. Given that four of the five have citizenship requirements, this may have limited responses from undocumented students, as well as international students. Although several of the awards (e.g., Gilman and Fulbright) do not have minimum GPA requirements, students may have also self-selected out of the study because of their belief that they are academically ineligible to apply. Furthermore, participant interest in at least one of the NCAs and honest responses regarding their motivations to apply were assumed.

As with all qualitative studies, the small interview sample (ten) may have limited the range of perspectives about factors related to applying for NCAs among the TSCC population. Interview participants transferred from a total of eight community colleges that have varying resources and support services. However, given the lack of research on this topic, the interviews were only a starting point. Their responses were further explored in the follow-up survey.

Additionally, participants were recruited from a list provided by one community college that included 3,539 student email addresses of students who had indicated an interest in transferring to a four-year institution on their community college application and were enrolled either part-time or full-time. While only 171 students or 4.83% completed the survey, a broader than expected number of community colleges were represented in the data. Survey respondents indicated that they were currently enrolled in twelve community colleges, including Ocean Community College, the institution which provided the student list. Ultimately, the survey findings represented the view of 171 students from 12 community colleges in Southern California and one community college in Northern California.

Initially, three community colleges had agreed to send the survey to eligible students but when the Coronavirus forced institutions to close in March 2020, two of the three sites withdrew their support, citing the pandemic as the cause. Thus, the survey was emailed to 3,539 students at one community college. Given this was during a pandemic and the email came directly from the researcher, only 171 responses were sufficiently complete for use in the data analysis. Moreover, perspectives captured from the survey were mostly female (75% of respondents identified as female).

Finally, this study utilized the CECE model because research has shown that “culturally engaging environments lead to greater participation in academically enriching behaviors, but it does not specifically outline how they do so” (Museus et al., 2017, pp. 193-194). Thus, participants who indicated that their institutions are employing the CECE factors may not be able to articulate concrete examples of these factors in action.

Significance of the Study

Because of the lacuna of (non-hagiographic) research on nationally competitive awards, researchers have asserted a “call to action” to expand into other areas, such as “studying what happened prior to the [NCA] selection” (Ludovic & Scott-Smith, 2012, p. 8). Additionally, NCAs like the Fulbright Program are prioritizing recruitment strategies that will lead to a more diverse applicant pool. In McMurtrie’s (2009) *The Chronicle of Higher Education* interview with Alina L. Romanowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs in the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Romanowski stated several times that Fulbright is seeking to diversify its applicant pool and institutional hosts. This study has the potential to impact college students, higher education institutions, scholarship foundations, and departments that manage government-sponsored awards.

By studying both transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) and community college students who intend to transfer (proTSCC), this research has the potential to impact student awareness of NCAs and thus may increase the number of students applying for (and winning) these opportunities. In fact, the study utilized a new scale for measuring awareness of NCAs and a student’s motivation to apply, which may also contribute to future research on this topic.

In addition to the student impact, this study has the potential to bolster existing bridge programs between two-year and four-year institutions; or possibly create new supports for TSCC. Lastly, NCA foundations, government organizations, and other managing bodies may be impacted by the study through an increase in the diversity of their applicant pools.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the research study on community college transfer student perceptions and access to nationally competitive awards. For a list of key terms, see Appendix A. Chapter 2 will provide a detailed map of existing literature that both supports and acknowledges the current gaps in research on NCAs. After a review of the literature, Chapter 3 will outline the study's methodology, and Chapter 4 will explore the data collected in the interviews and from the survey responses. Lastly, Chapter 5 will provide recommendations for future research and how the findings may be applied within current community colleges and four-year institutions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In higher education, students transferring from two-year to four-year institutions face unique challenges that “traditional” college students—those who attend a four-year institution directly after completing high school—do not experience. Many of these challenges relate to issues of access and equity in relation to educational opportunities. One subset of educational opportunities is nationally competitive awards (NCAs), which provide funding for a variety of educational experiences in college. For instance, some NCAs provide merit-based or need-based financial support to travel abroad; other NCAs cover costs of tuition, room and board, and miscellaneous educational expenses; and some fund research opportunities, internships, or language acquisition programs (Cobane & Jennings, 2017; Lamont, 2004). However, little is known about whether transfer students are aware of NCAs, let alone whether they might apply. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) access to NCAs by determining (a) TSCC awareness of NCAs and (b) the factors that influence their decision to apply. This review of the literature will provide background on community college students, with a focus on transfer students; student development theories that aim to explain motivation and self-efficacy; and an overview of NCAs.

Community College Students

In 1901, the first community college in the United States was established in Chicago, Illinois (O’Banion, 2019). The superintendent of a local high school and the president of the University of Chicago sought to address concerns about graduating high school seniors who were not fully prepared to begin university-level coursework. In partnership with the university,

Joliet Junior College (housed within Joliet High School) offered supplemental coursework to help these underprepared students transition into university and specifically became a feeder for the University of Chicago (O'Banion, 2019). Today, there are approximately 1,200 community colleges across the United States (Edgecombe, 2019) and perceptions of community college settings vary from technical schools to vocational education, to occupational training centers. Yet, others label these types of institutions as “college for the dumb rich and bright poor” (O'Banion, 2019, p. 2).

Notably, students who attend two-year institutions represent a diverse segment of the higher education population. Six million out of 17.3 million undergraduate students attend two-year institutions (Ginder et al., 2017). This population is not only ethnically diverse, with 56% of Hispanic undergraduate students and 44% of Black undergraduate students attending two-year institutions; but the majority of these students also hail from the lowest socioeconomic groups (Ma & Baum, 2016). This is also evident in that over two-thirds of community college students work while attending school, with around one-third working full-time (Ma & Baum, 2016). Moreover, according to a U.S. Department of Education Report, about 42% of first-generation college students attended two-year institutions compared to 26% of students whose parents had earned a bachelor's degree (Cataldi et al., 2018). Considering these statistics, the successes and challenges community college students experience within two-year institutions differ from traditional, four-year college students.

Student Success

In addition to the diverse backgrounds of community college students, one significant hurdle students encounter is the general stigma associated with attending a community college. One component of this stigma stems from the remedial coursework offered at two-year

institutions, which is perceived by some as less rigorous and of lower quality (O'Banion, 2019). Although data from 2003 to 2009 showed that around 68% of community college students enrolled in one or more remedial courses (Chen, 2016), this alone does not indicate a student's overall ability to succeed in higher education. Within the same dataset, 40% of students who attended a public four-year institution also enrolled in one or more remedial courses (Chen, 2016). Yet, students attending four-year institutions are generally not singled out for taking remedial courses or stigmatized because of their academic needs. This denigration attached to the remedial academic coursework at community colleges has led to a recent call to action to change the terminology from "remedial" to "developmental," to lessen these negative connotations (O'Banion, 2019).

Although widely considered an affordable alternative to costly four-year institutions, financial challenges remain one of the greatest barriers to community college student success. Even with the rise of college promise programs, which offer tuition-free enrollment at community colleges, many students struggle financially (Kanter & Armstrong, 2019). As of 2018, there were approximately 300 college promise programs in 44 states. However, most college promise programs are "last dollar" programs, meaning students must apply for federal financial aid and any federal aid will first be applied to tuition costs, before the college promise program kicks in any remaining balance (Millett et al., 2018). Miller-Adams (2015) found that last dollar programs do not address additional education costs such as textbooks, living expenses, and other fees.

Moreover, a Wisconsin HOPE Lab survey of 4,000 students at ten community colleges found that one in three of the students surveyed experienced hunger, 51% lacked secure housing, and 14% were homeless (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Further studies also highlighted how

financial insecurity inversely impacts student success (Booth et al., 2013; Cofer & Somers, 1999; Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Shelton, 2019; St. John & Starkey, 1994). Booth et al. (2013) noted:

Student responses highlight how everyone on a campus can affect their achievement. They underscore the importance of colleges promoting a culture where all individuals across the institution understand their role in advancing students' success. Yet, across the board, students most commonly recognized faculty as having the greatest potential impact on their educational journeys. (p. 10)

Transfer Students from Community Colleges

Approximately 32% of community college students transfer to four-year institutions (Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2017). TSCC not only continue to encounter the same barriers they faced while attending community college, but they also experience additional academic and social challenges. Kuh et al. (2005) noted “Most institutions pay far more attention to new first-time first-year students than they do to transfer students. As a result, transfers often do not know enough about the resources available to them” (p. 255).

Student Success

In a recent study on the transfer student transition, participants expressed doubts in their abilities, regardless of their high transfer GPAs, indicating that they felt less capable than their “traditional” peers because they had attended a community college (Shaw et al., 2019). Once again, the stigma associated with community colleges is carried throughout the transfer process.

Yet, in a recent study funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Glynn (2019) found that community college students who transfer to selective four-year institutions have equal or higher graduation rates as students who enrolled directly after high school. Within the study, selective institution designations were based on the 2016 *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges* categories of “Most Competitive” or “Highly Competitive” (as cited in Glynn, 2019, p. 3). In fact, the study also found that, regardless of the selectivity of the four-year institution, transfer

students from community colleges were more likely to graduate in six years than students enrolling from high school (Glynn, 2019). The study analyzed National Student Clearinghouse data, which accounted for 96.7% of postsecondary enrollments nationwide between 2010 and 2016 (Glynn, 2019).

Another study highlighted transfer student misconceptions among faculty and staff. Researchers collected the perspectives of 17 faculty and staff members at a four-year institution through interviews and found that they believed the greatest concern of transfer students was how their credits would transfer; and only two of the 17 participants acknowledged the social challenges transfer students generally experience (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012). In this same study, faculty and staff participants did not attribute under-preparedness to the transfer student population, but they also were not aware of transfer student needs or how these students integrated on campus (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012).

TSCC continue to face financial barriers to their success. One study that followed ten lower-income students who successfully transferred from a community college to a selective four-year institution found that transfer students struggle with education costs beyond tuition, such as paying for textbooks (Dowd et al., 2013).

Moreover, a mixed-methods longitudinal study of 111 high-achieving, low-income TSCC, found that two-thirds of students questioned some aspect of their academic and social abilities during their first year, including a sense of belonging at their institution (Schmertz, & Carney, 2013). Furthermore, many students reported feeling overwhelmed by the transition to a four-year institution. Students noted that faculty and advisor relationships helped ease the transition (Schmertz & Carney, 2013). Most interview participants also expressed feelings of loneliness and not belonging when they first arrived on the new campus. Multiple interviews

showcased students' "perceptions of their own 'failings' and the larger sociological context of arriving at a school where many of their peers had already formed friendships as freshmen" (Schmertz & Carney, 2013, p. 17).

The characteristics of community college students as noted above, suggest that while they face unique challenges such as self-doubt, social integration on campus, and financial insecurity, they are not academically less successful than their traditional college peers. The next section will outline student success theories, with a focus on factors of motivation and self-efficacy. The purpose of the study is to understand why students choose to engage in optional co-curricular opportunities, such as nationally competitive awards, which are likely tied to motivation and self-efficacy.

Postsecondary Student Success Theories

Student success in higher education has been studied for decades and generally refers to college completion. The theories of Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1984, 1999) are two of the most well-known, and widely-cited theories on student success, and these theories have laid the groundwork for the conceptual framework of this study: the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment model (Museus, 2014). In addition to looking broadly at student success, this study attempted to uncover contributing factors of student success such as motivation, persistence, and sense of belonging. These three student success factors, in turn, guided the study to determine why a student may opt to apply (or not apply) for an NCA.

Beginning with Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) integration theory, factors that contribute to why students drop out of college were the main focus of his work. His theory asserts that students begin college with certain predispositions that influence their goals and motivation in higher education. This includes precollege factors such as family background, previous

educational experience, and skills and abilities. These predispositions determine a student's level of integration into both the social and academic environments within their campuses. The level of student integration then influences the student's likelihood of succeeding in college. In Tinto's (1983) later version of his theory, he noted that students may integrate into some part of the campus, but not the whole campus (as cited in Mayhew et al., 2016). However, several major criticisms emerged from Tinto's theory, including: (a) an earlier version of the theory suggested that students must "leave behind their precollege communities and cultures to adapt successfully in college" (Mayhew et al., 2016, p. 362), which may adversely affect students of color who attend institutions that are culturally different from their own cultures; and (b) Bensimon (2007) and Rendón et al. (2000) have argued that the theory places too much emphasis on the student's responsibility to integrate and not enough on the campus' role in supporting that integration. Additionally, Hurtado and Carter (1997) have noted that students of color and white students can experience the same campus activities in different ways, recommending the need for studies on "sense of belonging among students from other racial-ethnic groups" (p. 341).

In 2017, Tinto developed a conceptual model of student institutional persistence. Unlike his integration theory, which focused on how institutions can "retain" students to increase student success, his model of student institutional persistence placed the focus on student success directly on the student experience (p. 254). Entitled, "Through the Eyes of Students," Tinto (2017) highlighted the importance of student persistence as a form of motivation. He also argued that student motivation is dependent on their level of self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and perception of the curriculum (Tinto, 2017). Sense of belonging and self-efficacy are recurring factors in numerous student success theories and studies, including Museus' (2014) CECE model.

Astin's (1984, 1999) student involvement theory is another foundational theory, which posited that the more a student is involved in college, the more likely they are to persist and to graduate from college. According to Astin (1984, 1999) "student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Astin provided examples of involvement that contribute to student success such as membership in Honors programs, participation in campus organizations like student government, and having frequent interactions with faculty. Student involvement theory primarily places emphasis on the student's role in their success versus the role of the institution (Astin, 1984, 1999). The theory also highlighted differences in involvement at two-year versus four-year institutions, asserting, "Community colleges are places where the involvement of both faculty and students seems to be minimal" (Astin, 1984, p. 524). Because community college students are more likely to commute to campus and attend part-time, they are less likely to be involved and thus two-year institutions have higher drop-out rates (Astin, 1984, 1999). However, the theory does not explicitly address how to engage culturally diverse student populations or increase their involvement. As drop-out rates for culturally diverse students are higher than traditional college-going students, this has led to criticisms of the theory, such as Rendón et al. (2000), who argued:

If practitioners accept the cultural separation assumption without understanding its inherent trauma for nontraditional students, then practitioners will tend to see involvement as a relatively easy task since they will also assume that all students, regardless of background, are ready, willing, and able to get involved. (p. 145)

Again, this foundational theory is not only important to the study of student success but may also connect to this study on factors that influence TSCC to apply for NCAs.

Taken together, the work of Astin (1984, 1999), Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993, 2017), Bensimon (2007), Rendón et al. (2000), and others have laid the foundation for understanding student persistence and success in college, highlighting the critical roles of sense of belonging, motivation, and self-efficacy. These same factors may also play a role in a student's decision to seek out and apply to NCAs.

Theories of Motivation and Sense of Belonging

While the postsecondary student success theories described above are foundational to higher education research, there are also numerous theories rooted in Psychology that focus on motivation. When determining factors that influence a student's decision to seek an NCA, their psychological motivations must be also taken into consideration. For the purpose of this study, theories that focus on motivation, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging are reviewed because they complement and inform the theories of Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993, 2017), Astin (1984, 1999), and Museus (2014).

According to Tinto (2017) motivation “can be enhanced or diminished by student experiences in college,” which is influenced by self-efficacy and sense of belonging (p. 255). Vroom's 1964 expectancy theory (as cited in Owens & Valesky, 2015) asserts that motivation is based on one's belief in their ability to successfully complete a task, also known as self-efficacy, combined with one's perceived importance of that task. Irvine (2018) also found that there was an “interrelationship between expectancy-value theory and self-efficacy; the students' beliefs about their own ability to accomplish a given task will influence whether they choose to engage in the task” (p. 2). This concept of self-selection of a task was applied in a study that measured the self-efficacy of students who chose to study or work abroad (Milstein, 2005). Milstein (2005) argued that individuals who choose to study or work abroad may have had high levels of self-

efficacy prior to the experience of studying or working abroad, meaning high self-efficacy levels may have led them to that decision (Milstein, 2005).

Moreover, Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory asserts that individuals actively control their development by taking action, but what they do is determined by how capable they feel they are in performing that activity, otherwise known as self-efficacy. This coupled with their perception of the value or importance of the activity impacts their motivation (Bandura, 1989). Thus, these several theories underscore the important role of self-efficacy in decision making, especially when the task at hand has some sort of perceived chance of failure. Additionally, an individual's perceived value of the task also impacts their motivation to proceed. Regardless if it is a low or high-stake task, higher self-efficacy levels and high levels of interest in a task may lead to more overall risk-taking.

Because of the gap in research on motivation to apply to NCAs, this study intended to adapt two instruments created to measure motivation to study abroad. Anderson and Lawton (2015) developed the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) through an exploratory sequential study. They first created an open-ended instrument, based on existing literature on study abroad motivation, for students who have enrolled in study abroad programs (Anderson & Lawton, 2015). Based on their responses, they developed 53 statements that summarized participants' reasons for studying abroad and administered them to 120 additional students who had also enrolled in study abroad programming. After an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, researchers winnowed down the statements to 37 and administered them to a third group of enrolled study abroad students. Anderson and Lawton (2015) conducted a second round of exploratory factor analysis, resulting in the MSA four dimensions of study abroad motivation: *world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment*. Since not all

NCAAs involve international travel or components, for the purpose of this study, NCA motivational factors will only include the *personal growth* and *career development* dimensions.

The second motivation to study abroad instrument used in this study was the Multidimensional Motivations to Study Abroad Scale (MMSAS), developed by Aresi et al. (2018). Like the MSA, the MMSAS was developed to fill a gap in existing research about study abroad motivations. To create their scale, Aresi et al. (2018) employed a multi-step development approach that included a literature review, pilot qualitative study, assessment of emerging themes by experts in the field, a second pilot study, and finally, the implementation of the nine-factor MMSAS. As with the MSA, only a few of the nine MMSAS factors complement NCA motivations to apply. Of the nine, four will be used in the NCA survey: *personal growth*, *academic*, *others' expectations*, and *career*; with *personal growth* and *career* overlapping with the MSA dimensions (Anderson & Lawton, 2015).

Sense of Belonging

In addition to theories of motivation, which highlight self-efficacy as a key factor in engaging in activities, a sense of belonging refers to a student's psychological perception of their integration on campus and how this integration affects their ability to succeed in college. As discussed above, the frameworks of both Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993, 2017) and Astin (1984, 1999) cite a sense of belonging as an integral factor of student success. One study on how a sense of belonging directly impacts TSCC was found in Blaylock and Bresciani (2011) outcomes-based assessment research on a transfer bridge program for transfer students from community colleges. Researchers found that "the more comfortable and connected new students felt, the more likely they were to ask questions and express their concerns" (p. 50). Additional research (Booth et al.,

2013; Hausmann et al., 2007; Kuh et al., 2005; Milem & Berger, 1997) also has affirmed the importance of a sense of belonging in relation to student persistence and student success.

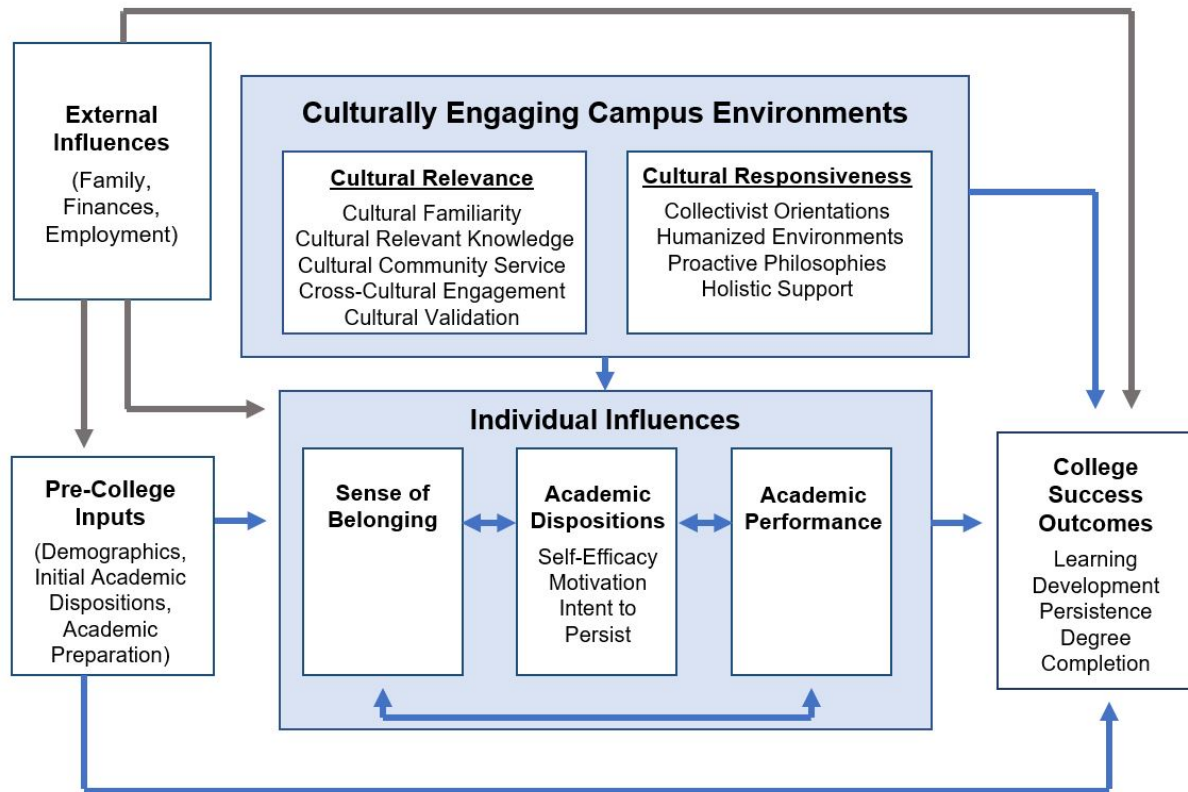
Yet, as studies employed the theories of Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1984, 1999), criticisms arose regarding the gap in addressing the backgrounds of diverse students and their experiences, with student success (Hurtado et al., 2012; Museus, 2014; Museus & Quayle, 2009; Rendón & Muñoz, 2011). In response to these criticisms, Museus (2014) developed the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) model, which considers diverse student perspectives and their unique experiences.

Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) Model

To address the gap in how underserved students succeed, Museus (2014) developed the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) model. This model “utilizes 30 years of literature on diverse students’ success to outline a set of quantifiable elements of campus environments that research suggests are associated with success among diverse populations” (Museus et al., 2016, p. 772). Expanding on Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993) and Astin (1984, 1999), Museus (2014) identified nine factors that define a culturally engaging campus, which interact with individual factors to contribute to student success, defined as college completion. The nine factors that indicate whether a campus environment is culturally engaging include cultural familiarity, culturally relevant knowledge, cultural community service, cross-cultural engagement, cultural validation, collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support.

Figure 1

Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model of College Success



Note: Used with permission from “The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model: A New Theory of College Success” by S. Museus, 2014, in M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 29* (pp.189–227), Springer, p. 207. Copyright © 2014 Springer. Reprinted with permission.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the CECE model begins with the understanding that external factors (e.g., family, finances, employment), which vary from student to student, must be taken into consideration when researching student success in college. It is important to note that the external factor of finances is directly related to this study, considering previous research has shown that scholarships, like NCAs, which offer financial support, are positively related to college completion and persistence (Alon, 2011; Gross, 2011; Mayhew et al., 2016). The CECE model also factors in pre-college inputs (e.g., demographics, academic preparation) as potentially

influencing specific individual influences (e.g., sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance) as determinants of student success. Within the description of these individual influences, academic dispositions are operationalized as self-efficacy and motivation.

While individual influences were measured in the current study (e.g., self-efficacy, motivation, and intent to persist), the research design heavily explored the campus environment as it relates to NCA access. This design was intentional given that Museus' (2014) CECE model extends traditional research about college student success by adding the dimension of a culturally engaging campus environment. As it relates to NCA access, the campus environment plays a key role.

Campus Environment

Focusing on the specifics of the campus environment, Museus (2014) offered nine factors to operationalize culturally engaging campuses, which are separated into two broader categories: (a) cultural relevance and (b) cultural responsiveness. The category of "cultural relevance" is broken down into five factors that indicate the extent to which campus environments are culturally relevant to diverse student populations, including cultural familiarity or a student's access to institutional agents with similar backgrounds and experiences as them; culturally relevant knowledge or access to opportunities where students engage in knowledge exchange that is relevant to their own cultural communities; cultural community service or opportunities which allow students to give back to their communities; cross-cultural engagement or the extent to which students interact with individuals of different cultural backgrounds, specifically with social and political topics; and lastly, cultural validation or if students feel their cultural backgrounds and identities are valued at their institutions (Museus et al., 2016).

The second category, “cultural responsiveness,” is broken into four factors and “focus on the extent to which campus environments are responsive to the cultural norms and needs of diverse populations” (Museus et al., 2016, p. 774). These include *collectivist cultural orientations*, or to what extent campuses are promoting collaborative, group environments versus campus that validate individual efforts; *humanized environments*, or campuses with faculty and staff who care about and develop meaningful relationships with their students; *proactive philosophies*, or campuses with faculty and staff who make the extra effort of bringing pertinent information and support directly to the students, versus just making info and support available to students; and *holistic support*, or campuses that employ faculty and staff who are willing to assist students even when it may be outside of their roles and responsibilities (Museus, 2014).

Cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness also play a part in the NCA cycle. When describing the fellowship evaluation process, Lamont (2004) noted concerns of what she defined as:

cultural determinants of success of fellowship competitions, that is, the taken-for-granted assumptions about excellence at work in the process of fellowship application and selection. We are concerned here with the cultural assumptions of potential applicants (concerning what one should do to win a competition, for instance) and the cultural assumptions of panelists (concerning how to recognize originality, for instance). (p. 106).

She also acknowledges that these assumptions, although implicit and difficult to measure, “undoubtedly affect the outcome and success of nationally and internationally competitive scholarships” (Lamont, 2004, p. 106).

Several studies utilizing the CECE model highlight the impact of the nine CECE indicators, as they relate to a sense of belonging and self-efficacy contributing to student success. For example, one study employed the CECE model to examine the relationship between culturally engaging campus environments and sense of belonging of students of color and white

students (Museus et al., 2018). Researchers analyzed survey data from 870 students who attended an urban public research university and found that the nine CECE indicators significantly impacted both students of color and white students' sense of belonging on campus (Museus et al., 2018). Furthermore, "access to environments characterized by cultural familiarity, collectivist cultural orientations, and holistic support might be especially important in providing the conditions to maximize belonging among students in college regardless of racial background" (Museus et al., 2018, p. 479).

Muñoz and Espino (2017) interviewed eight undocumented students from one university to determine the applicability of the nine CECE indicators "in creating a counterspace and optimal learning conditions for students without legal status" (p. 543). One of their findings indicated that the culturally relevant knowledge CECE factor (under the broader category of cultural relevance) helped the participants gain an understanding of themselves (Muñoz & Espino, 2017). A second finding showed that under the category of cultural responsiveness, the campus in this study demonstrated humanized environments, proactive philosophies, and provided holistic support, which positively impacted the participants' sense of belonging on campus, especially as individuals without legal status (Muñoz & Espino, 2017). Faculty and staff, according to participants, offered "a place in which students without legal status can be their authentic selves and make meaning of their legal status in a nurturing context" (Muñoz & Espino, 2017, p. 546).

In another study that employed the CECE model, Montgomery (2017) analyzed the experiences of six Chinese undergraduate students attending one large, public institution. Utilizing the CECE model (Museus, 2014), researchers interviewed participants about their transition experience at this U.S. institution. One notable finding included "the presence of

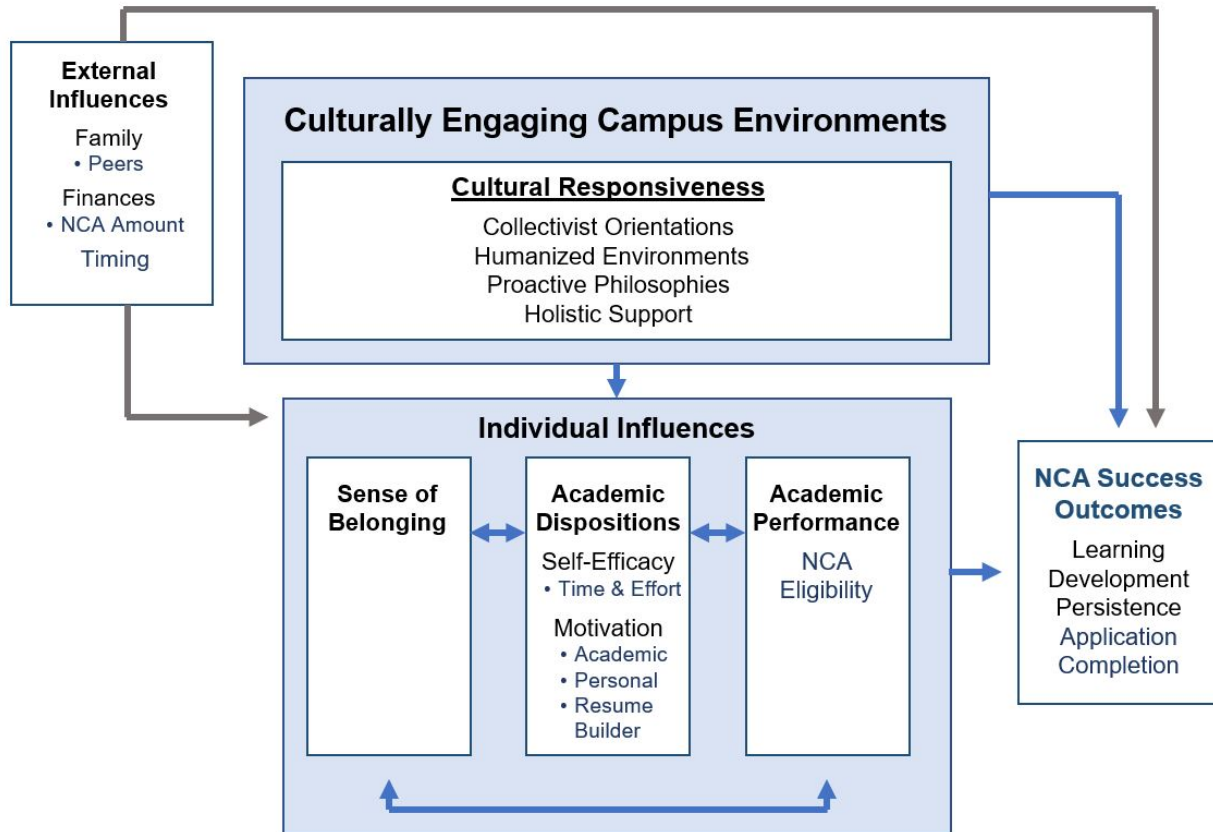
Humanizing Educational Environments and Holistic Support by various institutional agents who took time to develop meaningful relationships with them or who were viewed as trusted sources of information and assistance” (Montgomery, 2017, p. 982). Furthermore, some participants indicated that they felt culturally validated by faculty and staff who took an interest in their cultures and backgrounds, while others indicated a lack of cultural validation, stating they felt like they could not fully participate in class because faculty did not make any personal effort to get to know them, affirming the importance of Museus’ (2014) cultural validation indicator (Montgomery, 2017).

Given the primary interest in how the CECE model impacts access to nationally competitive awards, the focus of the current study was on the external influences category (e.g., family and finances), the individual influences category (e.g., sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance), and the cultural responsiveness category (e.g., collectivist orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support). However, as this was an exploratory sequential research study, an additional CECE component emerged from the qualitative interview data. The factor of *cross-cultural engagement*, which falls under Museus’ (2014) cultural relevance category, appeared several times in the interview responses. Because this factor only applied when participants discussed NCAs that fund international experiences, like Gilman and Fulbright, I chose to leave *cross-cultural engagement* scale items out of the NCA survey because they did not broadly apply to most NCA opportunities. Yet, the notion of cross-cultural engagement may be a worthwhile topic for future research. An adapted version of the CECE model, as illustrated below in Figure 2, was utilized to ascertain which external influences, individual influences, and campus factors led students, specifically transfer students from community colleges, to apply for NCAs. Noted

changes include the addition of *timing* as an external influence and the removal of *employment* (external influence) and *intent to persist* (individual influence). The adapted model also incorporates several subfactors like “peers” under *family*; “NCA amount” under *finances*; “time and effort to apply” under *self-efficacy*; and “academic growth,” “personal growth,” and “resume builder” under *motivation*. Furthermore, “NCA eligibility” was added to *academic performance* to acknowledge that some NCA opportunities have academic requirements like minimum GPAs. Finally, *college completion* was changed to *application completion* as the application was the outcome under study. Adapted Figure 2 also eliminates the *pre-college factors* and *cultural relevance* boxes—not because these are unimportant to the access of NCAs, but simply to reinforce the purpose of the study, which focuses on external influence factors, individual influence factors, and campus environment factors that might lead to students applying for NCAs. While pre-college inputs (e.g., academic preparation before college) are certainly important factors to consider, the current study chose to focus on aspects related to external influences, individual influences, and the campus, wherein recommendations for change aligned with supporting TSCC campus engagement could be drawn.

Figure 2

Access to Nationally Competitive Awards Within the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment Framework



Note: Adapted from “The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model: A New Theory of College Success” by S. Museus, 2014, In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research: Volume 29* (pp.189–227), Springer, p. 207. Copyright © 2014 Springer. Reprinted with permission.

While the student development theories outlined above focus on student success as measured by college completion, Kinzie and Kuh (2017) have argued that “equally important is engaging in educational experiences associated with acquiring proficiencies that equip students for life and work” (p. 22). One type of educational opportunity is nationally competitive awards.

Nationally Competitive Awards

Access to and awareness of nationally competitive awards (NCAs) were examined in this study. NCAs represent a category of opportunities available to undergraduate students studying at U.S. institutions. Also known as prestigious scholarships and fellowships, NCAs are generally considered the “gold standard for students who will become future leaders and benefit from a lifetime of advantages that the award offers” (Adam, 2016, p. 198). Depending on the NCA, awards may provide funding for tuition and living expenses, study abroad programs, language study, undergraduate research, or graduate school (Cobane & Jennings, 2017). Lamont (2004) estimated that there are around six thousand nationally competitive scholarships available to Americans annually, representing over 400 million dollars in funding.

For the purpose of this study, awareness of the following five NCAs was measured to answer the research questions: (a) Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, (b) Fulbright U.S. Student Program, (c) Barry Goldwater Scholarship, (d) Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Scholarship, and (e) the Harry S. Truman Scholarship. All five NCAs require an institutional nomination, endorsement, or other support, which makes college campuses the gatekeepers of these awards. Although not directly related to NCAs, examinations of both study abroad and STEM undergraduate research opportunities have shown that faculty and staff are vital sources for sharing these opportunities with students (Amani & Kim, 2017; Campbell & Skoog, 2008; Peterson, 2003; Pierszalowski et al., 2018; Zydney et al., 2002) suggesting the role institutions, faculty, and staff play in supporting student access to opportunities.

As referenced in chapter one, four of the five NCAs selected for this study are also fully or partially funded by the U.S. government (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-b; The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-b; Fulbright

U.S. Student Program, n.d.-c; The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-b), which makes the question of access even more important considering these programs rely on citizen tax dollars.

Also worth noting, is the increased likelihood that a previous NCA recipient will win additional NCA opportunities, known as Merton's 1968 principle of the Matthew Effect (as cited in Lamont, 2004). Both the Goldwater and Gilman scholarships highlight how many of their award recipients go on to win other selective NCAs such as Fulbright U.S. Student Program grants (Research Solutions International, 2016, p. 23), Rhodes Scholarships, and National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2021b).

Although these opportunities are meant to support college students, there is a lack of research on NCAs. For example, perhaps the best known (and longest running) NCA is the Rhodes Scholarship, founded in 1901, which funds study at Oxford University in the United Kingdom (Pietsch & Chou, 2018). However, there are few, if any studies about the impact of this program on scholars; and there are no studies on the accessibility of such a program on diverse student populations. In fact, critics of Rhodes called it "elitist" (Schaeper & Schaeper, 2012, p. 279) and argued that the scholarship shapes elites by offering "opportunity and connection" (Pietsch & Chou, 2018, p. 45). While research has not addressed the Rhodes access question, Pietsch and Chou (2018) acknowledged that investigating the success of scholarship winners at the higher education level may be misguided, since their success at the college-level is directly related to access to resources in primary and secondary school.

Instead, existing literature on NCAs is generally focused on: (a) firsthand accounts of advisors or faculty, who support students in the application process; or (b) outcomes and

experiences of alumni, typically initiated by the NCA funding organizations. While both approaches to the field are inherently problematic because neither addresses possible issues with the selection processes, they do illustrate the field of NCAs, including added benefits, beyond a monetary value.

NCA Benefits

When describing how to measure the benefits of global exchange fellowships, like the Fulbright Program, Rosenfield (2018) wrote that the “impacts of fellowships are often revealed in the long run and are usually multifaceted, affecting the individual, the institution, the field and, at times, public opinion and policymaking” (p. 248). This is yet another reason for the lack of research on NCAs, and therefore lack of published evidence on the benefits of NCAs.

Furthermore, most NCA literature only focuses on successful scholars and their NCA experiences. In a text meant to provide a historical overview of the Marshall Scholarship, an award previously mentioned in chapter one that fully funds graduate study in the UK for eligible U.S. citizens, Mukharji (2016) noted the following:

this book conspicuously highlights the positive experiences, achievements, and contributions of [Marshall] Scholars but does not mention the negative experiences, the failures, or the disappointments. Not all scholars are world-renowned scientists, successful businesspeople, or respected public intellectuals. . . . One, by this author’s count, is homeless. (p. viii-ix)

As such, while research on the benefits of participating in NCAs is minimal, the lack of information only reaffirms the need for this study and more overall research on these opportunities.

Existing literature from the institutional perspective is written by individuals such as fellowship advisors or Honors program directors, who write about their direct experiences in

supporting students with NCA applications. Through these perspectives, NCA non-monetary benefits are highlighted.

In one article, Rushton (2017), a veteran fellowships advisor since the early 1990s, argued that students who apply for NCAs learn how to articulate their academic and career goals through the process of self-reflection; sometimes earlier in their undergraduate careers than those who do not apply for NCAs. This article provided a descriptive account of the process of advising students during the process of applying for NCAs, and the purpose of the article was for Rushton (2017) to share her NCA advising strategy, which included bringing out a student's authentic voice and recruiting for qualified candidates as early as freshman year. Rushton also emphasized the need to ask a lot of questions about her students' lives, values, and experiences during her interactions with them. Through these discussions, she shared that she was better able to guide students towards NCAs that fit their goals (Rushton, 2017).

Another NCA advisor and Honors program director wrote a follow-up to Rushton's (2017) article. Bickford (2017) provided a slightly different take on how she advises an arguably more diverse student population than those at Rushton's institution. Bickford (2017) stated that 40% of her students were Pell Grant recipients and most worked either part or full-time. Because of this, she did not always have the same interactions as Rushton (2017) described. Notably, Bickford (2017) highlighted working with a student military veteran, who was also a first-generation transfer student. When she recommended that he apply for the Gilman scholarship (one of the five NCAs used in this study), she recalled how he was excited and surprised to learn that his background and experiences were valued (Bickford, 2017).

A third article by Cobane and Jennings (2017) argued that the incorporation of NCA applications into a student's scholarly development plan is in-line with other high impact

practices (HIPs), such as undergraduate research, service learning, study abroad, internships, and writing-intensive courses. Kuh (2008) identified ten teaching and learning practices, or HIPs, that facilitate undergraduate student learning and engagement. NCA application development share several commonalities to HIPs: (a) the majority of HIPs require a significant time and effort commitment by the student to achieve the task; (b) multiple interactions with faculty, staff, and peers over an extended period of time; (c) a likelihood that the student will engage with others from diverse backgrounds; (d) detailed and frequent feedback on the student's performance of the HIP; (e) the likelihood that the HIP takes place in a variety of settings, e.g., on and off campus; and (f) HIPs help students "better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world" (Kuh, 2008, p. 17). Cobane and Jennings (2017) emphasized that writing an NCA application is helpful to students to learn how to express their goals, a skill needed in one's professional career, which is a HIP characteristic. However, their account was limited to only Honors students.

All three of the above examples featured advisor perspectives and their NCA work with undergraduate students. Yet, it is worth noting that the three articles were all published in the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* (Bickford, 2017; Cobane & Jennings, 2017; Rushton, 2017). Although many institutions house both fellowship offices and Honors programs under one location on campus, this may contribute to a lack of NCA access to the broader campus community.

Terri Heath et al. (1993) is possibly one of the earliest articles that offered advice on how graduate students could identify NCA opportunities. Written by three faculty, it outlined where to find NCAs, such as in a fellowship office or by reaching out to a faculty mentor; but also acknowledged that the level of NCA support varies by institution (Terri Heath et al., 1993). Like

Rushton (2017) and Bickford (2017), they too emphasized the invaluable writing skills gained from the application process, regardless if a student wins the NCA. Moreover, one foundational representative (someone who administers NCAs) further reaffirms that “for non-awardees, the mere process of applying for a fellowship can be an important source of inspiration and learning” (Lamont, 2004, p. 122). Taken together, these accounts share the faculty and staff perspective on the benefits of applying for an NCA. Additional research has also described alumni experiences after participating in an NCA and documented perspectives of foundation directors, who award the NCAs.

Other foundations conduct survey assessments of alumni experiences. For example, the 2012 Marshall Scholarship evaluation survey collected responses from 617 alumni, representing 38% of all Marshall Scholars since the award was established in 1954 (Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, 2012). Of the survey respondents, over 90% indicated that the award was important to their career development and the prestige of the program played a role in advancing their careers. This next section will highlight several alumni surveys from the five NCAs selected for this study.

The Gilman Scholarship

Research has shown that cost is a significant barrier to study abroad participation (Amani & Kim, 2017; Research Solutions International, 2016) and in 2001, the federal government created the Gilman Scholarship to lessen these financial barriers. In 2016, the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs coordinated a mixed-methods research study to capture program outcomes (Research Solutions International, 2016). The research team electronically surveyed 1,591 Scholars, conducted 17 focus groups with Scholars in six cities,

conducted phone interviews with 25 Scholars individually, interviewed 30 friends and family of Scholars, and interviewed representatives at 42 colleges.

According to the report, “Some Scholars [Gilman alumni] reported that they would not have been able to study abroad without the Gilman Scholarship” (Research Solutions International, 2016, p.16). The study also found that 48% of respondents said study abroad (funded by Gilman) helped clarify their professional goals. For respondents who continued to graduate or professional school, they indicated that their Gilman experience helped them decide what to study, and a few also believe that they were accepted to graduate school because of the Gilman Scholarship (Research Solutions International, 2016).

Other findings include the 30% who said the Gilman inspired them to pursue other educational opportunities, such as other NCAs. Additionally, of the 1,591 respondents only 51 (3%) applied and received the Gilman while attending a two-year institution (Research Solutions International, 2016).

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program

The ETA Program is one of several grant types within the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. The fully funded grant places recent graduates and graduate students in classrooms abroad to assist with local English language instruction. Between 2004 and 2010, 2,350 Fulbright ETAs traveled abroad to 48 countries (EurekaFacts, 2014). Grantees receive roundtrip airfare, a living stipend, accident and health insurance, as well as other benefits. In 2012, a survey was sent to 1,827 ETA alumni and 43% responded (EurekaFacts, 2014). Alumni of the program said participating as an ETA helped them clarify their professional goals (73%) and encouraged them to take professional risks (72%).

NCA Access

In 2002, major European, British, and American scholarship foundation officers convened with other relevant leaders in higher education to find mutually beneficial commonalities among programs. The authors of Ilchman et al. (2004) shared their experience at the conference, as NCA foundation officers (at the time of publication, Alice Stone Ilchman was the director of the Jeannette K. Watson Fellowship; Warren Ilchman was the director of the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans; and Mary Hale Tolar was deputy executive secretary of the Truman Scholarship Foundation and a co-founder of the National Association of Fellowship Advisors). They acknowledged that “many able, talented people have not had the privilege of selective development— experiences that make candidates more attractive and available to those who select them” (p. 2). Speaking on behalf of the foundation officers at the conference, they stated their desire to find more awardees “outside elite institutions and away from metropolitan cities” and that they all “actively seek more racial and national diversity and a greater socioeconomic range” (p.15). More importantly, they dispelled the argument that there is a conflict between excellence and diversity (Ilchman et al., 2004).

Another foundation consultant, Lamont (2004), sought to explore the selection process of NCAs, including how foundations may inadvertently hinder diverse applicants, such as TSCC. Lamont (2004) served as a consultant to foundations like the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans and participated as a panelist for several NCA review committees. Using information readily available on foundation websites, she noted that receiving one NCA increases the chance that the awardee will win another one; a concept known as the “Matthew Effect.” This is further reinforced in several of the NCAs featured in this study. For example, the Goldwater Scholarship touted that past scholars “94 Rhodes Scholarships, 150 Marshall

Scholarships, 170 Churchill Scholarships, 109 Hertz Fellowships, and numerous other distinguished awards like the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships” (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2021b, para. 3).

Another one of Lamont’s (2004) main arguments included the concern about cultural assumptions that are made about applicants, stating:

Fellowship administrators may be able to limit the impact of these cultural assumptions and maximize the diversity of winners by becoming attuned to the fact that some of these virtues (especially that of self-actualization) are class-specific and distinguish American upper-middle-class culture from American working-class culture. (p. 118)

She argued, “Lack of social capital also reduces the likelihood that they will know about available fellowships and how to maximize one’s chances of obtaining one” (p. 121). Moreover, she referenced evaluating how foundations promote the NCA, as well as how they recruit and train application reviewers and panelists, noting these are aspects that foundations can typically control (Lamont, 2004).

Although research on access to NCAs was nonexistent, foundations, as well as U.S. government sponsored NCAs have indicated the need for increasing the diversity of applicants. The five awards in this study purported to support a wider applicant pool, either through explicit policy changes or preferential selection criteria.

The Gilman Scholarship

Gilman was created to increase the number of study-abroad participants from lower-income families. Established in 2001, the scholarship is only open to Pell Grant recipients. As stated in chapter one, around 38% of community college students received Pell Grants in 2011 (Park & Scott-Clayton, 2017), making a large portion of them eligible to apply for Gilman.

However, according to the 2017 Gilman Scholarship Impact Report, of the 3,136 scholarships awarded, only 123 went to community college students, less than 4% of the available awards (Manley & Martel, 2018). While other factors may impact a community college student's decision to apply for study abroad funding, this may mean there is a gap in community college student access to this award. According to Amani and Kim (2017) "Coordinators and faculty should work together . . . to assist community college students to tap personal, institutional, community, and governmental resources for the opportunities to participate in study abroad programs" (p. 691). This includes governmental resources like the Gilman Scholarship.

The Goldwater Scholarship

Second-year community college students are also eligible for the Goldwater Scholarship, which aims to increase the number of STEM researchers. However, between 2006 and 2021, only 20 out of over 3,500 Goldwater scholarships were awarded to community college students (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2006-2021). Moreover, of the 20 scholarships awarded to community college students, 12 of these came from one community college on the East Coast, demonstrating a significant gap in how many community college students are (applying to) and earning this award.

However, as of the 2020 cycle, Goldwater had amended their nomination process. Previously, two and four-year institutions could nominate up to four students for the national competition. Now, "Four-year schools that nominate a 'Transfer Student' can nominate a '5th' student," which includes students who transfer from community colleges (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2020b). This was an indication that the foundation is interested in increasing the number of TSCC who apply and receive the scholarship.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program

The U.S. Fulbright Program is managed by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. The Board has specified a goal to make the Fulbright programs accessible to all qualified applicants, stating:

In order to ensure that the Fulbright Program draws its candidates from the widest possible pool of high caliber individuals, the Bureau and the cooperating agencies will actively disseminate information on the Fulbright Program in all geographic areas of the United States, at different types and sizes of institutions, both academic and non-academic, and will engage in such other recruitment activities as are necessary to encourage participation in the Fulbright Program of persons of diverse backgrounds, representing the variety and richness of American society. (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016, SEC 428)

Moreover, in May 2018, the European Fulbright Diversity Initiative (EFDI) was founded. Twenty-three European Fulbright Commissions (foundations managing the Fulbright program in-country) and the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs “established this initiative to address the complex and international dimensions of diversity within the Fulbright realm” (Fulbright Germany, n.d., para. 1). A notable goal of the EFDI is to increase Fulbright’s appeal to students from all backgrounds. Since May 2018, the EFDI has hosted several workshops and seminars to discuss how to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity. They also hosted the first International Diversity Conference, which hosted over 180 current Fulbright grantees.

The Truman Scholarship

Truman also made efforts to be more inclusive of community college transfer student applicants. In 2000, the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation modified its nomination instructions for the Truman Scholarship. Previously, four-year institutions could nominate up to three students for the national competition and if a two-year institution wanted to nominate a

student, they had to forward their nomination to whichever four-year institution their student now attended. Any former community college student also had to compete with the other traditional student applicants for one of the three spots (Harry S. Truman Scholarship Program, 1998). Given the additional work required by both two and four-year institutions, it is not surprising that these nomination instructions changed. In 2000, nominations from four-year institutions increased to four students, and an additional three students may also be nominated if they transferred from another institution, including community colleges (Harry S. Truman Scholarship Regulations, 2000). Additionally, according to the Truman website, two-year institutions may nominate up to four former students, as long as they are attending a four-year institution as full-time students (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a). However, the website does not outline how this nomination process works.

Yet, questions of access remain as TSCC have very little time to apply for the Truman once they arrive at their four-year institutions. While the national application deadline is generally in early February, students must first be nominated by their campuses which “can begin as early as the sophomore year” (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-c, para. 1).

The Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS)

From its inception, JKCUTS sought to support low-income transfer students from community colleges. Petrease Felder and Tesauo (2014) argued that JKCUTS could make its scholarship program more accessible through the application process, stating JKCUTS “allows the school to connect the opportunity with students who have proven their ability and does not require the students to independently seek out the scholarship” (p. 47). JKCUTS also offers

academic and social support for its scholars, with a particular focus on easing the transfer transition (Petrease Felder & Tesauro, 2014).

Although the NCAs selected for this study have indicated in one way or another an interest in increasing the diversity of their respective applicant pools, nothing is known about student perspectives of NCAs or if the NCAs managing bodies are reaching those whom they deem “diverse”.

Conclusion

Community college students, including those who transfer to a four-year institution, have long been stigmatized for their education choices. Although more and more students are opting to attend community college due to the growing expense of higher education, many of these students face additional challenges and barriers to completing a bachelor’s degree. One of these barriers, which was the focus of the current study, may be access to nationally competitive awards (NCAs).

NCAs are opportunities that fund study abroad, graduate study, undergraduate research, and other experiential activities, at little to no cost to selected students. Because of the gap in NCA research, what was known was minimal, indicating a need for this study. However, based on NCA participant feedback, these opportunities have been known to positively change and shape the lives of the recipients.

After reviewing several postsecondary student development theories, with an emphasis on motivation and persistence; this study determined that Museus’ (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) model best addressed factors of student success for diverse student populations, such as transfer students from community colleges. Next, chapter three will detail the methodology of the study, including the rationale for the mixed-methods study design.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Introduction

This study aimed to understand what transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) know about nationally competitive awards (NCAs) and to determine what factors contribute to their decision to apply to these opportunities. By studying TSCC perspectives and experiences, the goal was to understand potential gaps at both two- and four-year institutions regarding nationally competitive award access. The study highlighted the existing NCA support of this diverse student population.

Research Questions

As research on NCAs was minimal, the following two descriptive research questions guided this study.

1. What do transfer students from community colleges know about nationally competitive awards?
2. What primary factors impact their decisions to apply for nationally competitive awards?

For the purpose of this study, transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) were defined as students who had transferred from a U.S. two-year institution to a U.S. four-year institution within the last four years. The study also included a sample of community college students who intended to transfer to a four-year institution, e.g., prospective transfer students from community colleges (proTSCC). To provide a broad representation of this expansive category of opportunities, I focused on five exemplars of nationally competitive awards (NCAs) which were selected because of their exceptional benefits and suitability for the community

college and transfer student population. Moreover, the exemplars selected had application processes that directly impact the TSCC population. For instance, the Truman Scholarship application is due early in the spring of a student's junior year, but many four-year institutions set earlier campus deadlines to facilitate their nominations (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-c). Thus, TSCC may miss applying to Truman because of their transitions from their two- to four-year institution. The five NCAs included in the study were: (a) Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, (b) Goldwater Scholarship, (c) Fulbright U.S. Student Program, (d) Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, and (e) Truman Scholarship.

Method

Context

This study utilized an exploratory sequential mixed-method design, also known as a qual QUAN approach, which consisted of three distinct phases: (a) a qualitative data collection phase, (b) a quantitative feature phase, and (c) a quantitative test phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the primary motive of the qual QUAN approach was to apply a quantitative measure, e.g., the CECE Community College Survey (Museus, 2014), that was “grounded in the qualitative data” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 84). After beginning with qualitative interviews, I constructed subsequent quantitative survey questions based on the interview participant responses. Both the interview questions (see Appendix C) and the NCA access survey instrument (see Appendix D) were submitted to the Loyola Marymount University (LMU) Internal Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Participants

Intending to collect multiple student perspectives on NCAs, participants in this study included transfer students from community colleges and currently enrolled community college students who intended to transfer to a four-year institution.

Qualitative Phase

I conducted ten interviews with transfer students from community colleges, including one recent TSCC alumni who had graduated in May 2020. All ten interview participants attended Blue Private University (BPU), a private four-year institution on the West Coast. According to the university website, BPU is a suburban private university with an undergraduate population of around 7,000. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, in-person interviews were prohibited. Therefore, I held these 45-minute interviews virtually using Zoom software, a video conferencing tool that has video and audio recording, as well as transcription capabilities.

Employing criterion sampling (Gay et al., 2012), I sought to diversify the participants and intentionally sampled four participants with little knowledge of NCAs as well as three participants with more awareness. Rounding out the sample were three previous NCA applicants, including one winner. To determine their level of awareness, students who expressed interest in participating in the study completed a pre-interview, electronic demographic form through Qualtrics (see Appendix B).

Five of the TSCC participants had never applied to an NCA and had minimal awareness of NCAs (Marty, Saul, Penelope, Henry, Athena). The remaining five participants had some experience with NCAs, either through demonstrated knowledge of these opportunities (Alex) or as previous applicants (Carlos, Gema, Hannah, Vika). This ensured the study captured multiple TSCC viewpoints. Below is a table of demographic data.

Table 1*Qualitative Interview Participant Characteristics*

Name*	Level	Major(s)	GPA	Ethnicity	Gender	Pell
Alex	Junior	Women & Gender Studies	3.2	Black or African American	F	Yes
Athena	Sophomore	Sociology	3.41	Middle Eastern	F	Yes
Carlos	Alumnus	International Relations	3.58	Hispanic or Latino	M	Yes
Gema	Senior	English	3.3	Hispanic or Latino	F	Yes
Hannah	Senior	Psychology	3.67	Hispanic or Latino	F	Unsure
Henry	Junior	Entrepreneurship	3.22	Asian American	M	Unsure
Marty	Junior	Film	4.00	White	M	Yes
Penelope	Senior	Liberal Studies	3.78	Multi-racial	F	Yes
Saul	Junior	Finance	3.4	Multi-racial	M	Yes
Vika	Sophomore	Economics	3.7	White	F	No

Note: Name = pseudonym or legal name, per each participant's preference.

All participants had GPAs above a 3.0, making them academically eligible for many NCA opportunities (including NCAs with no minimum GPA requirements).

Participants had transferred to BPU from eight different community colleges, which allowed accounts of multiple two-year campus environments. Table 2 shows their former community college and when they began their studies at BPU.

Table 2

Qualitative Interview Transfer Information

Name*	Former College	First Enrolled at BPU
Alex	Beach CC	Spring 2018
Athena	Downtown CC	Fall 2019
Carlos	Mass CC	Fall 2016
Gema	Sunny CC	Fall 2018
Hannah	East Coast CC	Fall 2017
Henry	South CC	Fall 2019
Marty	North CC	Fall 2019
Penelope	Ocean CC	Fall 2017
Saul	Beach CC	Spring 2020
Vika	Beach CC	Fall 2019

Note: Name = pseudonym or legal name, per each participant's preference.

Provided below is the rationale for the selection of each participant, based on the pre-interview demographic form.

Alex. A women and gender studies major, Alex had attended community college in California, was Pell Grant eligible, and had a GPA above 3.0. At the time of the study, Alex was a junior. As such, she was most likely eligible for three of the five NCA exemplars. She was also invited to participate in the interview because she indicated some knowledge of the study exemplars including the Gilman Scholarship and Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Athena. Similar to Alex, Athena attended community college in California, was Pell Grant eligible, and had a GPA above 3.0. As a sophomore and sociology major, she was most likely eligible for three of the five NCA exemplars and she listed that she had knowledge of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Carlos. Carlos was the only alumnus in the study, having graduated from BPU in May 2019. He was also one of two participants who attended a community college outside of California. After transferring to BPU from Mass Community College in the fall of 2016, Carlos

attended BPU for three years, but during his junior year, he studied abroad in London for two semesters. As a Pell-eligible, political science major with a high GPA, Carlos was most likely eligible for four of the five study exemplars. However, he was primarily selected to participate because he had applied for one of the study's exemplars: The Fulbright U.S. Student Program. In fact, Carlos earned a Fulbright grant to Mexico during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Gema. Gema attended Sunny Community College in California before transferring to BPU. As a graduating senior, she was Pell Grant eligible and had a GPA above 3.0. Thus, Gema was potentially eligible for at least three of the five NCAs. She was also asked to participate in the study because she denoted knowledge of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS), and Truman Scholarship in her demographic form.

Hannah. I invited Hannah to interview because she had applied to the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Student Scholarship (JKCUTS), which provides up to \$40,000 per year for transfer students to complete their bachelor's degree (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, n.d.). Hannah, like Carlos, had attended community college outside of California. At the time of the interview, Hannah was a graduating senior at BPU, after transferring in as a sophomore in the fall of 2017. She also had a high GPA and based on her pre-interview demographic form, she was potentially eligible for four of the five NCA exemplars (all but the Goldwater Scholarship, which is for STEM students).

Henry. Henry was one of two participants who indicated no knowledge of the study exemplars in the pre-interview demographic form. At the time of the study, Henry was a junior, enrolled in his second semester at BPU. Thus, he was invited to share his lack of knowledge on NCAs.

Marty. Marty, also a junior who had transferred to BPU in the fall of 2019, was invited to interview because he had little to no awareness of NCAs, even though he had the highest GPA of all ten participants (he was a junior with a 4.0 GPA).

Penelope. Like Marty, Penelope was selected to interview because of her high GPA. At the time of the interview, she was a graduating senior with a 3.78 GPA. She also indicated that she had knowledge of the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship and Fulbright U.S. Student Program in the demographic form.

Saul. Like Henry, Saul was selected to interview because he indicated no knowledge of the study exemplars in the pre-demographic interview form. At the time of the interview, Saul was a junior who was enrolled in his first semester at BPU.

Vika. Vika was also initially selected to interview because of her high GPA (3.7) and because she indicated knowledge of Truman and Gilman in the demographic form. However, shortly after we began her interview, she shared that she was an international student, which made her eligibility and perspective unique compared to the other participants. Like many of the other participants, Vika was a junior who first enrolled at BPU in the fall of 2019.

Quantitative Phase

For the quantitative phase of the study, in May 2020, I sent a survey invitation to 3,539 currently enrolled part-and full-time students at Ocean Community College (a public two-year institution in Southern California with approximately 12,000 students) who indicated an intent to transfer to a four-year institution when they first enrolled in classes at the institution and were subsequently coded as potential transfer students in Ocean CC's systems database. The Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, after confirming Ocean Community College's willingness to participate in the study, ran a query to identify these proTSCC students. Then, I emailed the

study invitation directly to the identified students requesting participation in a Qualtrics survey. Of the 3,539 students at Ocean Community College who received the invitation, 258 clicked on the survey; however, six indicated that they no longer intended to transfer to a four-year institution or were not over the age of 18 years and were, therefore, screened out of the survey. Additionally, the data were cleaned by removing incomplete responses, yielding a final sample of 171, a 4.83% response rate.

Table 3 displays the demographic characteristics of the 171 respondents.

Table 3*Quantitative Participant Characteristics*

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	129	75.4
Male	41	24
Non-binary/ Third gender	1	0.6
Ethnicity		
Armenian	1	0.58
Asian American	5	2.9
Black or African American	37	21.6
Hispanic or Latino	93	53.2
Iranian	1	0.6
Multiracial	15	8.8
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.6
White	18	10.5
Pell Grant Recipient		
Yes	112	65.5
No	35	20.5
Unsure	24	14.0
GPA		
4.00	14	8.2
3.5-3.99	51	29.8
3.0-3.49	52	30.4
2.5-2.99	29	17.0
2.0-2.49	13	7.6
Below 2.0	4	2.3
No GPA Yet	8	4.7

Note: $N = 171$. Participants were on average 29.74 years old ($SD = 10.58$).

Notably, more women than men completed the survey (about 75% compared to 24%) and approximately 68% had a GPA of at least 3.0 or above. Similar to the qualitative participants, academically, the community college respondents would be competitive for most NCA opportunities. Not illustrated in Table 2 is citizenship and first-generation college student status. Of the 171 respondents, approximately 97% self-identified as U.S. citizens or permanent

residents, which is another eligibility requirement for most NCAs. And approximately 68% of respondents were first-generation college students.

Procedures

True to the qual QUAN design, the study consisted of three phases. During the first phase, I conducted ten qualitative interviews, utilizing a small subset of the target population: TSCC. These were students who had already transferred from a two-year community college to a four-year University. I interviewed ten TSCC because of the need for rich descriptions of their lived experiences (Gay et al., 2012), specifically those surrounding their experience (or lack thereof) with nationally competitive award opportunities.

In the second phase, otherwise known as the survey-development variant (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), I coded the interview responses and flagged for emerging themes, as well as cross-referenced emergent themes with the nine factors of a culturally engaging campus environment (as adapted from Museus, 2014), and the research on motivating factors of study abroad. Specifically, the goal was to collect multiple perspectives from phase one to assess the nine Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) factors outlined by Museus (2014); the concepts measured in the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) instrument by Anderson and Lawton (2015); and the Multidimensional Motivations to Study Abroad Scale (MMSAS) by Aresi et al. (2018). This fulfilled what Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) referred to as “a need to make an existing quantitative measure or instrument as specific to the participants or culture as possible” (p. 86).

After coding and analyzing the interview participant responses, the final survey administered in the third phase focused on external influences (family, finances, timing), individual influences (sense of belonging, self-efficacy, motivation, and NCA eligibility), and

campus environments (collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support). The survey was administered to proTSCC students.

Recruitment

After receiving a letter of support from the Director of Transfer Admission and Enrollment Services at Blue Private University (BPU), a private, four-year institution with an undergraduate population of approximately 7,000 and a transfer population of around 500 students annually, the director sent a study invitation email to approximately 1,300 currently enrolled students who had transferred to BPU. Since the transfer population at BPU included students who transferred from both two-year and other four-year institutions, the invitation clearly indicated an interest in only transfer students from community colleges. I received twenty replies expressing interest in participating in the study. From there, interested students completed a pre-interview demographic form (see Appendix B), with the understanding that they would be notified within one week if they had been selected to participate. After reviewing the completed demographic information, I selected nine students who came from varying community colleges, academic (majors) and presented diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, a range of GPAs, citizenships, and knowledge/experience with NCAs. To round out the interviews, I used purposive sampling to invite a TSCC alumnus (from BPU) to participate. This alumnus was known for having competed for and successfully earning a Fulbright U.S. Student Program grant.

While I received one pre-interview demographic form from a student majoring in a STEM discipline, she had a GPA below 3.0 and thus did not meet the eligibility requirement for the Goldwater Scholarship. Goldwater provides funding for future STEM researchers and requires a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA to apply. Therefore, by choosing not to interview this STEM student, I was unable to explore participant knowledge of and interest in this exemplar

NCA. In fact, given the specialized eligibility criteria for Goldwater (minimum 3.0 GPA, open to STEM majors who have intentions of pursuing a research career), this should not have been included as one of the study's exemplars. However, future research targeting a broader range of STEM majors with eligible GPAs is recommended in order to investigate access to this prestigious award.

After analyzing participant responses in the qualitative phase, I proceeded to phase two the development of an online survey, and then phase three, disseminating the survey to currently enrolled community college students who intended to transfer to a four-year institution. After receiving a letter of support from the Dean of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Ocean Community College, she provided me with email addresses of part- and full-time students who expressed an interest in transferring to four-year institutions in their initial community college admissions application. Ocean Community College has a total student population of around 12,000, and 3,539 had indicated an intention to transfer, meeting the proTSCC criteria for this study. It is important to note that while I received the student email list from Ocean Community College, the respondents of the survey selected 12 unique community college sites as their enrolled institutions (see Table 4).

Table 4

Community Colleges Represented in the Survey

Community College	<i>n</i>	%
Arid CC	7	4.1
Beach CC	2	1.2
Breezy CC	1	0.58
Bustle CC	3	1.8
Downtown CC	17	9.9
Driftwood	7	4.1
Hilltop CC	6	3.5
Ocean CC	101	59.1
Orange CC	7	4.1
Rose CC	1	0.58
Stucco CC	9	5.3
Sunny CC	8	4.7
Not Listed	2	1.2

Note: “Not listed” indicates the respondents left this question blank.

As seen in the table above, the majority of proTSCC were enrolled at Ocean Community College, but 11 other community colleges were represented in the data. This strongly suggests that community college respondents likely enrolled in classes at multiple campuses. Previous research supports this assertion with one study finding that around 30% of community colleges students enrolled in coursework at two or more community college sites during their undergraduate careers, and 13% of these students had simultaneous enrollment in which they took classes at two community colleges during the same semester (Bahr, 2012).

Instruments

The CECE Community College Survey

Museus and Saelua (2017) developed a culturally engaging campus environment (CECE) survey that focused on “measuring elements of optimal campus environments that research indicates promote diverse populations’ sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy and

motivation, satisfaction, and eventual success” (p. 8). In their survey development program of research, they designed one survey for four-year college students, another for graduate students, and a third for two-year college students. This study employed the two-year college CECE student survey. Although the surveys were “designed to be administered at the institution level, it is worth noting that they can also be effective tools for program evaluation” (Museus & Saelua, 2017, p. 9). Thus, this study utilized the CECE community college student survey to determine how effective two-year institutions are at promoting and supporting students with NCAs. The CECE survey not only was used for the quantitative survey but the items helped guide the qualitative interview questions. In addition to using the CECE survey for phase three, it was also used to guide the qualitative interview questions in phase one.

The MSA and MMSAS Instruments

Given that most NCAs offer an experience abroad, this study explored whether factors of motivation to study abroad were similar to factors of motivation to apply to NCAs. As such, both the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey included study abroad motivation factors derived from previously validated instruments.

Anderson and Lawton (2015) developed their Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) instrument by first reviewing existing literature and conducting their own exploratory sequential study. At the end of their study, they identified four dimensions, *world enlightenment*, *personal growth*, *career development*, and *entertainment*, as key motivational factors for why students study abroad (Anderson & Lawton, 2015).

The Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) instrument identified four motivational dimensions, two of which are included in this survey: *personal growth* and *career development*

(Anderson & Lawton, 2015). The MSA “has face validity, has high statistical reliability, [and] meets accepted criteria for reliability” (Anderson & Lawton, 2015, p. 61).

The second instrument utilized in this study is the Multidimensional Motivations to Study Abroad Scale (MMSAS), of which nine factors have been identified as motivation to study abroad: *personal growth, better academic knowledge, others’ expectations, learning or improving foreign language skills, cross-cultural interest, get away from home environment, career perspectives, search for independency, and leisure* (Aresi et al., 2018). Like the MSA, the MMSA has been tested for construct validity and it also includes similar factors of motivation to the MSA (Aresi et al., 2018). For the purpose of this study, the MMSAS factors of personal growth, academic (reworded as “academic growth”), others’ expectations (addressed as “peer encouragement” and “family encouragement”), and career (reworded as “resume builder” after interview participant responses) were included as potential motivational factors for applying to NCAs.

After removing factors that did not relate to domestic NCA opportunities, e.g., “get away from home environment”, the two study abroad motivation scales were cross-referenced with the limited literature on NCAs and made up the quantitative survey items on motivation to apply for NCAs.

Interviews

Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, the semi-structured interviews examined the participants’ lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon: experience with NCAs as a transfer student (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Interview questions focused generally on the participants’ existing knowledge of NCAs, including if and how they learned about these opportunities. Participants completed a short demographic form (see Appendix B) before their

interviews. Depending on their responses to the pre-interview demographic form, I also asked specific questions about any of the five NCA exemplars for which they indicated knowledge of or had previous experience as an applicant. Lastly, I asked them open-ended questions about their motivation to apply to these awards (see Appendix C for a list of interview questions). Once again, due to the global health pandemic of COVID-19, all ten interviews were video-recorded using Zoom audio conference software. All recordings were subsequently transcribed and reviewed for accuracy.

Surveys

The survey was finalized based on the feedback received during the interview phase of the study. Additionally, this study applied the CECE model to examine factors from the literature, which were related to motivation to apply to NCAs. To that end, Museus (2014) granted permission to use the validated CECE community college student survey (see questions 43 to 45 in Appendix D). CECE surveys focus on measuring elements of optimal campus environments that research indicates promote diverse populations' sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy and motivation, satisfaction, and eventual success. Researchers examined both content and construct validity of the CECE scale and it has been deemed a statistically valid tool for measuring CECE indicators (Museus et al., 2016). Using a sample of 499 undergraduates at three higher education institutions, Museus et al. (2016) first established groups of subject matter experts (SMEs) to calculate content validity ratios (CVRs) for each survey item. Next, they applied an adaptation of Lawshe's 3-item Content Validity Scale. To test for construct validity, they applied factor analytic techniques including the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for purposes of cross-validation (Museus et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Museus et al. (2016) recommended that campuses should consider using the CECE model to be more culturally inclusive, stating:

This might mean placing emphases on teamwork and collaboration, developing meaningful relationships with students, pressuring students to take advantage of opportunities that are available to them (e.g. scholarships, study abroad, internships, etc.), and underscoring the importance of practitioners proactively serving as useful conduits for students to access larger support networks on campus. (p. 789)

Analytical Plan

Interviews

After the interview data were collected, I utilized Zoom transcription software to create the transcripts. I then compared the automated transcript to the recorded interviews to correct any confusing or incorrect transcription. Once I verified that the transcripts were accurate, I sent copies to the participants, asking for feedback such as corrections or clarifying comments (Gay et al., 2012). During this process of member checking, only three of the ten participants replied to my request for transcript feedback and the only notes they provided were grammatical—a result of using Zoom’s automated transcription service.

Using Dedoose research software to track emerging themes, I uploaded all ten interview transcripts into Dedoose where they were securely stored. This allowed for seamless coding across all ten interview transcripts. Next, I assigned codes to the data and reduced them to a “manageable form,” from which themes emerged, describing a pattern of behavior (Gay et al., 2012, p. 478).

I first applied an *a priori* coding process (Saldaña, 2016), assigning thematic codes derived from the literature. Utilizing Museus’ (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) model, interview responses showed significant evidence of student individual influences of sense of belonging, academic dispositions of self-efficacy, motivation, and intent to persist.

Moreover, the CECE model's four campus factors categorized under "cultural responsiveness" were also prevalent themes throughout participant responses. These factors, also used as *a priori* codes, included collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies. I also found evidence of cross-cultural engagement and cultural validation; two other CECE campus factors categorized under "cultural relevance." However, the cross-cultural engagement factor, which once again refers to opportunities for students to take part in experiences with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, only surfaced when discussing Gilman and Fulbright; the two NCA exemplars that fund international exchange. Moreover, only four of the ten participants cited this potential NCA benefit of going abroad. As for the cultural validation factor, which refers to students feeling that their cultural identities are important at their institutions, this was minimally mentioned by four of the participants.

I also applied additional *a priori* thematic codes derived from both the MSA and MMSAS instruments, both of which measure factors that influence a student to study abroad. These codes included personal growth, academic, and others' expectations.

After *a priori* coding, I conducted a round of inductive coding, or the creation of codes derived from the interview data (Saldaña, 2016), to capture the remaining themes that the literature may have missed. Notably, participants described two additional factors that influenced their interest in NCAs; the time and effort required to apply to an NCA and the financial amount of the award. I ultimately added both of these factors to the quantitative survey instrument.

Survey-Development Variant

Next, I reviewed the emerging themes from the qualitative interviews to refine the survey instrument that was initially developed from Museus and Saelua's (2017) CECE Scale as well as additional literature (Anderson & Lawton, 2015; Aresi et al., 2018). As recommended by

Creswell (2012), “existing instrument . . . can be modified to fit the themes and statements found in the qualitative exploratory phase of the study” (p. 555).

I included prevalent CECE indicators and MSA/MMSAS factors in the final NCA access survey (see Appendix D for quantitative survey questions). Therefore, the emerging themes were cross-referenced with the CECE Scale, with a focus on any referenced individual influences (e.g., sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance) and the CECE culturally responsiveness factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support.

Second, I compared emerging themes to the included MSA and MMSAS factors of motivation as they relate to NCAs: personal growth, academic, others’ expectations, and career development (Anderson & Lawton, 2015). Both the MSA instrument and MMSAS instrument include personal growth and academic growth as key factors influencing an individual’s decision to study abroad. These were also prominent in interview participant interest in NCAs, thus both were included in the quantitative survey. Moreover, career development was also a consistent factor as to why a student might apply for an NCA. However, career development was changed to “resume builder” because eight of the ten interview participants used this specific phrase to describe career development/advancement, and thus was determined to be a better way to represent the factor in the survey.

The MMSAS instrument also noted the factor of others’ expectations, but based on interview responses, was further expanded in this study to differentiate the types of “others” or relationships that may impact a student’s decision to apply to an NCA. Therefore, others’ expectations became “peer encouragement,” “family encouragement,” and “faculty/staff encouragement” in the quantitative survey. The inclusion of family encouragement as a factor

also connects to family as an “external influence” to student success in the CECE model (Museus, 2014; Museus et al., 2016). Likewise, the use of faculty/staff encouragement as a factor reinforces the CECE culturally relevant campus factor of humanized educational environments, or faculty/staff who make an extra effort to connect with students (Museus, 2014; Museus et al., 2016); and speaks to Rushton (2017) who had asserted that when faculty or staff encourage students to apply for NCAs can potentially increase their self-worth.

Furthermore, based on interview responses, “time and effort required to apply to an NCA” and the “financial amount of the award” were added to the quantitative survey instrument as potential factors that may influence a student’s interest in NCA opportunities.

Similarly, because four of the five campus factors categorized under “cultural relevance” (cultural familiarity, culturally relevant knowledge, cultural community service, and cultural validation) were either minimally or never referenced in participant responses, these CECE scale items were removed from the final NCA access survey. The fifth factor of *cross-cultural engagement*, while mentioned during the interviews by four of the ten participants, the factor did not apply to all five of the exemplar NCAs (or even NCAs more broadly). Thus, the corresponding scale items were also omitted in the survey. Table 5 lists the final CECE scale items included in the survey.

Table 5*Scale Items by CECE Factors*

	Cronbach's alpha
Sense of Belonging (<i>Individual Influence</i>)	0.91
1. I feel like I am part of the community at this institution.	
2. I feel like I belong at this institution.	
3. I feel a strong connection to the community at this institution.	
Collectivist Cultural Orientations (<i>Campus Factor</i>)	0.94
1. In general, people at this institution help each other succeed.	
2. In general, people at this institution support each other.	
3. In general, people at this institution work together toward common goals.	
Humanized Educational Environments (<i>Campus Factor</i>)	0.91
1. In general, educators care about students at this institution.	
2. In general, educators at this institution are committed to my success.	
3. In general, I view educators at this institution as caring human beings.	
Proactive Philosophies (<i>Campus Factor</i>)	0.83
1. People at this institution often send me important information about NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.	
2. People at this institution send me important information about NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE AWARDS*.	
3. People at this institution often send me important information about SUPPORTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE.	
4. People at this institution check in with me regularly to see if I need support.	
Holistic Support (<i>Campus Factor</i>)	0.95
1. If I need support, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me that support.	
2. If I have a problem, I know a person at this institution who I trust to help me solve that problem.	
3. If I need information, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me the information that I need.	

Note: Scale items were followed with a 5-point Likert Scale with response options ranging from (1 = Strongly Disagree to 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Surveys

In early May of 2020, after receiving approval from the Loyola Marymount University (LMU) Internal Review Board (IRB), I distributed the survey via Qualtrics to eight content experts, as well as my dissertation chair, to check for question clarity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Four of the content experts were doctoral students in my LMU cohort. I also sought feedback from a colleague who works in fellowships advising, a transfer admissions director who works closely with TSCC, and a former TSCC who currently works as a staff member at a nearby community college. Each content expert was assigned fictional community college student profiles to test out the survey's skip logic and item readability. For example, one content expert was asked to respond to the survey as if she was a Pell Grant recipient studying English with a 3.70 GPA. In total, content experts tested fifteen fictional community college student profiles. This resulted in several minor edits to the wording of existing questions and therefore, additional IRB approval was not required. Shortly after the final survey edits, I sent an email invitation to the community college students stipulated above. Participants submitted their survey responses via Qualtrics, which ensured confidentiality of the collected data (Gay et al., 2012).

Survey data were first analyzed descriptively to better understand the sample demographics, knowledge about NCAs among community college students, and gain a general sense of the motivating factors associated with applying for NCAs. Next, the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) factors that emerged from the qualitative interviews and thus included in the survey: proactive philosophies, holistic support, sense of belonging, collectivist cultural orientations, and humanized educational environments were assessed for internal reliability. Utilizing Cronbach's alphas, reliability was as follows: (a) proactive philosophies four-item scale, $\alpha = .83$; (b) holistic support three-item scale, $\alpha = .95$; (c) sense of

belonging three-item scale, $\alpha = .91$; (d) collectivist cultural orientations three-item scale, $\alpha = .94$; and (e) humanized educational environments three-item scale, $\alpha = .91$. Given the adequate internal reliability, mean composites were created to represent each factor. Composites were used in subsequent analyses to determine which factors were associated with higher knowledge of NCAs.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study had several limitations. First, I selected the five NCA exemplars because their criteria aligned with the community college transfer population. I assumed that most transfer students from community colleges would be eligible to apply for at least one of the five NCAs listed. For the qualitative phase, recruitment addressed eligibility by specifically selecting TSCC participants based on experience with at least one of the five NCAs (Gilman, Goldwater, Fulbright, JKCUTS, and Truman). Once again, four of these NCAs have citizenship requirements, which limited responses from undocumented students and international students in this study. Furthermore, students may have self-selected out of the study because of a common misconception that there is an academic edibility requirement. If students thought they were not academically eligible to apply, they might not have participated in the study, limiting the range of voices captured, even though the Gilman, Fulbright, and Truman NCAs do not require a minimum GPA. As with all research studies, there was an assumption that participants provided honest responses regarding their motivations to apply.

Third, unique to qualitative studies, the small interview sample (ten) may have limited the range of perspectives collected. To account for this, participants were selected to represent a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. Participants represented eight community colleges

with varying resources and support services. However, given the lack of research on this topic, the interviews were a starting point that was further explored in the quantitative survey.

For the survey data collection, COVID-19 became a hindrance for two of the three confirmed community college sites. Two community colleges withdrew their support before sharing the survey with their students. Thus, the survey was administered to 3,539 community college students based on a list provided by Ocean Community College. However, only 171 respondent data were sufficiently complete to include in the analysis, leading to a low response rate of 4.83%. These 171 participants further indicated being enrolled in one of twelve different community colleges, thus providing a broader range of community college representation in the study. As with most survey studies, self-selection, or those who opt to participate, limited the range of opinions captured.

Summary

This study began to fill the gap in research on nationally competitive awards, specifically addressing questions of access to these awards by understanding factors related to students' motivation to apply. NCA experts, such as institutional advisors (also known as fellowship advisors), foundation leaders, and government stakeholders have noted the importance of increasing the diversity of competitive award applicant pools (Ilchman et al., 2004; Lamont, 2004; Ludovic & Scott-Smith, 2012; McMurtrie, 2009). As such, this study has the potential to positively affect college students, higher education institutions, scholarship foundations, and government-sponsored award departments.

Data collected and subsequent analyses resulted in a scale that measured student knowledge and awareness of NCAs, as well as factors that motivated their decision to apply.

This newly developed “Access to Nationally Competitive Awards Scale (ANCAS)” will be useful to both two-and four-year institutions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Study Background

This study focused on transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) and their access to nationally competitive awards (NCAs). Here, TSCC referred to students who began their college studies at a two-year institution and then transferred to a four-year institution to complete their bachelor's degrees. TSCC represent around 19% of total enrollment at four-year institutions, yet research has shown that they feel unsupported during and after the transfer process (Schmertz, & Carney, 2013).

Moreover, prospective transfer students from community colleges (proTSCC) or currently enrolled community college students who intend to transfer to four-year institutions, were also the focus of this research. The utilization of the framework by Museus (2014), which identifies aspects of culturally engaging campus environments (CECE), was appropriate for the current study given its focus on how higher education institutions are supporting the success of diverse student populations. Applying a mixed-method exploratory research methodology, the goal was to understand what TSCC knew about NCAs and to determine factors that motivate them to apply. NCAs refer to a broad category of competitive fellowships available to college students. Due to the lack of literature on NCAs, the following two descriptive research questions guided the study.

1. What do transfer students from community colleges know about nationally competitive awards?
2. What primary factors impact their decisions to apply for nationally competitive awards?

Applying a mixed-methods approach, I began with phenomenological interviews of ten transfer students from community colleges (TSCC). I analyzed interview responses and applied thematic codes derived from the literature, with a focus on Museus' (2014) Culturally Engaging Campus Environment model. This included external influences like family, finances, and timing; individual influences of sense of belonging, self-efficacy, motivation, and persistence; and campus factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, holistic support, and proactive philosophies. Interview data informed the development of a survey, which was then administered to community college students at Ocean Community College. Survey recipients had all indicated their intention to transfer to a four-year institution in their community college application.

Summary of Findings

Organized broadly by research question, study findings presented here describe participant awareness and knowledge of nationally competitive awards. For each research question, I presented the interview outcomes followed by the survey results. To address the first research question, analyses of interviews and survey responses confirmed that TSCC and proTSCC had some awareness of NCAs, but very little knowledge about these opportunities. Distinctions between knowledge and awareness were also defined as general recognition (awareness) or some detailed understanding (knowledge) of awards.

Moreover, to address the research question about factors leading to students applying for NCAs, I first assessed general interest in NCAs. TSCC and proTSCC demonstrated high levels of interest in NCAs including the study exemplars. Data then describe factors that influence TSCC and proTSCC motivation to apply to NCAs. Drawing from Museus' (2014) CECE model, motivational factors were categorized by external influences, individual influences, and campus

characteristics. When coding TSCC interview responses, the most frequently referenced motivational factors by category included: the financial amount of the award (external influences), time and effort to apply (individual influences), and proactive philosophies (campus characteristics). For proTSCC survey responses, the highest ranked motivational factors by category were the financial amount of the award (external influences), academic growth (individual influences), and humanized educational environments (campus environment characteristics).

NCA Awareness and Knowledge

This research sought to capture both general awareness of and interest in NCAs as a broad category, as well as awareness and knowledge levels of the study exemplars. Notably, because none of the ten interview participants majored in STEM fields, participants were not asked questions about the Goldwater Scholarship, which funds future STEM researchers, because they were ineligible for this NCA. The additional four exemplars: Gilman Scholarship, Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS), and Truman Scholarship, were discussed.

Interview Findings

Beginning with ten phenomenological interviews, I spoke with students who had transferred from community colleges and were either currently enrolled or had recently graduated from a four-year institution. They were asked about their awareness and knowledge of NCAs. Awareness was defined as having heard of a particular NCA opportunity. This concept differed from knowledge in that participants were asked to correctly define some characteristics of the award to demonstrate their knowledge of NCAs. The distinction between awareness and knowledge was evident when many of the interview participants thought they had knowledge of

the study exemplars when in actuality, they had only vaguely recalled hearing the name of the award.

For example, the pre-interview demographic form (see Appendix B) asked participants if they had (a) applied to any of the exemplar NCAs, e.g., the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, Barry Goldwater Scholarship, Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Student Scholarship, or Harry S. Truman Scholarship; or (b) if they had heard of any of the five exemplars. Table 6 denotes their responses.

Table 6

Qualitative Pre-Interview Versus Actual Knowledge of Exemplars

Participant	Gilman		Goldwater		Fulbright		JKCUTS		Truman	
	<i>pre</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>pre</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>pre</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>pre</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>pre</i>	<i>actual</i>
Hannah	No	No	No	–	Yes	Yes+	Yes	Yes+	No	No
Alex	Yes	No	No	–	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Marty	No	No	No	–	No	Yes	No	No	No	–
Saul	No	No	No	–	No	No	No	No	No	No
Vika	Yes	No	No	–	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Penelope	No	No	No	–	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Henry	No	No	No	–	No	No	No	No	No	–
Athena	No	No	No	–	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Gema	Yes	No	Yes	–	Yes	Yes+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Carlos	Yes	Yes	No	–	Yes	Yes+	Yes	No	No	–

Note: Pre means the student indicated knowledge of the NCA in the pre-interview demographic form. *Actual* refers to student knowledge of the NCA during the interview, beyond recognizing the name of the award. + indicates the student applied or started the application at some point. – indicates the NCA was not discussed during the interview. JKCUTS is an acronym for the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

Overall, only three participants had applied to one of the study exemplars. Carlos, Hannah, and Gema had applied for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program (although later in their interviews, both Hannah and Gema explained that they never submitted), and Hannah had

applied for the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Student Scholarship. Table 6 outlines whether participants had heard of the exemplars before the study, versus their actual knowledge of the exemplars demonstrated during the interview. Here, knowledge during the interview refers to the student's ability to correctly define some characteristics of the award, such as what it funds. Students were determined to have knowledge of the NCA if they could correctly define something about the award, beyond simply having heard the name. It was evident from the interviews that very few participants had detailed knowledge of NCAs; and of those who had some knowledge of NCAs, the majority knew most about the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

Three more participants (Alex, Penelope, and Vika) had initially indicated awareness or knowledge of one or more of the exemplars, but during the interviews, it became apparent that they only recognized the name of the award but could not define what it provides. Besides the three participants who had applied for exemplar NCAs, an additional two participants had demonstrated some knowledge of one or more of the exemplars.

Once again, none of the ten participants majored in STEM disciplines and thus were not eligible for the Goldwater Scholarship, which invests in future STEM researchers. Thus, Goldwater was the only exemplar in which awareness and knowledge were unexplored.

NCA Awareness

Eight of the ten participants had some awareness of NCAs, even if they could not define them beyond having heard the name. Several participants admitted to hearing or reading something about the exemplars but could not expand further. Although Carlos remembered hearing about JCKUTS while attending Mass Community College, he shared, "I did receive a link. I did look at the website. Again, I think it was either past deadlines or I thought this is impossible, something like that." Hannah, too, recalled receiving an email about the Truman

Scholarship from BPU's fellowships office, but she said, "Um, I kind of skipped over it because I didn't think that public sector applied to me, but maybe it does now that I'm hearing you say that, so I should look more into it." As a psychology major with an interest in clinical psychology, Hannah did not understand the purpose of the Truman Scholarship, and that her future career trajectory may have fallen within the eligibility requirements. Gema also had awareness of Truman, although she couldn't define it, she "heard of other classmates of [hers] who applied to it."

However, the most common type of awareness was when a participant had heard the name somewhere but was not sure how it connected to a specific opportunity. Penelope, for instance, had indicated that she had heard of the Truman Scholarship and Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS) in the pre-interview demographic form. However, when asked if any of the five exemplars sounded familiar, she replied, "the Truman one kinda does, but I don't know if that's just because it's just a common name, honestly." She then confirmed that she had not heard of JKCUTS prior to the interview.

Although most could name an example of an NCA, two of the ten participants had minimal to no awareness of NCAs nor the study exemplars. When asked to name an NCA, Saul cited a scholarship offered by his mother's company and the Cal Grant, the state of California's need-based financial aid grant. Neither of these are examples of NCAs as defined by this study.

Interestingly, when I asked Saul to confirm that he had not heard of any of the study's NCAs, he replied with a firm "no" and elaborated by stating:

And just so, I don't know if this helps. But I was in the scholars program at Beach Community College, which is like their honors program. So I probably should have been one of the people to hear about things. . . . So I wasn't just a regular student there. . . . I had special counseling and stuff.

Saul was genuinely surprised he had not heard of these opportunities because of the additional support he received through the scholars program at Beach Community College. Similarly, when asked to provide an example of an NCA, Henry said, “no, not off the top of my mind.”

Furthermore, after describing three of the five exemplars for which he may have been eligible, he confirmed that he had not heard of them at his community college, South CC, nor at BPU.

As for the study exemplars, surprisingly, participants were least aware of the Gilman Scholarship. As a Pell Grant recipient, Hannah had not heard of the Gilman Scholarship at East CC or BPU, even though she studied abroad during the fall of her junior year (approximately one year after transferring to BPU). Gema also stated that she had never heard of the Gilman Scholarship at her community college or BPU, even though she indicated she was a Pell Grant recipient in the demographic form. However, when I confirmed her Pell Grant status during the interview, she was less certain that she qualified. Thus, when she stated that she had never heard of the Gilman Scholarship at her community college or BPU, this may be because she was ineligible. Given that Gilman is an NCA open to community college students as well as TSCC, it is notable that only one of the ten participants had heard of the Gilman (Carlos) and this was through his own online search when he was seeking study abroad funding.

NCA Knowledge

Participants were most knowledgeable about the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. As a Fulbright alumnus, Carlos was highly knowledgeable about this NCA, having been awarded a grant to Mexico during the 2019-2020 academic year. Likewise, when asked if she could name an NCA, Hannah first listed Fulbright sharing that she had started the application during the previous cycle. Although Hannah did not end up submitting the application, she was able to define the award including the various types of Fulbright grants, e.g., research and teaching

English abroad. Gema, too, was knowledgeable about Fulbright and had also intended to apply for the grant during the summer of 2019. Ultimately, she experienced a family emergency that prevented her from submitting.

Alex was also knowledgeable about Fulbright, although she could only define its mission, more broadly:

What I know is that students or I believe grad students as well get like a large grant to go like to a country and like improve relations or like study relationships between like the U.S. and like that particular country and kind of get like an insight of like how . . . like relations be improved, like so big research, like a lot of research.

Yet, although somewhat knowledgeable about the award, Alex also had some misconceptions, especially regarding the eligibility requirements. For instance, she was unaware that Fulbright has no minimum GPA requirement, explaining that she thought one would have to be “very, very achieving, GPA wise” to receive the grant. She was also unaware that certain Fulbright host countries do not require proficiency in the host country’s language.

Athena, conversely, demonstrated her knowledge by describing a specific type of Fulbright grant:

My professor at BPU like last semester. She told us about a student who had done [Fulbright] and had gone to a different country. To teach English and she was telling us that, you know, if you are going to take a gap year during or before you went to law school or whatever, whatever you’re going to do, then you should apply for this because it’s very useful.

Although Marty lacked confidence in his definition of Fulbright, he correctly identified some characteristics of the opportunity, stating, “I think the poster that I may have seen that word [Fulbright] on it also has something to do with studying abroad or some sort of international program, but I could be wrong about that.” Thus, he had some knowledge of the award.

Knowledge of the other exemplars was minimal and generally limited to participants who had sought out or applied to the specific opportunity. For instance, Hannah was a semifinalist for the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Student Scholarship (JKCUTS), which provides up to \$40,000 per year for transfer students to complete their bachelor's degrees. Thus, she was the only participant who knew (and could describe) the award.

Likewise, Carlos had knowledge of the Gilman Scholarship because he conducted a Google search of study abroad funding after deciding to spend an academic year at the London School of Economics. In fact, Carlos was the only participant who actively sought out NCAs on his own. Unfortunately for him, although he received Federal Pell Grants and was therefore eligible to apply, by the time he discovered the award, he had missed the deadline. Besides his own research, he does not remember receiving any information about Gilman at Mass CC or BPU, even though he was a Pell Grant recipient at both institutions,

Several participants also exhibited knowledge of NCAs outside of the study exemplars. As with the other displays of knowledge, this was usually because the participant had applied, started an application, or intended to apply to the NCA. Hannah, for instance, provided detailed knowledge of the Critical Language Scholarship, which funds summer language immersion programs (The Critical Language Scholarship Program, n.d.), since she had twice applied for this award. Vika, an international student from France, explained that she had applied for a Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) scholarship. PTK is an international honor society that Vika joined at her community college. Gema shared information about the Coca Cola Scholarship, an award for which she started an application whilst also enrolled at her community college. Carlos gave examples of both the Rhodes Scholarship and Gates Cambridge Scholarship and correctly described what they funded (e.g., graduate study to the UK), and noted that he had an interest in

applying to these awards in the future. Marty gave a detailed description of a discipline specific NCA, the Academy Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting, sharing:

I only ever found out about [NCAs] while I was already in my first semester at BPU. There's one that I know it's called the Nichols Fellowship, that's like a screenwriting one from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

As a screenwriting major who had recently attended an info session on this fellowship, he was able to define the opportunity as well as express interest in applying.

Overall, all ten participants lacked a broad understanding of NCAs including what distinguishes them from other scholarships. Hannah summed it up best, stating, "I'm honestly not really sure what differentiates a nationally competitive scholarship from a regular scholarship." She simply learned about opportunities of interest and applied. Penelope also emphasized her lack of knowledge about NCAs, especially the benefits, sharing, "You know, I don't know what lies in scholarships, other than being able to get financial assistance." Vika felt her limited knowledge was due to her status as an international student stating, "Like 90% of the scholarships are just for, which I understand, American citizen." In fact, as an international student, she was only eligible for one of the study exemplars (JKCUTS). Finally, Athena pointed out that she may have at one time had more knowledge of these opportunities but may have forgotten over time, saying, "I feel like I should know them, but I can't remember them. Because I had a professor at Downtown Community College who would tell us about different awards."

Survey Findings

Of the 171 surveys analyzed for the study, 84.8% of participants responded "no" to the survey question: "Can you give an example of a nationally competitive award?" This confirmed that the term "nationally competitive award" was not well-known. However, anticipating this unfamiliarity with the terminology, the survey included an additional awareness question. After

listing examples of more established, therefore possibly more familiar, NCAs, including the Rhodes Scholarship, Coca Cola Scholars Program, and Gates Millennium Scholars Program, respondents were asked if they had heard of any of these awards. Even after providing more well-known NCA examples, 66% still responded “no” or “unsure” of having heard of them.

Awareness of NCA Exemplars

The survey also asked respondents about their awareness of the study’s five NCA exemplars. However, respondents were only asked questions about exemplars for which they were determined most likely eligible. After comparing each respondent’s self-provided demographic information against specific NCA eligibility, the survey’s skip logic presented the appropriate questions for specific NCAs. For instance, if a respondent indicated they were a U.S. citizen who received Federal Pell Grants, they would see questions related to the Gilman Scholarship, beginning with a short description of the award. Thus, *n* for each section of the survey about the study’s exemplars varies by respondent eligibility. Table 7 shows that overall, awareness of the five NCAs in this study was extremely limited.

Table 7*Awareness of NCA Exemplars*

	Gilman		Goldwater		Fulbright		JKCUTS		Truman	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Eligible										
Yes	117	68.4	37	21.6	145	84.80	71	41.52	145	84.80
No	54	31.6	134	78.4	26	15.20	100	58.48	26	15.20
Aware										
Yes	2	1.71	2	5.4	12	8.28	7	9.86	8	5.52
No	111	94.87	34	91.9	127	87.59	62	87.32	133	91.72
Maybe	4	3.42	1	2.7	6	4.14	2	2.82	4	2.76

Note: JKCUTS is an acronym for the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. Respondents only answer questions on exemplars for which they were determined eligible based on their self-identified demographic data.

Respondents were most likely to be eligible for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program (84.80%), but less than 9% had heard of the award.

Additionally, 68.4% of respondents were most likely eligible for the Gilman Scholarship. However, less than 2% had heard of the Gilman before the survey. Unlike Fulbright, students are eligible to apply for Gilman as early as freshman year, including students enrolled in their first year of community college. Thus, it is especially surprising that so few community college students within the survey were aware of this award. This also aligns with the interview participants' lack of awareness of Gilman.

Although the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS) had the highest level of awareness at 9.86%, less than half of total respondents were considered eligible, which is a small subsection of the overall survey population.

Knowledge of NCA Exemplars

Unlike the interviews, which differentiated between awareness and knowledge of NCAs, the format of the survey questions primarily captured awareness of these opportunities by asking students if they had heard of NCAs and the study exemplars. However, the survey included one knowledge question. Twenty-five respondents selected “yes” to “Can you give an example of a nationally competitive award?” and were then asked to provide an example of an NCA. Only four out of 25 students correctly identified an example of an NCA. The accurate examples respondents provided included: Fulbright, Gates Cambridge, Posse, and Foreign Affairs Fellowship. Other respondents identified opportunities that are not considered NCAs, such as “Full-time/ Part-time Deans List” and “FSFA [*sic*]” (which was most likely a reference to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

All in all, NCA awareness and knowledge for both interview participants and survey respondents were extremely limited. Table 8 provides a snapshot of the data collected relating to knowledge and awareness.

Table 8*Integrated Results Matrix on Knowledge and Awareness of NCAs*

Qualitative results	Quantitative results	Example quote
The majority of participants had awareness of one or more of the exemplar NCAs, but could not define what they funded.	The majority of respondents had not heard of the NCA exemplars.	Gema: "I've heard of [Gilman], but I don't know what like the details are of the scholarship."
Knowledge of NCAs was minimal and primarily limited to participants who had applied to one or more of these awards.	Knowledge of NCAs was almost nonexistent with only four participants correctly providing an example of these awards.	Penelope: "I just applied for some scholarships for graduate school . . . I don't know if those are nationally competitive, though, you know, so . . . I don't know the correct definition."
Participants were most aware of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.	Respondents were most aware of the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.	Marty: "I know that it's called Fulbright and to my limited understanding based on, I think, the poster that I may have seen . . . it also has something to do with studying abroad or some sort of international program."
Participants were least aware of the Truman Scholarship.	Respondents were least aware of the Gilman Scholarship.	Athena: "I'm glad like, I found out about [Truman] I don't think I've. . . I think I've heard about it, but I don't think I ever actually paid attention to what it was."

Note: I integrated qualitative data (interviews) and quantitative data (survey responses) to provide a side-by-side summary of the data for research question one. Data related to the Goldwater Scholarship were omitted due to the limited number of both participants and respondents who were eligible for that award.

In summary, three of the ten participants, Hannah, Carlos, and Gema had the highest NCA knowledge. However, although these three had the highest awareness and understanding of the study exemplars, each also had gaps in their knowledge and struggled to correctly define some of the opportunities. It is also worth noting that these three individuals were the only participants to have applied or started an application to one or more of the study exemplars.

Additionally, at the time of the interview, Hannah and Gema were graduating seniors and Carlos was a recent BPU alumnus, having graduated in Spring 2019.

Furthermore, both the interview participants and survey respondents were most likely to be eligible for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. While the interview participants (TSCC) were most knowledgeable and aware of the award, less than 9% of the survey respondents (proTSCC) had heard of Fulbright prior to the survey. Considering Fulbright is for recent graduates who have received their bachelor's degree as well as current graduate students, it may be that community colleges do not promote this program since their students are not eligible until after they transfer to a four-year institution.

NCA Interest

Although most participants lacked knowledge of NCAs, the study also sought to gauge student interest and motivation to apply for the awards. Before unearthing factors of motivation, the study first confirmed NCA interest levels from both the interview participants and survey respondents. Overall, both the interview participants and survey respondents showed interest in NCAs more broadly as well as the study exemplars. All ten interview participants demonstrated interest in one or more of the study exemplars and around 84% of survey respondents stated they were strongly or somewhat interested in learning more about nationally competitive awards. While factors that impact interest will also be addressed, below is a summary of interest levels of the interview participants and survey respondents.

Interview Findings

Participants who had previously applied for at least one NCA seemed most interested in NCAs more broadly. Carlos and Hannah, the two individuals with the most experience applying to NCAs, were very interested in any NCA opportunities that supported their goals. When Carlos

was asked why he might apply for an NCA, he replied, “they’re worth it. It’s worth it if you get it. . . . They’re wonderful opportunities. They’re great opportunities.” Vika, an international student from France who previously applied for an international honor society scholarship, also showed high levels of interest, stating, “I would definitely do it if I go for scholarships, I would do it if I fit. I would do it. No reasons why not.”

As for the study exemplars, the majority of participants demonstrated high levels of interest in Fulbright. After briefly describing the various types of Fulbright grants (teaching English abroad, study awards, and independent research/creative projects), Penelope’s interest was clear. She said, “Wow . . . I want to do it the year after I graduate and get my master’s.” Her interest was further evident when she began exploring the Fulbright website during the interview, sharing: “I just opened it up in my browser. No. I’m sorry, you’re talking. And I’m a do-er.”

Marty also was highly interested in Fulbright. When asked which of the grant types he was drawn to the most, he said, “You know what, I’m kind of drawn to all of them.” After explaining a bit more about the independent research/created projects grant type, he amended his statement:

My interest it goes in reverse order based on how you listed them. Creating some sort of project sounds just like the most fun way to do it. Although secondly, I know of international graduate programs that I think I’d really enjoy being a part of. And then I don’t know if I am smart enough to teach English, but that still sounds like something. . . . I mean I can speak it. So maybe I can help out.

Henry also expressed interest in the Fulbright, demonstrated by his follow-up questions: “So once again, just to clarify, they pay for, like, your travel there, back, your tuition there, and your housing and food? Wow. Probably really interested.”

However, not all participants were interested in Fulbright. Saul, for instance, was not excited by the international aspect of Fulbright, sharing, “Honestly, I don’t know if I put that

much effort into an application process. . . . I don't know, I feel like local programs speak better to local, local companies.”

The Jack Kent Cook Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS) also appealed to all of the eligible participants. Penelope stated her interest as “huge” during the interview and vigorously nodded when asked if she would have applied had she known about it. Marty likewise replied, “Yeah, absolutely,” to whether or not he would have applied, and Henry, although unsure if he met the 3.5 minimum GPA requirement, still stated, “I'd be very interested” in the award.

The other study exemplars also had varying levels of interest. Alex was highly interested in Gilman which would have helped fund a study abroad program. When asked if she would have applied had she known about Gilman earlier in her undergraduate career, she replied, “I probably would have considered it for sure. Because that's a good deal.” Others indicated that their interest in Gilman was dependent on if they could fit study abroad into their schedules. This will be discussed further under the “timing” factor.

Survey Findings

Around 84% of respondents stated they were strongly or somewhat interested in learning more about nationally competitive awards. The 7.6% who stated they were somewhat or strongly uninterested were asked to provide a rationale as to why they were uninterested. Interestingly, several respondents shared doubts about their eligibility, which reinforces the lack of knowledge about these awards. One respondent noted, “I never thought in competing over those scholarships, I just usually went to find ways that's manageable for me from the Financial Aid office.” Yet looking at his demographic info, he had a high GPA and received Pell Grants, making him eligible for several of the exemplar NCAs. Another respondent shared, “no one ever

really seems to win them” and she too had a GPA above 3.0 and was also pursuing a STEM major. These text responses illustrated the lack of understanding or knowledge about NCAs which may have impacted their interest.

Respondents were also asked about their interest levels in the awards for which they were eligible (again, established from their demographic responses). Table 9 illustrates levels of interest for each exemplar.

Table 9

NCA Exemplar Interest

	Gilman		Goldwater		Fulbright		JKCUTS		Truman	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Interest										
Strongly interested	60	51.7	15	40.5	47	32.41	48	68.57	50	34.48
Somewhat interested	38	22.2	9	24.3	46	31.72	10	14.29	43	29.66
Neither interested nor uninterested	12	7	8	21.6	35	24.14	10	14.29	41	28.28
Somewhat uninterested	1	0.6	2	5.4	3	2.07	1	1.43	4	2.76
Strongly uninterested	5	2.9	2	5.4	14	9.66	1	1.43	7	4.82
Previously applied	0	0	1	0.6	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

Note: JKCUTS is an acronym for the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. Respondents only answered questions on exemplars for which they were determined eligible based on their self-identified demographic data.

With the exception of Goldwater, interest was consistently high. JKCUTS had the highest levels of interest with 82.86% of eligible respondents noting strongly or somewhat interested in the award. JKCUTS also had the lowest levels of uninterest, with only two out of 70 students selecting somewhat or strongly uninterested; and when asked why they were uninterested, one wrote “I don’t qualify,” and the other provided, “not at this time.”

After JCKUTS, respondents ($n = 116$) were most interested in the Gilman with almost 74% selecting strongly or somewhat interested in learning more, and only six respondents selected somewhat or strongly uninterested in learning more. Here, two of the respondents provided family commitments as a rationale for their lack of interest in studying abroad, including “Not interested in abroad, I am a single mother” and “I have children, could not travel.” Another respondent highlighted employment responsibilities, writing in all caps: “CANT STUDY ABROAD DUE TO JOB.” And a fourth respondent was strongly uninterested because their “schedule does not permit [them] to leave the country for even 2 weeks.” This affirms previous literature that acknowledges the additional barriers to study abroad that post-traditional students face (Amani & Kim, 2017). Here, post-traditional is defined as “adult learners, full-time employees, low-income students, students who commute to school and working parents” (The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018, Post-Traditional students in higher education section, para. 1).

Respondents were also mostly interested in the Truman Scholarship with around 64% selecting somewhat or strongly interested. Only 7.58% ($n = 93$) were somewhat or strongly uninterested. Within this group, most cited (seven out of 11) that they did not qualify for the award or that Truman was not relevant to their career goals.

Similar to Truman, about 64% of respondents ($n = 145$) were somewhat or strongly interested in Fulbright. However, respondents provided the most varying reasons for their lack of interest. Around six students thought Fulbright did not fit in their career goals, stating, “I have no plans on being a teacher,” “Not a education major,” and “Not the career path I am currently heading in.” Others did not want to go abroad “I’ve already traveled everywhere,” or had family obligations that prevented them from going abroad, including: “I have a husband and 2 young

children I cannot leave behind for such an extended period of time,” and “I could not leave my children for a year.”

While the Goldwater respondent sample size was low ($n = 37$), it is noteworthy that 64.8% expressed some or strong interest in learning more. Of the around 11% who were somewhat or strongly uninterested, one reason provided was “Science isn’t my strongest area.” Another respondent wrote, “not a biological sciences major.” She was pursuing a degree in health-related fields (nursing, public health, physical therapy, health technology, etc.) which may be an eligible discipline for Goldwater if she was interested in research. This may be another indication that lack of understanding influences interest in NCAs.

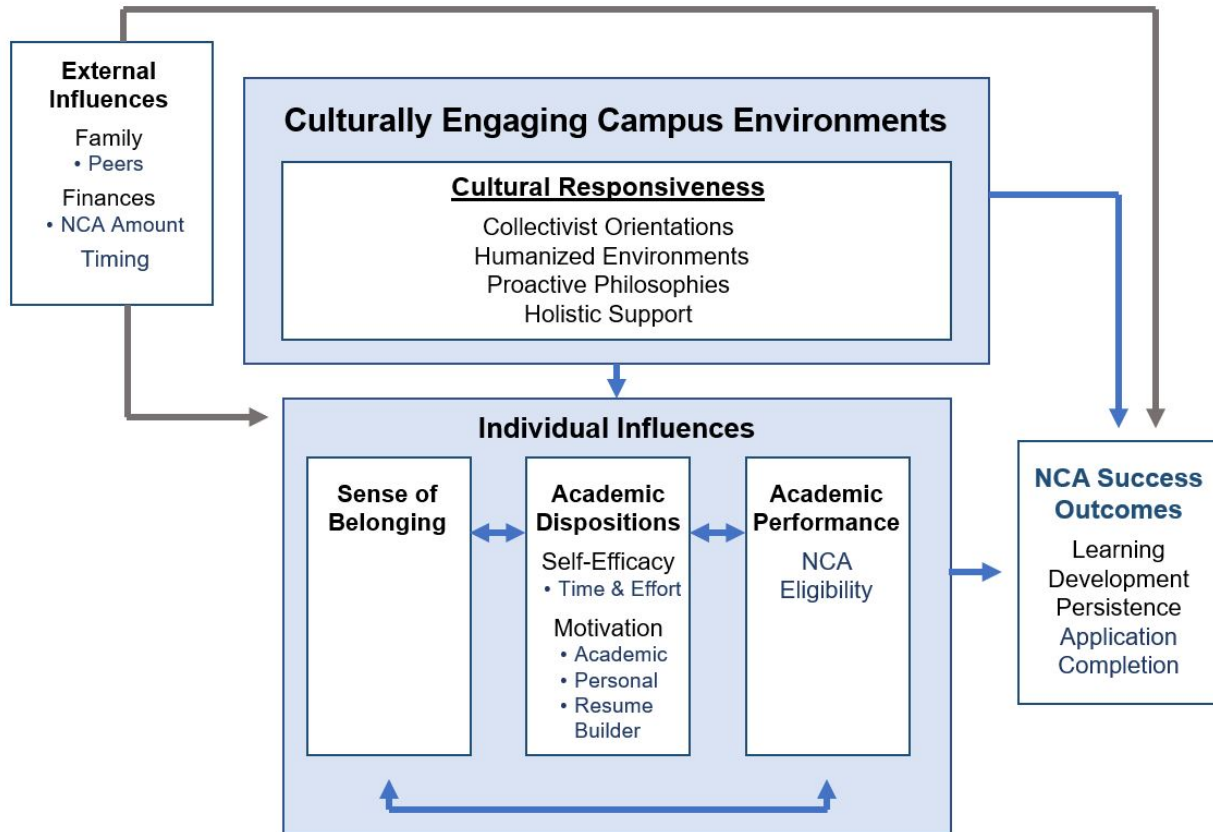
Given that most TSCC and proTSCC who participated in the study had an interest in NCA opportunities, it made sense to then investigate factors that might influence their interest and motivation to apply. Thus far, low interest levels seemed to be tied to questions of eligibility, which was further explored in the next section.

NCA External, Individual, and Campus Factors

For research question two, this study unearthed factors that motivate transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) as well as prospective transfer students from community colleges (proTSCC) to apply for NCAs. Using an adapted version of the CECE framework, Figure 2 provides a refresher on how factors were categorized and structured in this section.

Figure 2

Access to Nationally Competitive Awards within the Culturally Engaging Campus Environment Framework



Note: Adapted from “The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model: A new theory of college success” by S. Museus, 2014, Higher education: Handbook of theory and research), p. 207. Copyright © 2014 Springer. Reprinted with permission.

The following summary of the data begins with external influences (family, finances, and timing), followed by individual influences (sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance), and concluding with culturally engaging campus environments or campus factors (collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support).

Interview Findings

While the interview questions (see Appendix C) were open-ended, data analysis of their responses frequently showed themes connected to Museus' (2014) CECE framework which influenced their motivation to apply. These factors included: (a) external influences of family and finances, (b) individual influences like a student's sense of belonging at their institution, self-efficacy, motivation and, (c) campus factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic advisement. Additional subfactors that emerged from the interviews included: (a) timing as it related to NCA application deadlines; (b) financial amount of the award; (c) the time and effort it takes to apply; (d) NCAs as a "resume builder" or something that may make the student more competitive for future professional opportunities; (e) NCAs as an academic accomplishment, including elevating a student's graduate school plans; and (f) personal interest in what the NCA offers, referred to in the study as "personal growth."

External Influences

In addition to family and finances, timing, as it related to NCA application deadlines, is also categorized as an external influence that impacted motivation to apply. Moreover, the financial amount of the award was considered a subfactor of finances.

Family. For the purpose of the study, the definition of family included friends and peers. Family first emerged as an influence in the interviews when several of the participants shared how they learned about NCAs. Hannah, for instance, credited her awareness of Fulbright back to high school when a family friend won the grant. She also thought that her family may have talked about it because her grandmother is a professor and both of her parents "are very like academics." Similarly, Alex had heard about Fulbright from "friends of friends who achieved it"

and Gema had heard about Truman from classmates who had applied. Vika, too, shared that she learned about the Phi Theta Kappa scholarship from her friends, stating, “If my friends had not told me about [PTK], I would not have known any of those scholarships.”

Several participants noted the importance of family support in relation to NCAs. Hannah, for example, asked her mom to review her JKCUTS application. Likewise, for the Critical Language Scholarship, she once again utilized family during the application process, sharing, “I had my parents like read and review like edit my essays.” Marty also mentioned that, should he apply for an NCA, he would ask his mom and sister to review his writing, and Henry joked about using family for NCA recommendation letters. Moreover, Athena highlighted that her friends and classmates were the best sources of inspiration, stating:

If I was gonna get any information about [NCAs] it would be from my classmates and if my friends were like, “oh, I applied for this like you should too. It’s this or whatever.” I think if my friends told me that they applied. . . . I would probably do it too, just because it’s like, [if] they can do it, so can I.

Family also had an effect on how some participants viewed their competitiveness for NCAs. For example, Athena shared how her experience as the first in her family to attend college impacted her motivation to apply to NCAs:

Honestly, so I like I kind of grew up in a house where education isn’t important. So, um, for my family like me going to community college was a big step because nobody really does that in my family. So, my, my parents both dropped out of high school. They don’t know anything about college at all. So, not having that presence in my life where they were like, you have to do this and apply for scholarships, I felt like it wasn’t necessary. So, I just never did it and even at BPU, when they send emails I kind of just put it to the side, even though I know I should [apply].

Also a first-generation college student, Alex expressed similar sentiments when discussing whether it was worth it for her to apply to NCAs. She felt that other college students might have an advantage, saying “Maybe [they] had parents that or family members who have already gone

to college. So, it's just kind of like second nature for them. They encourage their kids to do it [apply for NCAs].”

Family was also a potential barrier to the NCA exemplars that funded international experiences. When asked if he knew of any cons of applying for a Fulbright, Marty replied:

It depends on how much you like being home and your family, I guess, applying is no problem, but for being away for nine months to a year, I know that that can be really complicated depending on the relationships you have back home.

Similarly, Athena admitted she would miss her family if she studied abroad on a Gilman Scholarship.

Finances. Finances also emerged when discussing NCAs, especially concerning the amount of the award or what the award covered. As such this section both highlights finances as broad influences as well as specific examples of how the amount of the award shaped participant motivation.

The most prevalent examples of finances occurred when discussing the cost of study abroad and graduate school. These expenses both motivated and demotivated participants to apply to NCAs. As a sophomore with law school aspirations, Athena was especially drawn to Truman which provides \$30,000 for a public service-related graduate degree (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a). She shared:

Um, [Truman] actually sounds like really, really useful, especially [for] law school because it's so expensive. And I'm glad like, I found out about it. I think I've heard about it, but I don't think I ever actually paid attention to what it was. So, um, yeah, that'd be super useful with law school because it's so expensive and it's just a lot of people go into debt from law school and I don't want to do, like I'm trying to avoid as much as possible. So, applying for that would be like probably something I would do in my junior year.

When discussing the Gilman Scholarship, Saul's interest was dependent upon whether the award would affect his financial aid package. He asked several questions about how the award was

dispersed and what it could cover, including “would that kick into my tuition” and “is it like a check or is it made out to the school.” It was clear his first and foremost priority was to make sure Gilman did not interfere with his finances. Carlos described how he never intended to study abroad due to cost, explaining, “I thought [study abroad] was for people with money, to be honest. I thought a lot of money to do it. These are people that have a lot of financial support from their family.” And Alex never seriously considered studying abroad because she was concerned with “being as strategic with financial aid as possible.”

Another unexpected connection between finances and NCAs occurred when multiple participants shared that they had not originally planned to transfer to BPU, a private four-year institution. Penelope admitted that she had planned to “go to like Berkeley” and had a “UC type of mindset,” so she only focused on meeting UC transfer requirements. Others, like Athena and Marty, did not seek scholarships, including NCAs, to finance their studies because they did not expect to attend a private university. Athena explicitly articulated the relationship between not applying for scholarships, including NCAs, and her late choice to transfer to BPU:

If I had known where I wanted to go. If I was going to a private school, I would have done it [applied to JKCUTS]. But if I’m just going to go to another public school like UCLA or something, I probably wouldn’t have done it because I know that other federal things like . . . the Cal grant would have covered my costs for UC schools or Cal States, but I wish, like I wish I had known where I was going to go to school because if I had known that I would have done that scholarship, because [BPU] was very expensive.

Marty had a similar experience, explaining:

Going to private university was not something that I had considered at all . . . I went to community college because I was trying to save, save money and everything. And then the further I got into that education, the more I saw that if I was trying to save money when I . . . got my bachelor’s, for at least film, it might not be something that actually benefited me in the future. . . I wanted to go somewhere where I could find connections and do significant work already well in university. And so, what would motivate me more than anything is knowing that it would continue to help me along because of budgetary restraints.

Penelope also shared that she did not seek out NCAs at Ocean CC because she paid for the classes herself:

At Ocean CC, . . . I didn't access any [NCAs], like, I just paid for all my classes I don't think I used any type of aid in community college. . . . I think my semesters would cost like, you know, like I want to say like \$400 to register for . . . so I don't really remember that much about aid.

Timing. One prominent external influence that emerged in the study is how timing impacts proTSCC and TSCC motivation to apply to NCAs. Although not explicitly included in Museus' (2014) CECE framework, timing, especially as it related to the Gilman Scholarship, was a key factor in both interest and motivation to apply. As transfer students, there was a recurring theme in the interviews in which participants pointed out the difficulty of incorporating study abroad into their schedules, thus also affecting interest in the Gilman Scholarship. Marty, for instance, shared:

[Gilman] definitely would have interested me. Yeah, um, I have found though that in my time at both community college and university I structure my academic plan in such a way like I kind of do it at the very beginning, before I've even began my program. So, I know what to expect each semester. That I don't even know if I could realistically do [study abroad] but it definitely would have interested me, and it would have made me think more seriously about it.

Carlos also cited timing as a rationale for not applying for the Gilman Scholarship. As shared earlier, Carlos had found Gilman through his own online search for study abroad funding once he was accepted into a yearlong program at the London School of Economics. He lamented about learning about Gilman too late in his undergraduate career because he needed additional financial support to go abroad:

I definitely [would have] apply [to] it. You got to apply because you need that scholarship. . . . I got a couple Fulbrighters here that I was with here. Got the Gilman, too. And like it's like a missed opportunity. Darn it. Like you would have liked a plan, you know, I would have liked someone to tell me, "Okay, this is, you know, there's this

wonderful opportunity in London for a year, but then you have the Gilman, so let's combine the two. Let's get you out there".

Like many students, Carlos only began his study abroad scholarship search after he was admitted into his London program, but by then, the majority of scholarship deadlines had passed. Carlos pointed out that NCAs, Gilman especially, are more than just prestige, they can also fill a financial need. He needed additional funding for his year in London.

Athena too, could not study abroad without financial assistance, so Gilman was especially appealing. Like Carlos, she felt she should have learned about it earlier.

I've always wanted to do study abroad and I have family in Greece. So, I wanted to like connect to my roots in Greece, a little bit and do that. Or like Italy or something. But my family was always like, "yeah, we don't have the money to do that". So, I don't know [where]to expect to get it from. So, I wish I had known about it before I got into BPU so I could have convinced them a little bit more.

Athena could not study abroad without financial assistance, but had she learned about Gilman before transferring to BPU, she may have strongly considered going abroad.

Alex reaffirmed the importance of learning about Gilman and study abroad before transferring. While at BPU she described how students who had studied abroad would come to her classes to share their experience:

There were students who have participated in programs who have come to our classes. . . Like for example, studied abroad to China, like there were students that came and talked about that and their experience . . . like how to apply and like what you could expect to get from there. But this was when I was in a lower division class, there were a lot of freshmen sophomores. As opposed to juniors or seniors. Because by that time you've already gotten those flag requirements fulfilled.

Alex felt that study abroad at BPU was not an option because any coursework she pursued abroad would not fulfill graduation requirements.

The last note about timing related to the COVID-19 pandemic. When interviews were held in March of 2020 all international travel, including study abroad programming, had been

postponed and paused. While most interview participants still showed interest in Gilman, the pandemic made it much more difficult for these TSCC to consider study abroad as an option. Saul, for instance, shared how his schedule, personal finances, and then the pandemic all led to him to question his study abroad intentions, sharing:

I was thinking about [study abroad] for the fall and then I was like probably not [COVID-19]. So yeah, I mean I had plans to study abroad. Um, but, I mean, I would have to make it work financially and with my schedule.

Similarly, as a sophomore at BPU, Athena was still eligible for Gilman, but she was less certain about going abroad because of the virus.

In addition to Gilman, the Truman Scholarship was another exemplar where timing influenced eligibility and motivation. As the exemplar where eligible students can only apply junior year, this especially affected TSCC. Alex, having almost completed her junior year was no longer eligible for Truman, yet her interest was high, stating “I think [Truman is] interesting. Only junior year? I wish I would have known.” Hannah similarly expressed interest in learning more about Truman but was also ineligible as a graduating senior.

Individual Influences

Individual influences were another key category of factors that impacted participant interest in applying for NCAs. This category focused on the factors of sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and motivation. Like external influences, several subfactors also emerged. Nested under self-efficacy was “time and effort it takes to apply,” “academic growth,” “personal growth,” and “resume builder” fell under motivation.

Sense of Belonging. Participants highlighted the importance of belonging to their institution which usually surfaced when asked if they received NCA information or support. Several participants expressed a lack of belonging at their two-year community colleges. Marty

admitted that he “wasn’t involved much beyond taking classes at the community college” and Hannah shared, “I kind of felt pretty lost and just [wanted] more like engagement with like emails and like opportunities and stuff like that.” When describing her Ocean Community College experience, Penelope shared:

I didn’t even attend my graduation [at Ocean CC], it was still like, you didn’t even know they had one, like I didn’t know anything. . . . I would just go there, go to my classes, and leave. And I don’t know if that was because I wasn’t involved or because I didn’t know of anything that’s going on, like, I didn’t know that community college was a community within itself.

Vika, however, explicitly noted the differences between belonging at BPU versus Beach CC, explaining, “But just the experience of Beach CC I didn’t feel like I belong to Beach CC, like a family. . . . I just wanted to transfer out and [at] BPU, I really feel like, oh, I belong, you know?” In contrast, Carlos felt like an outsider at BPU, stating:

As a transfer student, it’s always hard to truly be a part of the community. Sometimes I thought like, man, these people have been here since freshman year. So, they’re very well connected. They’re known by faculty . . . they’re known on campus are known by a lot of people.

Although this lack of belonging at BPU did not prevent Carlos from applying to Fulbright, he later credited this to specific BPU staff who reach out and encouraged him to apply (see humanized educational environments for a more detailed description).

Self-Efficacy. Most notably, self-efficacy emerged frequently when participants questioned their eligibility, which became a code-word for their own self-perceived competitiveness. Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their ability to successfully achieve a task (Bandura, 1989). Participants with lower self-efficacy were less likely to show interest in or pursue NCAs. Saul, for example initially indicated that he was open to NCA opportunities:

I mean, I'm always open, I'm always ears. So, yeah, if [faculty are] able to convince me into it, then yeah I mean if they're able to say, "I think that you should apply for Fulbright because I feel you would be a good candidate for this position that I know of", or yeah, like, give me a reason to put in the work. I'm not just going to do it for a "maybe."

Yet as Saul shared his thoughts, it became clear that he was not willing to apply for Fulbright for a "maybe".

Although interview participants were eligible for NCAs based on minimum application requirements when they spoke of eligibility, they actually meant whether they were competitive or a "good" candidate for the award. For example, when asked why she might not apply for NCAs, Gema explained:

I think one of the biggest reasons why people feel afraid of [applying] is because it's really, really competitive. And there's like these fellowships. They feel that they don't have a chance. And I think that's one reason why they would feel like they wouldn't want to apply to it or they feel intimidated that they wouldn't get picked because they feel like there's so many other people out there who are more, I guess, like privileged to get that. . . . So, I think that's also one reason why I didn't apply to these scholarships as well because I didn't feel like I would meet the criteria.

Athena likewise admitted self-doubt about her own competitiveness:

I personally, I know I get, I kind of psych myself out. And it's like, I know that I can be a great student and I know I can write beautifully. But when I think about it, there's so many other people out there, like, maybe they can write better than me. I mean . . . they can do it better than me. So why am I even trying? I'm not going to get it. So, I psyched myself out like that pretty often. And that would probably be the reason why I wouldn't do it [apply to NCAs].

Likewise, Alex focused on the competitiveness of these awards:

That there's so many people applying. It's like . . . is this work worth it? And not necessarily like, oh, you know, like I'm lazy, I just don't want to do it, but it's pretty intimidating when so many people are applying for the same thing and you know your GPA. it isn't necessarily a 4.0 let's say, like it's just an average GPA and it's like, well, why would they choose me if I don't have a super high GPA? . . . So, I guess intimidation.

Alex perceived anything less than a 4.0 as a weakness in NCA applications, which highlights the lack of understanding about who these opportunities are seeking to fund. At the time of the interview, Alex had a 3.2 GPA and aspirations of a future career as a social worker, making her eligible for three of the five study exemplars.

Penelope labeled it a low self-esteem issue, noting:

I might be a little discouraged if [Truman] was fairly competitive. . . . That's just like a self-esteem thing. It's just like my own thing . . . being like, "Oh, there probably are people who, you know, are better at what they're doing or like have been part of a lot of extracurriculars or like doing a lot with their time" . . . other than, like I'm good at school and like can't wait to be a teacher.

Potentially contributing to lower self-efficacy levels is the stigma of attending a community college that a few participants described. Henry best articulated this stigma when explaining why he had not taken advantage of co-curricular experiences at his community college:

Like in my head, I gave community colleges a bad reputation because where I come from, like all my friends went to like the top schools and everyone looked down at community colleges. So, I kind of thought like community college people, they're like, in my experience, they show that, like, a lot of them don't care about like anything . . . like the students there just don't even try at life and so, I don't know, I kind of didn't want to relate myself to any of them. And so, I didn't participate in like any of the things [at South CC].

Other participants did not fully describe the "stigma" but would instead hint at a lack of rigor or academic excellence. Saul, for example, pointed to the lack of professors with doctorates at his community colleges, saying, "Most of the teachers [at community college], they're, like I had like a handful of teachers whom I call doctor rather than professor. . . . [At BPU] I have quite a few more doctorate professors comparative to Beach CC." Saul also called Beach CC "a stepping stone" to BPU. Similarly, Alex called it a "Beach CC mentality," which she explained as "get undergrad done" as quickly as possible.

However, several participants also demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy regardless of the competitiveness of the NCA. When asked if she could think of any reasons not to apply for NCAs, Vika firmly replied, “No, I would definitely do it if I go for scholarships, I would do it if I fit. I would do it. No reasons why not.” Hannah acknowledged that she thought Fulbright was a prestigious program, but that did not stop her from applying, sharing, “it’s just like a bit intimidating how big and like prestigious [Fulbright] is. . . . It’s just, it’s kind of nerve-wracking, but I don’t think it’s deterring me from applying.”

Time and Effort to Apply. Closely related to self-efficacy was the individual influence of “time and effort required to apply” to NCAs. Most participants argued that (a) between school and their other responsibilities they did not have time to apply, or (b) it was not worth their time to apply if the application required too many components or steps.

When asked why he might not apply for an NCA, Henry answered:

Not any legit reasons but like other than maybe it has too many steps to do. . . . Like, I’ve heard you have . . . really, really long essays. . . . And so, like with that many steps just to . . . like apply for one . . . and all that work may like cause someone to not want to even go for it.

Gema noted that applying to NCAs is another commitment on top of many other responsibilities.

At her community college, Sunny CC, she even attended a workshop to apply for the Coca-Cola Scholars Program. However, she described the process of applying as “tedious,” sharing:

At the time, I was like, doing so many other classes. I was taking five classes at a time. I was like in a, like a sport. So, juggling all these things and made it difficult to complete the scholarship, but it was like the last thing on my mind. So, I don’t think I ever finished the scholarship.

Similarly, Penelope cited other responsibilities as a potential barrier to applying:

The only thing that would stop me as if I was like too overwhelmed with other things to be able to add putting my name out there, even if it was beneficial. And I guess that’s like an issue with prioritization because If you know would be helpful in the long run, but that

putting in the effort now might be difficult. . . . But if I thought that I had no chance, I would probably be like “eh”.

This statement illustrates a potential relationship between “time and effort to apply” and “self-efficacy,” as Penelope first argued that she was too busy to apply but ended with the chances of her winning the award.

Carlos also focused on the time and effort needed to competitively apply for an NCA:

Like I heard for the Rhodes Scholarship, you need . . . five reference letters of recommendation, maybe two to three essays and . . . these are essays that you have to look over like over 20 times, have a lot of people look over them. So, it’s like a lot of work, like my Fulbright was a lot of work and I remember I was late. I started the application late in and [the fellowships advisor] gave me BPU’s approval after the deadline and all that. And I remember I was in my first semester [at BPU], I was taking 20 units and working really hard on the Fulbright application. So, it is hard work. It does require a lot of hard working, you have to network with people that help you with the essay, help you with supplemental questions, and then the interview was nerve-racking.

Saul was most vocal about the return on his investment when it came to the time and effort of applying for NCAs:

The qualifications could be too intense. Sometimes they asked for, like, a three to five-page personal statement. I mean, I didn’t have to write that for BPU, so why would I write that? I mean, it’s just a cost-benefit analysis, I guess. But even then, I mean, if you look at it, you’re still making \$800 an hour. If you look at it like that, I guess.

Conversely, when asked about the Gilman Scholarships which requires several essays to apply, Marty found the application requirements manageable, stating, “Writing two essays doesn’t sound like too complicated. And one thing I’m very happy to sit down and do that whenever.”

A final topic of motivation connected to self-efficacy was the chances of not winning the NCA and how that might impact motivation. When pressed for additional rationale for why someone might not apply for an NCA, Penelope summed up the factor of time and eligibility/competitiveness which she labeled as “fit”:

I don't really think of any negatives. You know . . . like I said, if the time is there. You think you fit the role like you know, you can do the requirements needed of applying. I think the only negative would be if you get rejected, but that's okay because it wasn't even money, you're getting in the first place. I don't know. And so, I don't see that many negatives, other than like if you maybe wouldn't be okay with being told no.

Likewise, Carlos and Saul noted the possibility of rejection. Carlos noted, "if you were to get rejected, I mean that's tremendous pain, I guess." Saul too acknowledged this, but saw rejection as a positive, calling the process of applying "good because it teaches you rejection. . . . I mean, there's still some kids in college who haven't heard the word 'no'. And it's kind of crazy."

Motivation. The factor of motivation emerged from the interview participants' perceived benefits of NCAs. Within motivation, the subfactors of "academic growth," "personal growth," and "resume builder" surfaced.

Academic Growth. This factor surfaced when a student referenced an academic benefit to applying or receiving NCAs. Hannah saw NCAs as important to her academics, stating, "it's like an expansion of like your academics, like you can apply your academics to like a whole new setting." Gema also noted that she was drawn to Fulbright "mainly for the learning experience of how to teach." However, within the same conversation, she also cited academics as a potential barrier to applying. When asked why she did not apply for the Gilman, she replied, "Maybe the classes I was taking, juggling, because I remember my main goal was to be able to graduate within four years."

Several participants also shared that they thought NCAs like Fulbright would look good for graduate study. When asked to describe the benefits of NCAs, Marty shared the following:

But I know that if I were to qualify for and, you know, win one of those nationally recognized basically competitive awards, it would definitely look fantastic. When I was applying somewhere to go to [a] graduate program and trying to continue my education. I

don't know how great it would be when I was trying to apply to a job. But if I was trying to get them to continue education. I know that it would be very helpful.

Hannah likewise asserted that Fulbright would benefit graduate school applications:

Grad schools really value like seeing the Fulbright not just because it's a prestigious award, but because they know that you can like that you can be independent and then you can like navigate like a foreign country for an extended period of time and conduct like actual work on your own.

Similarly, Alex thought that an international experience like Fulbright might distinguish her amongst other graduate school applicants, saying, "because it's like . . . I would say, like, I don't just have domestic experience. I'm like . . . perhaps the average applicant. Whether that be for another graduate program or a job. So, kind of something to have underneath your belt."

Personal Growth. NCA benefits that connected to a student's personal interests or goals fell under this factor. Saul acknowledged how it feels to win a competition, stating, "I mean, you feel good when you receive a reward" and Vika also spoke of personal pride when winning an NCA, explaining "you know, you feel like, okay, it's your pride. . . . Yeah. Okay, proud of it." Carlos, when describing the benefits of applying to NCAs, shared, "there's no cons. I mean, you don't lose anything in applying. I definitely think you'll learn a lot in the process." At the time of his interview, Carlos was living in Mexico on a Fulbright grant, so he was also able to share how simply learning that he was selected benefitted his personal growth:

When I got the [Fulbright award notification], you know. . . I guess you understand that your life's going to change. . . that you have received something that not many people receive that's going to help you. Not only today but in the long run. And that, it was worth. . . the late nights, it was worth the "nos" all the "nos" that you received in order to receive that one "yes". And when I got it. I was very happy. I left the classroom. I called my mother, she was the first person I told. And she was also very happy. So, it's like it's a sense of hard work pays off. Your dreams do come true.

Other participants also spoke of how an NCA might personally benefit them or help them grow as a person. Marty elaborated on the personal benefits of pursuing a Fulbright grant:

Well, if I'm doing the project. I would walk away with a fantastic project. It might be more personal for me. . .and so I think that the benefits I can think of other than just the recognition and I mean, whenever you walk away with by the end, whether it be a degree or project or something, there is just that motivation and there is that kind of the reward of having done it, the reward. I mean, that's such a cool thing to think about.

When discussing NCAs that provide an international experience like the Gilman and Fulbright, most participants pointed out their personal interest in travel and exploring new cultures. Hannah shared what drew her to the Critical Language Scholarship, saying, "I became pretty interested because that's, um, that's, that's one of my big things is like living and experiencing like other cultures."

Resume Builder. Participants also thought that NCAs would lead to future opportunities, and for the purpose of the study has been labeled as "resume builders". Gema recounted the advice she received from BPU about the benefits of receiving an NCA:

I remember once I attended like it was a BPU workshop for like applying to like these scholarships and they said, "Oh yeah, if you do your masters and you get like the scholarships, it'll look good on your CV." And that's just one thing I remembered that they said. Apply to the scholarships and it'll look good.

Saul posited that participating in an international program like Fulbright would also benefit his future career goals, saying, "I feel like it would fare well with an employer were to look at it because it would show that you have intercultural workplace experience, which is good." Carlos affirmed this statement by sharing what he had learned from his Fulbright experience: "I've matured professionally and [know] what to desire and expect from a job." Alex also mentioned the benefits of adding NCAs to your resume, explaining:

I heard that it was a good thing to put on your resume that you achieve that scholarship. . . . Because a lot of these things are like they focus on like academics, it would kind of maybe tell myself like kind of like a self-assuring thing. As opposed to something someone else would see, it's like, oh, wow, like I did get those grades, like I did put in the work for the application requirements. So, like self-satisfaction also.

Alex's concluding statement of self-satisfaction also connects back to the subfactor of personal growth.

Henry also said NCAs were a resume builder, but he also connected this to a sense of pride (previously discussed in the self-efficacy section): "Because if it's competitive than then it's kind of like, oh I beat everybody else in this area and I got this. And it's an award that you can kind of like, show off."

Campus Factors

The final category of factors focuses on how higher education institutions support proTSCC and TSCC motivation to apply to NCAs. Stemming from Museus' (2014) CECE framework, the most frequently discussed campus factors included collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support. These factors, whether successfully or unsuccessfully executed at the community college and/or four-year institution level (e.g., BPU) affected the interview participants' motivations to apply to NCAs.

Collectivist Cultural Orientations. Campuses that exemplify *collectivist cultural orientations* focus on efforts that are collaborative and lift the entire student population as a whole versus individual successes. Although collectivist orientations was the least frequent CECE campus factor, interview participants still noted it as important to their success.

A prime example of collectivist cultural orientations is Gema's membership in "Achieve." When discussing the Coca-Cola Scholarship, another NCA example, Gema explained that she had attended a scholarship workshop to apply. Achieve, a Sunny CC program that supported students who intend to transfer to a four-year institution, led scholarship workshops for its members. Gema described one of the scholarship workshops:

The workshop was just an introduction to what kinds of scholarships you can apply for. They gave us a list of like the Coca Cola scholarship, the Jack Kent Cooke scholarship, the deadlines, how to apply. We were able to bring computers and like apply to any of them we'd wanted to, or we can search on our own for different scholarships that we liked or benefited us. . .it wasn't just the professor who led the workshop. It was other students who gained the scholarship, as well, to give us insight.

Within this workshop, former students from Sunny CC who had won these awards came to share their experience and advice. Achieve not only provided NCA resources for its members but sought to support its members collectively.

Yet some participants noted the differences between campus environments at their community colleges versus BPU. At Ocean CC, Penelope noted that she was one of many students receiving support from multiple counselors, making the process less personal:

It was like the office that you go to talk about your transfer, the transfer office, maybe . . . like, that type of thing where you would go and you would talk about your plan, but . . . there were like 10,000 people there. So, she would, so she wasn't like *my* guidance counselor . . . and when I got to BPU I got more one-on-one.

Vika had a similar experience at her community college, sharing, "Like Beach CC was just, it's very a bunch of people and we were just, you know, one in many. And so that's one of the biggest differences at BPU. I feel like, first of course it's small classes, but just you feel like you're . . . more personalized definitely more personalized."

Humanized Educational Environments. Institutions that exhibited *humanized educational environments* have faculty and staff that genuinely care about students and develop meaningful relationships. Within this factor, most participants positively experienced humanized educational environments at their four-year institution (BPU) and less so at their community college.

Athena felt very close to certain faculty at BPU, explaining "I have a couple of professors I love, that I just love with my entire heart and I always go to them for my questions." Vika

believed that BPU faculty and staff were more caring than at her community college, Beach Community College:

I really feel that [BPU] are always you know behind us and helping us and making sure we're aware of things and very supportive. Very, very supportive. Super sweet people, honestly anytime I needed something I just called. Everybody was so nice, super-efficient.

Henry also felt that faculty at BPU were more dedicated to students, "The teachers are a lot more engaging and . . . they're not like, they're not just there to like just teach on the side and get some money, but like, they actually have interest in students, which is pretty cool."

However, not all participants experience humanized educational environments at BPU. Carlos explained that he felt on his own when he decided to go abroad for an academic year. He felt like "no one cared" or reached out to him while he was away from BPU's campus. This coupled with him not receiving info from BPU about the Gilman Scholarship indicated he did not experience humanized educational environments within his study abroad application process. Overall, Carlos, unlike most of the other participants felt more supported by his community college than BPU:

When I started community college like you know you don't know anyone you come from a low socio-economic background, you don't necessarily, you don't have the same opportunities that like a lot of other people have had. But then again, given my context and given that I had graduated from my high school in Cambridge, given that I was in the city of Boston, in the US, I quickly, I saw that you're able to meet people who were willing to sincerely help you. And I guess that's why at BPU I was surprised sometimes when I didn't find the same support, you know [BPU has] more resources. . . . It's a four-year school. And like community college was much more, much more supportive.

Like Carlos, other participants also had positive experiences of humanized educational environments at their community college. Gema, interestingly, thought that some of the faculty at her community college were intimidating, but the faculty director of the "Achieve" program,

which again supports culturally diverse, first-generation college students, made her feel safe and welcome:

It's really interesting because a lot of the professors, I meet like in my class . . . they gave off a vibe and they made me feel like intimidated, I guess. But with [Achieve faculty director] he was very conversational, easy-going, so I was able to like ask questions in a more relaxed setting, since he was very easygoing with the rest of the students. So, it made it feel like we were always welcome to come to him during office hours.

Gema also shared that in addition to leading the Achieve program, he also taught English courses, so she had multiple interactions with him throughout her time at Sunny CC.

Although Alex explained that she was not aware of NCAs at Beach CC, she did acknowledge support with letters of recommendation:

But the one thing that [they] did focus on were recommendations. And that's something that Beach CC staff and professors were very eager to give especially, you know, if you put in the time to get to know them, which is kind of hard in a really big school like Beach CC. What I did find that even if they didn't necessarily have tips for writing the national scholarship, they tried to make it as easy as possible from what they could do.

There were also a few examples of participants experiencing a lack of humanized educational environments at their community colleges. When asked if he would have applied for JKCUTS at his community college had he known about it, Henry said "no," citing application requirements like letters of recommendation. He shared that he did not know anyone at South CC who could have written him a letter:

I think [letters of rec] would be one thing that would hold me back is like when I was at school there. I didn't really talk to all the teachers or like at a personal level or anything or, like, get to know them. So, I just went to class did my stuff and then left. . . . Because for someone to write a letter of rec, shouldn't they like see how hard you work . . . and kind of know you? . . . I think it'd be hard to like ask a teacher to write something about you. They don't really know you or they don't know anything about you and so yeah that that'd be a main reason.

Another notable example of humanized educational environments was Alex' description of the differences between her community college and BPU experience:

At Beach CC. No one's going to. . .like people aren't going to check up on you. Like if you want something you have to go get it yourself. You have to figure out who to talk to. And sometimes that person may not be the right person to talk to you and then you kind of have to. . .like, no one's babysitting you. . .and now [at BPU] I'm like, wow, like people not only know my name, but they're like keeping up with me, like it's very, very different.

However, also when describing these differences, Alex did not see these differences as a negative, noting:

Even though I really enjoyed Beach CC, like I really enjoyed Beach CC, everyone's kind of like, get your units done and transfer. That kind of tunnel vision that's definitely like I'll say at Beach CC and probably community college culture in general.

Alex did not need humanized educational environments to succeed at Beach CC. In fact, the lack of personal connection with faculty and staff forced Alex to seek out help and resources on her own.

There were also examples of participants experiencing both faculty who cared about them and other staff who seemed less likely to care. Athena described her experience with academic counselors and professors at Downtown CC:

Academic counselors were not my favorite people just because every single, single counselor would tell me something different. And it was just a whole mess so most of my academic questions were about me transferring because I wanted to get out of there as quickly, as quick as I could. I don't want to be there in the first place. So, I would always go, I had a couple of professors that I was very close with. So, I would always go to them and ask them about things like that. Especially that one sociology professor that I had because she was very adamant on her students getting out of Downtown CC. She was like, "I don't want you guys to stay here longer than you have to. So, if I can help you guys in any way. Maybe if it's picking your classes or figuring out your major, whatever it is. Let me know, and I'll help you. I'll make time for you guys." So, she was always a person I went to for things like that, instead of the academic counselors, because for like me, they just didn't know what they were doing.

Proactive Philosophies. Campuses that demonstrate *proactive philosophies* have staff and faculty who bring not only information to students, but opportunities and support alongside the information. Of the CECE factors, the theme of proactive philosophies appeared the most

frequently with participants sharing both positive and negative examples, often specific to the institution type or service offered.

At BPU, participants shared examples of proactive philosophies in connection to NCA opportunities. Carlos, for example, first heard about Fulbright shortly after transferring, sharing that “the campus had a lot of like Fulbright stories” which were advertised “on billboards and posters, stuff like that, on the website.” Then, the summer before his senior year, a staff member in BPU’s fellowships office contacted him via email. Carlos recalled, “She said if I was interested in applying to international fellowships and I told her my interest and she recommended me a program in . . . an Eastern European country and Mexico City.” These recommendations ultimately led him to apply for (and earn) a Fulbright to Mexico.

Hannah also said that after she transferred to BPU, she received “bi-weekly or monthly emails . . . with all the fellowship and scholarship information,” including emails about several of the exemplars like Truman and Fulbright. Marty too, heard about Fulbright at BPU, stating, “there is the Fulbright, I think. I don’t know if it’s a fellowship. I only found out about like, I only heard of the name at BPU.” Further along in the interview, as he was responding to questions, he searched his school email account, noting that he actually received emails about Fulbright from BPU’s fellowships office. Athena, however, pointed out that simply sending emails about NCA opportunities is not sufficient:

So, I know that there are scholarships sent through emails by BPU, but I feel like there isn’t much emphasis put on a scholarship to just kind of send it out. It’s like if you want to fill it out, you can fill it out . . . but it only briefly will describe what the scholarship is, and it won’t give a lot of detail about it. So, they kind of leave the students. . . to figure it out themselves. . . . But I had that one comparative politics professor last semester where I think it was like every Monday or something, she would talk about different scholarship or different opportunity. . . so just having the professors talk about it is really helpful.

Thus, Athena confirmed that email communications alone are not enough to motivate students to apply for NCAs. At BPU, faculty supplemented the email information with their own offers of support.

Several participants felt that BPU did a great job of providing not only information but support, even when it was not related directly to NCAs. Marty's experience with his BPU academic advisor had been positive, explaining that "I know that basically any question I have, I can walk up to the third floor of [Academic Hall] and have answered for me immediately".

Participants' experiences with proactive philosophies at their community college also varied by institution and service. Positive examples of this campus factor include Gema's involvement with "Achieve," a program that offers support and resources to prospective transfer students at her community college. According to Gema, any Sunny CC student can join Achieve and that was the program that first introduced her to several NCAs. When asked more about Achieve, Gema provided the following description:

They'll take us to different universities in California to like see what the requirements are, what the living situation would be like, what student life is over there. They would introduce us to how students would be living if they were in a four-year university and they also hold other workshops for parents to attend too, who are less inclined to let . . . their children, to go out to these four-year universities. So, it gets everybody in the family comfortable with transferring and pursuing their higher education.

By sharing resources and providing opportunities to their students, Achieve exemplified proactive philosophies.

Athena also experienced positive examples of proactive philosophies at her community college, specifically in the promotion of and support towards NCA opportunities. She explained that one of her professors at Downtown CC would share information about scholarships and even bring in guest speakers:

She would tell us pretty much every time we had the class, and she would even bring in people to talk about it because the entire class was minorities, so she wanted us to get as much information about scholarships as we can, especially in community colleges where you don't really hear about it as much.

However, other participants described an absence of proactive philosophies at their community colleges. While Athena had a professor who shared NCA info, she also admitted that Downtown CC failed to send NCA opportunities to students more broadly, even via email:

I would expect like an email to be sent out by the school informing the students that there is this opportunity, but I mean, Downtown CC didn't really do that. And I wish they did because there are so many scholarships that I would have known about. But they kind of expected the students have figured out themselves, but I would love for them to send out an email saying that there are these scholarships available.

As a JKCUTS semifinalist, Hannah learned about the opportunity through an email she received from East Coast CC. Yet, she did not seek any assistance from anyone on campus, sharing "I don't think anyone else [at the community college] knew I was applying to that scholarship and at the time I didn't really like understand that they were resources to help me with that." At North CC, Marty did not have proactive experiences with counseling services, noting:

I did end up making a few walk-in appointments to the counseling office, which was the walk-ins [which were] just kind of at desks outside of the office, so those usually weren't too helpful, they had a lot of papers that they handed me and then using those papers I figure things out from there.

Henry, too, described a gap in proactive philosophies at his community college, especially in regard to the transfer process. When working with counselors at South CC, Henry explained,

I've met with them to like design a plan for like for the class I need to take in order to be able to transfer within two years. . . . Then I went back there and checked in again and like it's different counselors every time. And then they wrote a whole different plan. . . . And I'm like, okay, whatever, I'll just do it and then so, I took those classes. Then I check again the next semester. And then same thing happens. I have to take even more

courses because they go, “oh, you forgot to add this and this and this and this.” So, then I’m like, okay, and like I just keep adding more and more classes. So, like I took a lot of units in one of the semesters because the counselors weren’t consistent, and some say that others were missing stuff. So yeah, that was kind of annoying for me.

This was almost identical to Saul’s community college experience. He lamented that meeting with different counselors at Beach CC was a source of frustration, exclaiming, “You wouldn’t always get the same counselor. . . . So, it was kind of annoying having like a different person read your file each time.”

Alex also attended Beach CC and she explained that information about NCAs was limited and something students had to actively seek out on their own:

At Beach CC there was a small section next to the financial aid office that had, like, it was like a scholarship. Like, you can go up to a desk and it was they had like a binder of like scholarships. But that’s mostly like the main place where you could get information on scholarships. So, unless I had to go there . . . and spent an extended amount of time looking, I probably didn’t know most of it.

Alex also noted that while Beach CC had a scholarships office, she “did not receive a lot of correspondence from them over time.” Thus, Alex’s experience illustrates that simply providing information on resources and opportunities, including NCAs, is not enough to encourage student action.

During the interview, participants wanted both their community college and BPU to practice more (and varying) proactive philosophies when increasing awareness of NCA opportunities. When asked how she would like to learn about NCAs, Vika replied:

Definitely a meeting. Um like I always read my emails you know for everything I do. But I, I like talking to somebody. I like somebody explaining to me. You know, like the way you did. I don’t, I don’t really want to look on my own.

She liked that I had taken time in the interview to briefly describe the awards and what they offer.

Penelope, however, only wanted written communication about NCA opportunities. When asked how she would want to learn about NCAs, she replied:

Emails. Big flyers. Things that I can access on my own, because I think it needs to be accessible for the kids like me who I'm just there for one thing, one thing only. And it's to get this degree. I love help along the way but I'm not the type of person who is like going to be on campus all day like I have things to do. Like I'm out of class, I'm getting groceries, like I'm going home. I'm like, doing a workout. Then I'm going back to school, so I can like print something out and go to my next class. And then I'm going to, like, go get food. . .so I feel like if you're going to offer me help it needs to be on my timetable and I don't know if that's selfish or like if we need things that can hit every type of student, even the ones who aren't engaging with campus life, but feel they're as much as a student as other people who are engaged, because I'm not saying I don't like my school. . . . I'm just not like a school spirit type person, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't get the benefits, educational benefits. Like if I want to participate in the fun stuff, sure, but like to miss out on educational benefits? But then I check my email every day. I get text alerts from BPU, like I have the ability to be updated about stuff.

Notably, Penelope asked for less engagement and one-on-one support from staff and faculty, especially if it took place outside of class time. She preferred resources she could access on her own because she had other commitments outside of her academics. This was one of two instances where participants did not need or want the CECE factors. Like Alex, who did not need humanized educational environments to succeed at Beach CC, Penelope did not need proactive philosophies to motivate her to apply for NCAs.

Holistic Support. Campuses that demonstrate *holistic support* have faculty, staff, or other designated contacts (e.g., peer mentors) who students trust for information and support and will offer assistance even when it is outside of their department. With the interview participants, holistic support was most evident in relation to NCA knowledge when trusted contacts at both BPU and the community colleges introduced participants to these opportunities.

Vika explained that she learned about study abroad scholarships from both BPU's Study Abroad Office, one of her professors, and emails from BPU:

So, when I went to the study abroad . . . building, but you know, room, and I remember [study abroad staff member] mentioned it. Also, my teacher because they were doing a program this summer in Greece. . .and he was mentioning [scholarships]. . .and . . . I received the emails for sure.

Gema first learned about Fulbright through a summer program that brought Sunny CC students to BPU for ten days to explore undergraduate research opportunities:

One [BPU] professor was telling us how he was a Fulbright recipient. How he had the chance to go abroad for his doctorate or something like that, somewhere, and that greatly interested me, the chance to get your degree in another country and research there. That was one thing that greatly piqued my interest and that was the first time I ever heard of the Fulbright scholarship.

Marty noted that he received emails from BPU's fellowships office, but he also learned about NCAs like the Academy Nicholl Fellowship, a screenwriting competition through his major department. As a screenwriting major, he shared how he learned about Nicholl at BPU:

There was a seminar that BPU put on. I know I read about it at one point on the Academy's website. But I think before community college and so it didn't even register, but then [BPU] held, like a meeting with three people from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and they talked about scholarships, they had and internships, they had and opportunities they had for undergraduates and graduates. . . .I just got an email from [my department], I think saying it was happening. And so, I signed up.

Athena was also introduced to NCAs by a faculty member, but while enrolled at Downtown CC. Although Athena could not recall any specific NCA examples, she shared:

I feel like I should know [NCAs], but I can't remember them. Because I had a professor at Downtown Community College who would tell us about different awards. She would ask us to do it because at least at Downtown CC, it was like, I guess there was one specific one where it was like the kids from Downtown CC would get it pretty often.

Similarly, while at Mass Community College, Carlos was paired with a peer mentor, a college student, who attended a nearby, selective four-year institution. It was his mentor that first introduced him to Rhodes and Gates Cambridge, stating "I had big aspirations, so [my mentor] recommended [Rhodes]." Carlos also thought he had received an email from Mass CC about

JKCUTS but could not recall more. Moreover, Carlos highlighted the various services and supports at Mass CC that he utilized to “the max”:

My community college was like amazing. They give you free books, free laptops, free scientific calculators. They even gave you free professional clothes . . . from high-end companies and they looked at your resume. . . . They gave you free food, free peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, stuff like that. They had food pantries. My time they didn’t have a discount for the for the public transportation, but now they do.

Yet Saul was less confident that he could have gone to his academic advisors at Beach CC to ask about NCA opportunities, noting, “I never actually thought of going to someone other than like an advisor for classes and stuff, but I feel like they wouldn’t have extensive information on the subject [of NCAs].”

In summary, while the majority of interview participants found the campus factors beneficial to their college success, these factors did not always connect directly to NCA motivation. Additionally, for Alex and Penelope, missing CECE factors were not a deterrent for their goals and needs. At Beach Community, Alex found that the lack of handholding prepared her to create her own schedule, to take ownership over her academic career. And at BPU, Penelope was adamant that her needs were unique, and she did not need a lot of additional support. She wanted the information on these types of opportunities so she could apply on her own terms.

Survey Findings

After incorporating motivational factors that emerged from the interview responses into the quantitative survey, respondents were first asked to indicate the importance of external and individual influences concerning their motivation to apply for NCAs.

External Influences

For survey respondents, questions about external influences focused on the importance of family, peers, and the financial amount of the award. Table 10 illustrates how survey respondents viewed these factors as important to their motivation to apply for NCAs.

Table 10

External Influences That Motivate Students to Apply

	Extremely		Very		Moderately		Slightly		Not At All	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Family Encouragement	71	42.77	49	29.52	28	16.87	8	4.82	10	6.02
Peer Encouragement	43	25.9	45	27.11	44	26.51	18	10.84	16	9.64
Financial Amount of NCA	96	57.49	38	22.75	26	15.57	4	2.4	3	1.8

Note: n values differ slightly by factor: Family Encouragement n = 166; Peer encouragement n = 166; Financial Amount of the Award n = 167

Of external influence options, around 80% of respondents selected the financial amount of the award as “extremely important” or “very important” to their motivation. Peer encouragement was the least important with almost 10% stating that it was “not at all important.”

Individual Influences

Next, respondents rated the importance of the following individual influences: “time and effort to apply,” “academic growth,” “personal growth,” and “resume builder.” Note that “time and effort” was the only influence related to self-efficacy in the survey. Table 11 shows that around 87% of respondents selected personal growth as “extremely important” or “very important” to their motivation to apply, followed closely by academic growth at 81%.

Table 11*Individual Influences That Motivate Students to Apply*

	Extremely		Very		Moderately		Slightly		Not At All	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Time and Effort to Apply	82	48.81	43	25.6	34	20.24	4	2.38	5	2.98
Academic Growth	82	48.52	55	32.54	22	13.02	3	1.78	7	4.14
Personal Growth	110	65.87	38	22.75	14	8.38	1	0.6	4	2.4
Resume Builder	78	46.71	51	30.54	29	17.37	6	3.59	3	1.8

Note: n values differ slightly by factor: Time and Effort to Apply n = 168; Academic Growth n = 169; Personal Growth n = 167; Resume Builder n = 167

Sense of Belonging. In addition to the individual influences listed in Table 11, the survey also measured sense of belonging using Museus and Saelua's (2017) CECE community college survey scale items. However, the survey was designed to measure student perceptions at a single institution and as noted earlier, respondents in this study represented 12 unique community college sites. Therefore, to honor the intent of the survey, only responses from Ocean Community College students ($n = 93$) were analyzed. Table 12 shows means and standard deviations for both the sense of belonging composite as well as individual scale items.

Table 12

Sense of Belonging at Ocean Community College (n = 93)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sense of Belonging $\alpha = 0.91$	3.44	0.90
1. I feel like I am part of the community at this institution.	3.41	0.99
2. I feel like I belong at this institution.	3.58	0.97
3. I feel a strong connection to the community at this institution.	3.33	1.00

Note: Scale items were followed with a 5-point Likert Scale with response options ranging from (1 = Strongly Disagree to 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Overall, respondents were mostly neutral in self-assessing whether they belonged at Ocean Community College. Yet, the high standard deviation suggested that there was a great deal of variance in student views of belonging. Composite scores showed around 46% of respondents fell at or below the “neither agree nor disagree” options. However, based on the composite data, around 11% strongly agreed that they felt a *sense of belonging* at Ocean CC.

While the majority of campus factor questions are described in the next section, respondents were also asked to consider “faculty or staff encouragement” as a separate motivating factor from the CECE scale items. Table 13 illustrates that around 63% of respondents found faculty or staff encouragement as “extremely important” or “very important” to their motivation to apply for NCAs.

Table 13*Faculty and Staff Encouragement as Motivation*

	Extremely		Very		Moderately		Slightly		Not At All	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Faculty/Staff encouragement	52	31.14	54	32.34	41	24.55	11	6.59	9	5.39

Note: n = 167

Interestingly, faculty and staff encouragement was one of the least motivating factors with around 37% selecting moderately to not at all important.

After respondents selected the importance of the motivational factors above (Tables 9-11), they were asked to rank their top three factors from the same pre-determined list. For this question response, $n = 165$. Overall, 80% of respondents ranked academic growth as a top-three motivating factor, followed closely by the financial amount of the award at 79%. Personal growth (70%) rounded out the top three rankings. The factors least likely to rank in the top three were: peer encouragement (22.4%), faculty and staff encouragement (29.7%), and resume builder (30.9%). Although in Table 12 around 77% rated “resume builder” as extremely or very important to their motivation to apply, when rank-ordering the factors, it was one of the least important in comparison to the other factors.

Campus CECE Factors

In addition to external and individual influences that motivate survey respondents (proTSCC) to apply for NCAs, they were also asked about campus factors, specific to Museus’ (2014) Culturally Engagement Campus Environment model, that impact motivation.

Because Museus and Saelua’s (2017) CECE community college scale was designed to measure culturally engagement factors at a single campus site, responses from Ocean

Community College were isolated to measure the CECE factors. This resulted in the removal of around 74 surveys that represented ten other community college campuses, giving Table 13 a sample size of around 97.

Table 14*Ocean Community College Institutional CECE Factors*

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Collectivist Cultural Orientations ($\alpha = 0.94$)	92	3.70	0.81
1. In general, people at this institution help each other succeed.		3.64	0.86
2. In general, people at this institution support each other.		3.74	0.87
3. In general, people at this institution work together toward common goals.		3.73	0.88
Humanized Educational Environments ($\alpha = 0.91$)	91	3.89	0.81
1. In general, educators care about students at this institution.		3.93	0.90
2. In general, educators at this institution are committed to my success.		3.86	0.85
3. In general, I view educators at this institution as caring human beings.		3.89	0.86
Proactive Philosophies ($\alpha = 0.83$)	97	3.13	0.91
1. People at this institution often send me important information about NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.		3.45	1.11
2. People at this institution send me important information about NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE AWARDS*		2.51	1.10
3. People at this institution often send me important information about SUPPORTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE.		3.68	1.18
4. People at this institution check in with me regularly to see if I need Support.		2.85	1.28
Holistic Support ($\alpha = 0.95$)	94	3.35	1.17
1. If I need support, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me that support.		3.37	1.29
2. If I have a problem, I know a person at this institution who I trust to help me solve that problem.		3.29	1.23
3. If I need information, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me the information that I need.		3.39	1.22

Note: Scale items were followed with a 5-point Likert Scale with response options ranging from (1 = Strongly Disagree to 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Table 14 displays both the composites of the scale items as well as the specific CECE survey questions developed by Museus and Saelua (2017), and that measure the campus factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support. Table 13 also highlights means and standard deviations.

Collectivist Cultural Orientations. Overall, survey respondents felt that Ocean CC did a good job of creating collectivist cultural orientations. Composite scores showed around 47% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that Ocean CC promoted collectivist cultural orientations and only 4% fell under the “disagree” or “strongly disagree” categories. This was the second highest composite score, after humanized educational environments, which means that Ocean CC is largely successful at lifting all students and is less focused on individual accomplishments.

Humanized Educational Environments. Of the four CECE factors measured in this study, Ocean CC survey respondents rated humanized educational environments highest and therefore Ocean CC was most successful in creating a campus environment where faculty and staff care about their students. Composite data showed around 54% of Ocean CC respondents felt that their campus cared about them and only 4% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with these scale items.

Proactive Philosophies. Survey respondents indicated that Ocean CC was least successful at demonstrating proactive philosophies. Based on the composite data, only around 15% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements in this section. Moreover, the following two questions, “People at this institution send me important information about nationally competitive awards” and “People at this institution check in with me regularly to see if I need support” had the lowest mean scores. Notably, only around 13% ($n = 97$) agreed or strongly agreed that “People at this institution send me important information about nationally competitive awards.”

Holistic Support. Unlike the other campus factors, Ocean CC survey respondents were conflicted in their assessment of whether Ocean CC demonstrated *holistic support*. While

composite data showed almost 42% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the *holistic support* statements, almost 17% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the statements. This resulted in the highest standard deviation of all five composites scores ($SD = 1.17$).

Reviewing both compositive and individual data for culturally engaging campus factors found that Ocean CC was most successful at creating humanized educational environments and least successful at demonstrating proactive philosophies. However, given the limited data collected from Ocean CC students, additional research utilizing a larger sample size may be needed to draw more concrete conclusions.

For this study, categories of motivation included interest, external influences, individual influences, and campus factors. Table 15 summarizes both the qualitative and quantitative data on TSCC and proTSCC motivation.

Table 15*Integrated Results Matrix on Factors That Impact NCA Motivation*

Qualitative results	Quantitative results	Example quote
Interest		
All participants demonstrated interest in at least one of the study exemplars.	The majority of respondents were interested in learning more about NCAs.	Saul: "Yeah, I mean, [Gilman] would be something I'd be interested in. Yeah."
External influences		
Participants most frequently referenced "finances" especially as they related to the amount of the NCA.	Respondents ranked "financial amount of the award" as most important.	Henry: "So once again., just to clarify, [Fulbright] pay for, like, your travel there, back, your tuition there and your housing and food? Wow."
Participants least frequently referenced "timing".	Respondents ranked "peer encouragement" as least important.	Carlos: "I looked at the Gilman, but. . .it was too late for me to apply."
Individual influences		
Participants most frequently referenced "self-efficacy".	Respondents ranked "academic growth" as most important.	Alex: "But I think something that did discourage me is if I saw the requirements and I was like, 'oh, I definitely don't cut this.'"
Participants least frequently referenced "sense of belonging".	Respondents ranked "resume builder" as least important.	Vika: "I just wanted to transfer out [of Beach CC] and [at] BPU I really feel like, oh, I belong, you know?"
Campus factors		
Participants most frequently referenced proactive philosophies.	Respondents found Ocean CC most successful at demonstrating humanized educational environments.	Hannah: "I know that like [BPU's fellowships] office will review essays. I also know that [they] can put me in touch with like a mentor that will help me through the [Fulbright] process."
Participants least frequently referenced collectivist cultural orientations.	Respondents found Ocean CC least successful at demonstrating proactive philosophies.	Gema: "I absolutely love the experience [of Achieve club]. It felt like a family because everybody. . . it's a network of people who want you to succeed."

Note: I integrated qualitative data (interviews) and quantitative data (survey responses) to provide a side-by-side summary of the data for research question two. Data related to the Goldwater Scholarship were omitted due to the limited number of participants and respondents who were eligible for that award.

Summary and Conclusion

Regardless of student type (TSCC versus proTSCC) or the NCA exemplar, the majority of the study participants and respondents knew very little about NCAs, with most also unaware of what they fund or their benefits. Yet, of the TSCC and proTSCC in the study, the majority were not only interested in learning more about NCA opportunities, but most were also eligible for at least one of the exemplars. Unfortunately for TSCC interview participants, this sometimes resulted in a disappointing conversation, in which they learned that they were no longer eligible to apply because of their academic level.

However, data from phase one and phase three of the study established which factors were most likely to motivate them to apply. With only minor differences between TSCC and proTSCC responses, it was clear that all four categories of influence (interest, external, individual, and campus) affect motivation to apply.

Although Museus' (2014) CECE model served as the framework for the study, the included CECE scale items (Museus & Saelua, 2017) only measured campus characteristics from an individual instead of an institutional perspective. The CECE scale seeks to determine if a campus demonstrates culturally engaging characteristics. However, even though survey respondents were recruited from a single community college site, proTSCC who submitted the survey attended more than one community college. Survey data collected represented 12 unique community college campuses. As such, it was difficult to assess a single community college site in this study. Conversely, survey data showed a snapshot of overall proTSCC perspectives.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study investigated access to nationally competitive awards (NCAs) for transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) as well as current community college students who intended to transfer to four-year institutions (proTSCC). NCAs offer college students opportunities that can include financial support for their undergraduate and graduate studies, internships, study abroad or other international experiences, and more (Cobane & Jennings, 2017). Previous research has demonstrated that TSCC and proTSCC experience unique barriers to college success such as navigating the convoluted transfer process, managing stigma associated with community college enrollment, and integration into their new four-year institution (Lopez & Jones, 2017; Townsend, 2008). Because of these and other challenges, this research sought to learn what TSCC and proTSCC knew about NCA opportunities and explored factors that might motivate them to apply.

Discussion of Findings

Both data from the interviews and survey overwhelmingly found that TSCC and proTSCC had minimal awareness and knowledge of NCA opportunities, including the study exemplars. Regardless of their limited or nonexistent awareness, the majority of participants and respondents were not only eligible for at least one of the study exemplars, but they also showed high levels of interest in learning more about these opportunities. Findings also indicated that external influences, individual influences, and campus factors contributed to their motivation to apply.

NCA Awareness and Knowledge

In both the qualitative and quantitative phases, participants and respondents had very minimal awareness and knowledge of NCA opportunities. TSCC who were knowledgeable about NCA opportunities were mostly individuals who had applied for one or more of these awards. These previous applicants also had high interest in pursuing future awards. This may expand Lamont's (2004) application of the "Matthew Effect" beyond NCA winners, in which she had asserted that once an individual wins an NCA, they are more likely to win other awards. Findings indicate that individuals who have previously applied to NCAs are more likely to apply for other awards.

The study also confirmed that the term "nationally competitive award" is not commonly known terminology for this category of opportunities. Within the interviews, participants were more comfortable with the term "scholarships" or "fellowships." Furthermore, the use of the term "fellowships" may be a result of BPU's fellowships office, which according to participants, uses this term to promote NCA opportunities. Minimal awareness and knowledge illuminate the first barrier to NCA access and is best summarized by Marty, a TSCC who said the following during his interview: "I have the motivation. . . . I think the first step would be knowing that [NCAs] exist and knowing that they are actually accessible and realistic to someone like me."

Moreover, while several TSCC did learn about NCAs while attending BPU (via faculty or the BPU fellowships office), seven of the ten participants were unaware that BPU had an office dedicated to NCA support before the study. However, of these seven, five began their studies at BPU in the fall of 2019 and one began in the spring of 2020. As interviews were conducted during April 2020, this short time at BPU, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced BPU to transition instruction and services virtually, may explain why these

participants were unfamiliar with the BPU fellowships office. Nevertheless, TSCC who typically have only a few years of enrollment at their four-year institutions should be aware of services like BPU's fellowships office.

One specific and especially concerning example of this knowledge barrier, was the Gilman Scholarship, which provides study abroad funding for Federal Pell Grant recipients. This award is also open to both eligible community college students and transfer students. Even though both populations can apply for Gilman, TSCC and proTSCC had almost no awareness or knowledge of the award, even though most of the study participants and respondents were eligible to apply at some point during their undergraduate career (six of 10 interview participants and around 68% of survey respondents).

Although community college students may be eligible for this funding, very few are applying and even fewer are receiving the award. According to the Gilman website, since 2015, the overall number of scholarships awarded per year has increased, yet the number of Gilman recipients from two-year colleges has declined (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-f). This points to a potential pipeline problem which may confirm that community college students are not aware of this award. Another potential challenge for Gilman is when proTSCC and TSCC should study abroad. This will be further addressed when discussing the finding related to "timing".

NCA Factors

Several major takeaways from the factors of motivation highlight the importance of certain external influences, individual influences, and campus environments.

External Influences. The factor of "finances" or more specifically the "financial amount of the award" emerged as the top external influence for TSCC and proTSCC. TSCC frequently

cited that the amount of an NCA may influence their interest, especially when assessing the amount of time and effort required to apply. Saul, for instance, called it a “cost-benefit analysis” and calculated a rate on return in terms of how many hours put in versus the potential award amount. As previous research has shown, community college students stem from the lowest socioeconomic groups (Ma & Baum, 2016), therefore it is not surprising that the amount of an NCA would be a key motivating factor.

Even though “timing” did not surface as a top motivating factor, this was still a significant finding given how many TSCC participants missed NCA opportunities because they learned about the award after application deadlines, or their eligibility window had passed. For example, TSCC were least aware of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship and notably, this is an award that students can only apply to during their junior year, with a national deadline around February (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a). As interviews for this study were held in April, several of the junior and senior-level interview participants were surprised to learn that they were no longer eligible and expressed that had they known about the Truman Scholarship, they would have applied. These findings reinforce previous research which showed, “transfer students commonly face either a loss of financial aid at the four-year level or lack of continuous aid due to missed deadlines” (Miller, 2013, p. 46). Because transfer students are learning new systems and support services at their four-year institution, they may be unaware of the deadlines which also sometimes require additional paperwork. To account for this transfer adjustment period Miller (2013) highlighted institutions that provided collaborative support for transfers, which included services like reminders about financial aid deadlines. This same approach may be beneficial in increasing awareness and access to NCAs that have short eligibility windows, like the Truman Scholarship.

However, timing was also an issue for NCAs with fewer limitations in regard to when students can apply. When discussing the Gilman Scholarship, which funds study abroad opportunities, multiple TSCC shared that the timing of when to study abroad was problematic. Even though eligible college students can apply to Gilman as early as freshman year, the question of *when* they should study abroad arose. Several of the survey respondents also indicated a lack of interest in Gilman because they had family or work obligations that prevented them from leaving the country for extended periods of time. This reinforces the findings of Amani and Kim (2017) which showed that “personal timing” was a contributing factor to a community college student’s decision to study abroad. Furthermore, Zilvinskis and Dumford (2018) found that transfer students were least likely to participate in study abroad compared to other high impact practices such as learning communities, service-learning, research with a faculty member, etc. While their research did not provide data on *why* transfer students were least likely to participate in study abroad, one possible explanation may be timing, such as if they should study abroad before or after transferring. Therefore, for the Gilman Scholarship, timing is not necessarily about the scholarship and its application deadlines. In fact, Gilman has two application cycles per year depending on the student’s intended study abroad term, e.g., spring, summer, fall, winter, or academic year (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-c). Instead, the timing issue for Gilman is dependent on the study abroad support and guidance for proTSCC and TSCC. It cannot be addressed until two- and four-year institutions develop study abroad strategies and support systems for these populations.

Individual Influences. Within individual influences, TSCC most referenced self-efficacy whereas proTSCC rated academic growth as their top motivating factor. Contrary to the literature TSCC appeared least affected by sense of belonging, as it related to NCA motivation.

Self-efficacy. When referring to their own competitiveness for NCA opportunities, self-efficacy surfaced as a key factor for TSCC. Although most participants conflated “eligibility” with competitiveness, when further explored, they explained that they may not be competitive or “good” candidates for an award. Regardless of the terminology used, competitiveness emerged as the top rationale for why they might not apply for an NCA. They also frequently referenced the prestige of NCAs, and within this prestige came misconceptions about eligibility. For example, Alex’s belief that Fulbright had a high, minimum GPA, when in fact, the program has no GPA requirements. A few TSCC also mentioned “rejection” as a potential demotivator for applying to NCAs. Competitiveness, prestige, and rejection relate strongly to self-efficacy.

While interview participants most frequently referenced self-efficacy as a motivating individual influence, it is pertinent to note that the ANCAS survey did not include questions that measured the importance of self-efficacy. However, a few text responses hinted at self-efficacy such as when one respondent wrote “no one ever seems to win” as a rationale for why they were not interested in learning more about NCAs. Thus, self-efficacy may also be an important individual influence for proTSCC.

In addition to the relationship between eligibility and self-perceived competitiveness, one under-investigated area in the study was if the stigma associated with attending a community college influenced self-efficacy, and therefore motivation to apply for NCAs.

These findings uphold previous literature which highlighted the relationship between Vroom’s expectancy theory and self-efficacy; a student’s belief in their ability to successfully achieve a task will influence their interest and motivation in pursuing said task (Irvine, 2018; Milstein, 2005). Similarly, Tinto (2017) found a connection between student motivation in

college and self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy may be the most important individual influence in motivating TSCC and proTSCC to apply for NCAs.

Academic Growth. It was also notable that proTSCC ranked “academic growth” as the top motivating individual influence. This may confirm previous literature which found that transfer students prioritized academic endeavors over co-curricular ones (Lester et al., 2013). Although their study focused on transfer students and not proTSCC, it may be that this preference for academic engagement begins at the community college level. To encourage proTSCC to engage with NCAs, it may be prudent to first emphasize the academic benefits versus other potential benefits such as personal growth or resume building.

Sense of Belonging. Museus’ (2014) CECE framework has emphasized that a student’s sense of belonging at their institution is key to their success in college, particularly for diverse student populations. However, when TSCC in this study referenced sense of belonging, it was minimal and rarely influenced their interest in NCA opportunities. Thus, it may be that while sense of belonging is key to college persistence and success (defined as college completion) it is less important as an NCA motivating factor. Nevertheless, several TSCC did share both positive and negative experiences related to belonging, and this varied by institution type.

Although sense of belonging was not a top factor of NCA motivation, one significant finding that did emerge was whether sense of belonging is truly an individual influence or campus factor. Much of the previous literature on sense of belonging focuses on campus factors that either positively or negatively influence this phenomenon in students (Blaylock & Bresciani, 2011; Lau et al., 2019; Whitten et al., 2020). As such, when considering sense of belonging as a potential motivating factor for NCAs, research should approach this from a campus perspective and not as a solely individual influence. For example, Ribera et al. (2017) found that

participation in high impact practices (HIPs) is positively associated with a student's sense of belonging. Later, under theoretical implications, I argue that two- and four-year campuses should develop nationally competitive award application workshops and programming, mirrored after other HIPs like learning communities and research with faculty. In this way, NCA application development may be seen as an opportunity to strengthen a student's sense of belonging.

Campus Motivation Factors

This study measured the four CECE factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and holistic support (Museus 2014). However, findings indicated that campuses that lacked holistic support were more likely to lack the other three CECE factors. Similarly, when a campus offered holistic support, other factors were also evident. Thus, if a campus emphasizes a holistic support approach, then other three CECE factors are likely to follow.

Emphasis on Holistic Support. Holistic support first emerged in the study when participants described how they learned (or did not learn) about NCAs. Two of the ten participants had community college experiences that demonstrated positive examples of holistic support. As a member of Achieve, Gema received guidance not only on the transfer process, but the club also facilitated NCA workshops and brought in guest speakers to share college success strategies. Likewise, Carlos joined a peer mentor program at Mass CC in which he was paired with an upperclassman who was attending a nearby four-year institution. It was Carlos' peer mentor who first introduced him to NCAs. They also had in-depth conversations about the transfer process and Carlos' future academic and professional goals.

Conversely, of the five interview participants who recalled hearing about NCAs at their community college, two learned about these opportunities from faculty, two learned about them

from their peers, and one credited their knowledge from a campus-wide email. Notably missing from this group were academic advisors or counselors. All ten interview participants shared their varying experiences with academic counselors, especially as they related to the transfer process. Yet not one participant learned about NCA opportunities from these staff members, and most had less than positive experiences with advisors at their community colleges. Furthermore, of the 31 survey respondents who indicated awareness of the study exemplars, only two said they learned about the opportunity from an academic counselor (one learned about the Gilman and the other learned about JCKUTS).

Previous literature on academic advising has advocated for a more holistic approach to guiding and supporting students, such as Mechur Karp (2016) who argued for “investing in intensive, intrusive, and holistic supports for community college students” (p. 40). One such example of holistic advising was Martinez and Elue’s (2020) study on the role of community college academic advisors in facilitating conversations around graduate school. While Martinez and Elue (2020) only looked at baccalaureate granting community colleges, the researchers argued that “community colleges have the responsibility to ensure the postgraduate success of their students” (p. 1022). Although not all NCAs fund graduate study or postgraduate experiences, research has shown that academic counselors are often knowledge gatekeepers for community college students (Hayes et al., 2020; Martinez & Elue, 2020). Therefore, it would be beneficial for advisors to introduce NCA opportunities during advisement sessions.

Additional benefits of holistic advising connect back to the remaining CECE factors of collectivist cultural orientations, humanized educational environments, and proactive philosophies. When Carlos and Gema shared their experiences of the holistic support structures at their community college (e.g., Achieve and a peer mentoring program), they were also

describing the CECE campus factors of collectivist cultural orientations (expressing that they were part of a larger group), proactive philosophies (provided not only information but also support), and humanized educational environments (Gema and Carlos felt cared for and by individuals associated with these programs). Therefore, while holistic support did not emerge as the top campus factor for TSCC or proTSCC, it may be the gateway for creating a culturally engaging campus environment. If campuses begin by implementing or increasing holistic support practices the other factors may follow.

Proactive Philosophies. Interestingly, TSCC referenced proactive philosophies most frequently when discussing campus factors, regardless of whether they were providing positive or negative examples of these services. Nevertheless, it was also significant that survey respondents felt Ocean Community College was the least successful at demonstrating proactive philosophies. By ranking this factor lowest, it shows its importance as a potential gap in support at Ocean CC. Therefore, proactive philosophies surfaced as the top campus factor for both TSCC and proTSCC.

Humanized Educational Environments. ProTSCC also rated their campus best at demonstrating humanized educational environments. The majority of respondents felt like faculty and staff cared about their well-being. This, combined with the fact that there was minimal NCA awareness at Ocean CC, might signal that faculty and staff are also unaware of these opportunities.

Of the CECE factors included in this study, holistic support may be the most integral to NCA interest and motivation. These opportunities require buy-in from multiple institutional agents on campus in order to truly facilitate access for proTSCC and TSCC. Students need to hear about these awards from multiple sources and individuals. Even though BPU has a

dedicated fellowships office, most interview participants were unaware of its existence and therefore wanted to learn about NCAs from other familiar sources on campus, such as faculty. Moreover, participants who did utilize BPU's fellowships office, first learned about NCAs from staff and faculty at their community college. When four-year institutions, like BPU, have a dedicated NCA office, they need to introduce TSCC to its services as early as possible, like during a transfer orientation.

Avoiding a One-Size-Fits-All Model. A few of the interview participants did not find the CECE model conducive to their motivation to apply to NCAs. Penelope, for example, highlighted that her needs were unique, and she did not necessarily want the same type of campus support as other students:

I love help along the way but I'm not the type of person who is like going to be on campus all day, like I have things to do . . . so I feel like if you're going to offer me help it needs to be on my timetable and I don't know if that's selfish or like if we need things that can hit every type of student, even the ones who aren't engaging with campus life, but feel they're as much as student as other people who are engaged, because I'm not saying I don't like my school. . . . I'm just not like a school spirit type person, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't get the [same] . . . educational benefits.

While the CECE model generally worked well to identify and measure factors of NCA motivation, Penelope, and others in the study, are reminders that the best support is often tailored to a student's individual needs.

Transfer Institution Uncertainty May Impact NCA Awareness

A finding not specific to the CECE model also emerged. Several of the interview participants (e.g., Marty, Athena, and Penelope) shared that they had not planned to transfer to BPU, a private institution, and therefore did not consider seeking out scholarships, including NCAs. These individuals had initially planned to attend a lower-cost public institution when they first enrolled in community college, which aligns with previous research that found most

proTSCC had planned to transfer to a specific four-year institution when beginning their community college studies, and one of the main factors that impacted choice was cost (Tobolowsky & Bers, 2018). Moreover, Jabbar et al. (2020) expanded this finding by adding that the transfer institution choice process is “neither linear nor sequential” (p.16). ProTSCC regularly change their intended transfer institution, often multiple times. Thus, for TSCC in this study, simply changing their future transfer institution choice may have impacted both their knowledge of NCAs and motivation to apply.

Community College Multi-Campus Enrollment

Another significant finding in this study occurred when collecting survey responses. Although I sent email invitations to proTSCC enrolled at Ocean Community College, respondents listed 12 unique community college sites in their survey responses. Although limited, previous literature acknowledges multi-enrollment or lateral transfers between community college sites as a phenomenon amongst community college students (Bahr, 2012). This unanticipated outcome was challenging because the CECE scale items were designed to capture student perspectives about a single institution at a time (Museus & Saelua, 2016). Therefore, it is worth noting that: (a) around 43% of survey respondents indicated attendance at a different community college from Ocean CC; and (b) of the 57% who indicated that they attended Ocean CC, there is a possibility that they may have also been simultaneously enrolled at another community college site.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, given survey responses represented 12 unique community college sites, the study cannot confirm that proTSCC respondents were answering the survey questions based on their experiences at Ocean Community College rather than their

experience at a different community college, or some amalgamation of their entire community college experience. This mostly impacted the analysis of the CECE scale items, which, again, were designed to measure one campus environment at a time. Second, due to COVID-19, two of the three confirmed community college sites withdrew their participation in the survey phase, citing new communication policies during the pandemic. Additionally, the low response rate of 4.83% limits generalizability. Finally, 75% of respondents identified as female, therefore, male and non-binary perspectives were limited.

Future Research

Considering the limited research on NCAs, the potential for future studies is limitless, therefore, presented is a small sample of the most salient topics.

Comparison of TSCC and “Traditional” College Students

Findings indicated both proTSCC and TSCC lack awareness of NCAs but have a high interest in them. Future research should include a study of students who began their undergraduate careers at four-year institutions (“traditional” college students) in order to determine if this is unique to the proTSCC/TSCC population or students at all institution-types. Furthermore, utilization of the ANCAS scale with these traditional college students may reveal differing or similar factors of motivation.

Faculty and Staff Awareness and Knowledge of NCAs

Since the current study investigated student awareness and knowledge of NCAs, future studies should also assess faculty and staff awareness and knowledge of these opportunities. As stated earlier, holistic support may be the key campus factor that facilitates access to NCAs. Thus, studies from the staff and faculty perspective may result in future promotion of NCAs to their student populations.

Self-Efficacy

Future studies should also further explore the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation to apply for NCAs. This may be a missing recruitment component for both the funding organizations that offer NCAs, as well as higher education institutions that recruit and support applicants. Funding organizations need to clarify who is eligible *and* competitive, and higher education institutions need to disseminate these criteria in a way that is accessible to the TSCC and proTSCC populations.

Sense of Belonging

Another future area of exploration would be to assess whether applying for NCAs using campus support services (e.g., faculty, scholarship offices, writing centers, etc.) increases a student's sense of belonging. Ribera et al. (2017) found that students who engaged in high impact practices (HIPs) were more likely to experience peer belonging at their institutions because of their interactions with other students participating in the HIPs. If institutions approached NCA application development as a structured group activity, such as Gema's experience with Achieve's scholarship workshops, it may facilitate a sense of belonging. Gema's membership in Achieve was integral to her involvement and sense of belonging at Sunny CC.

Benefits Beyond Winning

As several TSCC mentioned "rejection" or not winning as a potential deterrent to applying to NCAs, future studies should investigate the potential benefits of applying to these opportunities. Research could identify a group of "non-winners" to explore if students found the process beneficial despite the disappointing outcome.

Implications

Future research might also capitalize on the theoretical and methodological implications identified in the current study.

Theoretical Implications

This study employed Museus' (2014) CECE model because research indicated that culturally engaging campus environments support diverse student success. However, as discovered in this study, the CECE model does not explicitly address the stigma associated with community college enrollment and how this might impact college success outcomes. This may be a vital component to college success outcomes if TSCC and proTSCC feel less competitive than their "traditional" college peers.

While the CECE framework was designed to measure student success, defined as college completion, it provided a strong foundation to unearth what motivates TSCC and proTSCC to apply for NCAs. Thus, this study adds to the literature by offering a modified CECE model specifically aimed at conceptualizing motivation to apply for nationally competitive awards. Within this modified model, a further exploration between self-efficacy and NCA motivation is needed.

Furthermore, findings suggest campuses can do better in sharing knowledge about NCAs and offering support. However, according to Museus et al. (2017), one limitation to this model is that it does not explicitly outline how campuses implement these culturally engaging factors. As such, this study began to operationalize the external influences, individual influences, and campus factors in relation to NCA motivation: for example, adding "time and effort to apply" as a subfactor under self-efficacy. Campuses that offer scaffolded support such as application

checkpoints and deadline reminders may be able to mitigate student concern of time and effort to apply, which in turn, may strengthen self-efficacy.

One additional approach to operationalizing the CECE factors may be through the lens of Kuh's (2008) high impact practices (HIPs). Assessing HIPs such as study abroad for CECE factors may provide institutions concrete examples of practices and programming that they can implement to facilitate culturally engaging environments. HIPs are closely related to NCA development (Cobane & Jennings, 2017). If campuses offered structured NCA support for their students, this application development process may mirror other high impact practices, like research with faculty and writing-intensive courses. Thus, simply applying to these competitive and effort-intensive applications could also be viewed as a high impact practice.

Methodological Implications

Overall, the methodology of this study worked well to address the research questions. However, after further analyses of the qualitative interviews, the ANCAS survey instrument requires additional changes to improve its ability to capture factors that motivate students to apply for NCAs. Therefore, I recommend the following measurement changes to future iterations of the ANCAS survey:

- Considering around 85% of respondents had never heard of the term “nationally competitive award,” it is not necessary to include this question in subsequent uses of the survey as it is not established terminology.
- The connection between self-efficacy and who is applying for nationally competitive awards is worth further investigation. The current survey lacked scale items that measured self-efficacy in relation to NCA motivation. Given the importance of self-efficacy in the interview participant responses, the survey should include a few

academic self-efficacy scale items, such as those developed and previously validated by McIlroy et al. (2000).

- Based on the co-enrollment findings, the survey needs to instruct respondents to answer the CECE scale items, which were designed to measure a specific campus climate, with a single institution in mind.
- The CECE scale items, while useful in presenting student perspective on institutional characteristics, were less helpful in determining how these characteristics may directly impact NCA motivation (with the exception of the adapted question: “People at this institution send me important information about nationally competitive awards”). Therefore, the CECE scale items should be reconsidered or rephrased, or possibly removed in the future.

Policy Implications

Funding organizations that manage nationally competitive awards should also make concerted efforts to recruit proTSCC and TSCC. As evident by policy changes to both the Goldwater and Truman application processes, which allowed for additional campus nominations of transfer students (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, 2020b; The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a), these funding organizations are seeking more applicants who are transfer students. However, expanding the nomination criteria to include TSCC/proTSCC is insufficient. Funding organizations need to identify and address barriers to their awards, such as the timing of the application deadline for the Truman Scholarship.

This is also true for the Gilman Scholarship. Several survey respondents stated that they could not go abroad for extended periods of time due to family commitments. Although Gilman

allows community college students to apply for funding for programming that is a minimum of two weeks in duration, this requirement jumps to a minimum of three weeks once a student is enrolled at a four-year institution (Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, n.d.-d). Moreover, there is also a timing issue for proTSCC/TSCC of when to study abroad. Thus, the Gilman Scholarship should consider offering additional support to institutions. Instead of relying on two- and four-year institutions to create study abroad pathways for proTSCC and TSCC, they could create “best practice” guidelines for colleges and universities that demonstrate how to support these students, such as highlighting examples of short-term, quality programming or providing recommended application timelines. In turn, this may increase the number of proTSCC/TSCC who apply for the Gilman Scholarship.

Implications for Practice

Both community colleges and four-year institutions should ramp up efforts to not only disseminate information about NCA opportunities but to encourage and support students to apply. While this may create additional roles and responsibilities for staff and faculty, even some institutional-wide training on NCAs may benefit campuses as a whole.

Recommendations

After synthesizing the findings, there are clear practical recommendations for higher education institutions and funding organizations. Access to nationally competitive awards should be improved at the institutional and funding organization levels. While budget considerations may limit community college training and the expansion of support services, organizations, such as the National Association of Fellowships Advisors (NAFA) could enlist their members to offer assistance to community colleges that do not have the financial means to advise students on NCA opportunities.

Participant Recommendations

During their interviews, TSCC participants were asked how they would like to learn about NCAs. First, participants wanted an earlier introduction to NCA opportunities. When discussing the Truman Scholarship, Alex suggested introducing the award as early as high school so students can be aware and prepare even before college. Others, like Marty, suggested including NCA information during transfer orientation. Second, multiple participants wanted faculty-led short presentations during class. Henry suggested faculty take ten minutes during class to introduce specific awards. Athena, who had faculty share NCA information during class, agreed that this was the best way to introduce and excite students about these opportunities. Third, Marty highlighted the importance of faculty and staff engaging *with* students about these awards:

I mean, you sound excited about [Fulbright]. And that makes so much more of a difference than reading . . . information . . . but you're saying it with a smile on your face makes a difference. And so, if for example . . . you were in one of the transfer orientations and just able to talk about one specific example of a scholarship that BPU students are able to sign up for and compete for, I think that would be instrumental in getting people to sign up for it and trying to participate in it.

Fourth, several participants wanted more electronic communication about these awards. Unsurprisingly, there were conflicting opinions about using email to share NCA information. Athena pointed out that “a lot of students just skim through their emails. And they don't really pay attention to it,” but Saul and Penelope advocated for more NCA promotion through email. Penelope also suggested “big flyers” around campus.

Lastly, Hannah wanted a mentor to provide feedback on her NCA applications. She liked the idea of working with a previous applicant or even faculty to edit her application.

Two- and Four-Year Institutions

First, two- and four-year institutions should evaluate their advising practices on campus in order to recognize the advantages of providing holistic support, specifically, that includes conversations around NCAs. Campuses could begin by cross-training academic advisors and counselors, as well as faculty and other staff leaders. At a minimum, campus agents should be aware that these opportunities exist and feel comfortable discussing them in conversation with students throughout their undergraduate careers. When faculty and staff reinforce NCAs as viable opportunities, this will only increase the likelihood that TSCC will apply.

Second, at two-year institutions, the role of the transfer advisor is key. Thus, more in-depth training on NCAs may be beneficial. Transfer advisors, in turn, could offer NCA-specific workshops for their students, or embed NCA information into existing workshops like financial aid or study abroad.

Third, to account for the likely changes in transfer institution choice, private four-year institutions like BPU should consider providing NCA information (specifically on awards that lessen tuition costs) in their recruitment materials, and if possible, offer proTSCC application support such as NCA workshops to encourage them to apply. This would not only benefit the individual student but the receiving institution as well.

Fourth, two- and four-year institutions should create or expand programs like Achieve, which already offers scholarship workshops for its members. This type of program embodies all four CECE campus factors and without a doubt, made a positive impact on Gema's college experience. Programs like Achieve may also increase NCA access for proTSCC and TSCC.

Nonetheless, the recommendations above primarily focus on individual institution support and approaches, whereas collaborative programs jointly offered by two- and four-year

institutions have also been shown to support transfer students. In addition to Achieve, Gema also participated in a program between Sunny CC and BPU which brought her to BPU's campus to conduct research during the summer. It was during this program that Gema first learned about Fulbright and ultimately led her to apply. Therefore, existing collaborative partnerships should make a concerted effort to include NCA information as part of their programming.

NCA Funding Organizations and Foundations

While NCAs like Truman and Goldwater have expanded eligibility requirements to include additional nominations of transfer students, more work needs to be done. For awards like Gilman and Truman which may be impacted by transfer student timing, funding organizations should consider targeted, earlier recruitment for proTSCC as early as freshmen year and reiterated throughout their time at their community colleges and transfer institutions.

Gilman should also consider expanding their minimum time abroad requirements for TSCC, meaning that if students begin their studies at a two-year institution but are now enrolled at a four-year institution, they should still be allowed to apply for funding for programs as short as two weeks. Gilman may also want to explore shortening their two-week minimum requirement even further to account for post-traditional students who may have children or other dependents, or those who work full-time while enrolled in school.

Furthermore, if funding organizations genuinely want to attract these diverse applicants, they should also consider promoting successful proTSCC and TSCC who have previously won these awards. Recently, alumni of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program formed "affinity groups" to highlight and support current Fulbrighters as well as diversify future applicant pools (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-a). Examples of these groups include Fulbright Prism, a community of LGBTQIA Fulbrighters and allies (Fulbright Prism, n.d.-a), Fulbright Noir, a

community of Black Fulbrighters and allies (Fulbright Prism, n.d.-b); and Fulbright Access, a community of Fulbrighters who identify as having a disability and allies (Fulbright Prism, n.d.-b). While the Fulbright U.S. Student Program is not officially associated with these groups (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-a), they could encourage alumni to start another affinity group comprised of Fulbrighters who began their studies at a community college or encourage the existing affinity groups to highlight their members who began their studies at a community college.

Conclusion

Transfer students from community colleges (TSCC) and prospective transfer students from community colleges (proTSCC) are unquestioningly a unique and diverse population. Yet, it is precisely their varying lived experiences, tenacity, and drive that makes them especially compelling candidates for nationally competitive awards. As shown in the findings, these students were not only eligible for these opportunities, but they were also highly interested in learning more about them. Once campuses and funding organizations acknowledge their eligibility and interest, they can begin to offer these students support that is as unique as their other academic, professional, and personal needs.

Given the exceptionally limited research on NCAs, this study laid a foundation for future investigations into NCA access. Furthermore, the findings on what motivates this population to apply for NCAs should inform both campuses and funding organizations on how to best encourage these students to take advantage of these opportunities.

Interestingly, when campuses promote student services like career and tutoring centers, the messaging is sometimes, “You already pay for them, so you might as well use them.” While not always the best way to inspire students to engage with these services, there is truth in that

statement. The same could be said for several of the NCA exemplars in this study, which are partially or fully government funded. Taxpayers, including TSCC/proTSCC and their families, fund NCAs like the Gilman and Fulbright. Therefore, TSCC/proTSCC need to know that they not only have a right to apply but that they have just as much of a chance of winning as traditional college students.

One recommendation based on this study is for campuses to adopt holistic support practices across departments that includes the sharing of NCA information as well as any potential application support. If campuses were more holistic, then potentially institutions can improve their support for this community of students. Furthermore, based on the majority of TSCC participant responses, the transfer process was essentially a disruption to their undergraduate experience. Thus, two- and four-year institutions need to build better bridge programs through collaborative partnerships that can transform this transfer disruption into a transfer opportunity, such as offering specialized support for transfer students applying to nationally competitive awards. By increasing NCA transfer access, funding organizations and higher education institutions can begin to reframe conversations about who is competitive for these opportunities and why.

APPENDIX A

Definition of Key Terms

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program (Gilman Scholarship): The U.S. Department of State's Gilman Scholarship is a need-based grant for undergraduate students to study or intern abroad. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and must receive U.S. Federal Pell Grants. There is no minimum GPA requirement and eligible programs must be credit-bearing and at least two (for community college students) or three (for students at four-year institutions) weeks in duration. The goal of the program is to support students who have been traditionally underrepresented in study abroad (Research Solutions International, 2016).

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program: The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is the largest U.S. exchange program, offering approximately 2,000 grants annually in over 140 countries. Managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Fulbright grants typically fund one year of independent projects/research, graduate study, or English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Programs (Fulbright U.S. Student Program, n.d.-c).

The Goldwater Scholarship Program (Goldwater Scholarship): The Goldwater Scholarship is managed by the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation. The scholarship is a merit-based award for college sophomores and juniors studying in the natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Financial support of up to \$7,500 per year (two years for awarded sophomores, one year for awarded juniors) is given to the next generation of research leaders. Applicants must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA and must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or permanent resident (The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation, n.d.-a).

The Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship (JKCUTS): The JKCUTS is a merit and need-based award for community college sophomores who intend to transfer to a four-year institution. JKC Scholars receive up to \$40,000 per year, for tuition, living expenses, and other fees; until they complete their bachelor's degree. Scholars also receive additional support such as personal advising and mentorship. Applicants do not need U.S. citizenship, but they must have attended college at a two-year institution in the United States. They also must have a minimum of a 3.5 GPA and demonstrated unmet financial need. They consider applicants with family income up to \$95,000 (Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, n.d.).

Nationally Competitive Awards (NCAs): For the purpose of this study, an NCA was any scholarship or fellowship opportunity available to U.S. college students, which may include funding for research, study abroad, language learning, tuition (both merit and need-based), graduate school, or other experiential learning programs (Cobane & Jennings, 2017). NCAs are managed by external foundations and governmental organizations, also known as “funding organizations”.

Truman Scholarship: Managed by the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, the Truman Scholarship is a merit-based award for college juniors who intend to pursue public service-related careers. Scholars receive up to \$30,000 towards a public service-related graduate degree. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals from American Samoa; and must be in the upper quarter of their class (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.-a).

APPENDIX B

Qualitative Interview Demographic Form

Instructions: Please provide a response for each of the following questions:

1. Name of your community college: _____
2. College classification (circle one): Sophomore Junior Senior
3. How many units did you enroll in this semester? _____
4. Age: _____
5. Gender (circle one): Male Female Non-binary/Third gender
6. With which racial or ethnic category do you identify (circle as many as applicable):
American Indian or Alaska Native Asian American Black or African American
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Other (specific) _____
7. What is your major(s)? _____
8. What is your current cumulative GPA? _____
9. Did you receive federal Pell Grants during the 2019-20 academic year? _____
10. Did either of your parents graduate from college (e.g., community college, technical college, or a four-year institution)? _____
11. Have you heard of and/or applied to any of the following nationally competitive awards?
 - a. Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Y N
 - b. Barry Goldwater Scholarship Y N
 - c. Fulbright U.S. Student Program Y N
 - d. Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship Y N
 - e. Harry S. Truman Scholarship Y N

APPENDIX C

Qualitative Interview Guide

Begin with informed consent discussion.

Ask if the participant has any questions before we begin.

Intro: *Nationally competitive awards (NCAs) is a broad category of national and international scholarships and fellowships available to college students. These awards are typically external, meaning not institution specific. Depending on the award, NCAs may provide funding for research opportunities, study abroad, internships, language acquisition, and graduate or professional school.*

1. Tell me about your awareness of nationally competitive awards (NCAs).
2. What would motivate you to apply for these awards?
3. What is your level of interest in these awards and why?

Depending on their demographic form, participants will also be asked about their experience with the following NCAs:

- a. Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship
- b. Barry Goldwater Scholarship
- c. Fulbright U.S. Student Program
- d. Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship
- e. Harry S. Truman Scholarship

Questions include:

1. How have they heard about the nationally competitive award(s)
2. Have they applied or are they planning to apply, if applicable?
3. What factors would motivate them to apply?

APPENDIX D

Quantitative Survey Questions

Access to Nationally Competitive Awards

Start of Block: Informed Consent

Loyola Marymount University

Informed Consent Form

TITLE: Community College Transfer Student Access to Nationally Competitive Awards

INVESTIGATOR: Cassidy Alvarado, Director of National & International Fellowships, Loyola Marymount University, 310-338-3792

ADVISOR: Dr. Karen Huchting, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, Loyola Marymount University, 310-568-6227

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate community college transfer student awareness of nationally competitive awards (e.g., competitive scholarship and fellowship opportunities), as well as factors that influence your decision to apply for these awards. You will also be asked general demographic questions, such as your age, major, GPA, etc. You will be asked to complete this online survey, which will take between 10 and 15 minutes, through Qualtrics.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this study.

BENEFITS: You will contribute to an existing gap in the research. You may also learn about nationally competitive awards (NCAs) of interest and can reach out to your campus to learn more about how to apply.

INCENTIVES: You have the opportunity to enter a raffle to receive one of twenty \$10 Amazon e-gift cards (emailed no later than 30 days after the survey submission deadline). Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The online survey will collect your age, major(s), minor(s), expected graduation date, name of community college(s), cumulative GPA, and gender in connection with the data. Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). All research materials and consent forms will be stored via Qualtrics. Qualtrics treats all Customer Data as highly confidential. All Customer Data is safeguarded using industry-best security practices to prevent unlawful disclosure. Qualtrics does not sell or make available Customer Data except as requested by a valid court order, search warrant, subpoena, or otherwise as agreed by the parties or required by law. When the research study ends, any

identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing, or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. Contact Cassidy Alvarado at 310-338-3792, or email cassidy.alvarado@lmu.edu. The research summary is expected to be available around July 2021.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed, I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at David.Moffet@lmu.edu.

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?

- Under 18 -100

2. What is the name of your community college?

3. What is your classification in college?

- Freshman/first year
- Sophomore
- Junior

4. How many undergraduate units have you successfully completed? **Successfully completed means completing a course with a grade of a C- or above.**

- 0-12

- 13-24
- 25-36
- 37-48
- More than 48

5. How many units did you enroll in this semester?

- 12 units or more
- 9 to 11 units
- 6 to 8 units
- Less than 6 units

6. Do you intend to transfer to a four-year institution within the next two years?

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

7. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/ Third gender
- Decline to state

8. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify? Mark more than one if applicable.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (specify) _____

9. What is your status in the United States?

- U.S. citizen or U.S. national
- Permanent resident
- International student
- Other status (specify) _____
- I prefer not to respond

10. Which of these fields best describes your major, or anticipated major? You may indicate more than one if applicable.

- Agriculture
- Biological/life sciences (biology, biochemistry, botany, zoology, etc.)
- Business (accounting, business administration, marketing, management, etc.)
- Communication (journalism, speech, television/radio, etc.)
- Computer and information sciences
- Education
- Engineering (civil, mechanical, electrical, etc.)
- Ethnic and cultural studies (area studies etc.)
- Foreign languages and literature (French, Spanish, etc.)
- Health-related fields (nursing, public health, physical therapy, health technology, etc.)
- History
- Humanities (English, literature, philosophy, theology, etc.)
- Liberal/general studies
- Mathematics
- Interdisciplinary studies (international relations, ecology, environmental studies, etc.)
- Parks, recreation, leisure studies, sports management
- Physical sciences (physics, chemistry, astronomy, earth science, etc.)
- Pre-professional (pre-dental, pre-medical, pre-veterinary, etc.)
- Public administration (city management, law enforcement, etc.)
- Social sciences (anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, etc.)
- Visual and performing arts (art, music, theater, etc.)
- Undecided
- Other (specify) _____

11. What is your current cumulative GPA?

- 4.0
- 3.67 - 3.99
- 3.33 - 3.66
- 3.0 - 3.32
- 2.67 - 2.99
- 2.33 - 2.66
- 2.0 - 2.32
- Below 2.0
- No GPA at this time

12. Did you receive federal Pell Grants during the 2019-20 academic year? Your eligibility is decided by the FAFSA. Generally, students whose total family income is \$50,000 a year or less qualify.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

13. Did either of your parents graduate from college (e.g., community college, technical college, or a four-year institution)?

- No
- Yes, both parents
- Yes, mother only
- Yes, father only
- Don't know

In this section, you will be asked about your awareness of nationally competitive awards, as well as your motivation and interest in applying to these opportunities.

Nationally competitive awards refers to a broad category of scholarships and fellowships available to college students. These awards fund a variety of opportunities, including undergraduate expenses, research, study abroad, internships, graduate school, and more.

Nationally competitive awards are not institution-specific, and are typically funded by outside foundations or the government.

14. Prior to this survey, had you heard of this term, nationally competitive awards?

- Yes
- No

14b. Can you give an example of a nationally competitive award?

15. Not many people have heard of this term, "nationally competitive awards".

Examples include: The Rhodes Scholarship, Coca-Cola Scholars Program, Gates

Millennium Scholars Program, and Boren Scholarship. Prior to this survey, had you heard of any of these?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

16. Which of the following statements BEST describes your interest in learning more about nationally competitive awards?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

16b. Briefly describe why you are not interested in learning more about nationally competitive awards.

17. How important are each of the following in motivating you to apply for nationally competitive awards?

Response options: Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, Slightly important, Not at all important

- Academic growth
- Faculty or staff encouragement
- Family encouragement
- Financial amount of the award
- Peer encouragement
- Personal growth
- Resume builder
- Time and effort required to apply

18. Rank your top three motivation to apply factors. Please type 1, 2, 3 next to your top, second, and third choices.

1 = most important factor, 2 = second most important factor, 3 = third most important factor. Leave the others blank.

- _____ Academic growth
- _____ Faculty or staff encouragement
- _____ Family encouragement
- _____ Financial amount of the award
- _____ Peer encouragement
- _____ Personal growth
- _____ Resume builder
- _____ Time and effort required to apply

In this next section, you will be asked about your awareness of specific nationally competitive awards, as well as your motivation and interest in these opportunities.

The Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship provides awards of up to \$8,000 to Pell Grant eligible students to study or intern abroad for a minimum of two weeks. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and there is no minimum GPA to apply.

Although the Gilman is temporarily suspended due to COVID-19, please respond to the questions below as if the program is currently available.

19. Prior to this survey, had you heard of the Gilman Scholarship?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

19b. How did you first learn about the Gilman Scholarship? Mark more than one if applicable.

- Advisor or academic counselor
- Career center
- Faculty at my institution
- Family member
- Financial aid office
- Peers, e.g. another student
- Scholarship office

- Study abroad office
- Transfer center
- Unsure
- Other (specify) _____
- Multiple sources (please list)

20. Which of the following statements BEST describes your interest in applying to the Gilman Scholarship?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

20b. Briefly describe why you are not interested in the Gilman Scholarship.

The Barry Goldwater Scholarship was created to encourage outstanding students to pursue research careers in mathematics, the natural sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, physics, etc.) or engineering. Scholarships of up to \$7,500 a year are provided to help cover costs associated with tuition, mandatory fees, books, room and board. To be eligible to apply, a student must be a full-time sophomore or junior, intend to pursue a research career in a natural science, mathematics or engineering, have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA, and be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

21. Prior to this survey, had you heard of the Goldwater Scholarship?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

21b. How did you first learn about the Goldwater Scholarship? Mark more than one if applicable.

- Advisor or academic counselor
- Career center
- Faculty at my institution
- Family member
- Financial aid office

- Peers, e.g. another student
- Scholarship office
- Study abroad office
- Transfer center
- Unsure
- Other (specify) _____
- Multiple sources (please list)

22. Which of the following BEST describes your interest in applying to the Goldwater Scholarship?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

22b. Briefly describe why you are uninterested in applying to the Goldwater Scholarship.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program offers around 2,000 research, study, and teaching opportunities in over 140 countries each year. After you complete your bachelor's degree, you may either (a) design your own research or creative projects abroad, (b) pursue graduate study abroad, or (c) teach English abroad for a year. Benefits include: round-trip airfare, a monthly living stipend, and health insurance. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and there is no minimum GPA to apply.

Although Fulbright is temporarily suspended due to COVID-19, please respond to the questions below as if the program is currently available.

23. Prior to this survey, had you heard of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

23b. How did you first learn about the Fulbright U.S. Student Program? Mark more than one if applicable.

- Advisor or academic counselor
- Career center
- Faculty at my institution
- Family member
- Financial aid office
- Peers, e.g. another student
- Scholarship office
- Study abroad office
- Transfer center
- Unsure
- Other (specify)
- Multiple sources (please list)

24. Which of the following BEST describes your interest in applying to Fulbright?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

24b. Briefly describe why you are uninterested in applying to the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

The Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship is for community college students seeking to complete their bachelor's degrees. Each Cooke Scholar receives up to \$40,000 per year to attend a four-year institution. Applicants must be sophomore-level students with a minimum 3.5 GPA. They must also demonstrate unmet financial need, with a family income below \$95,000. U.S. citizenship is not required.

25. Prior to this survey, had you heard of the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

25b. How did you first learn about the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship? Mark more than one if applicable.

- Advisor or academic counselor
- Career center
- Faculty at my institution
- Family member
- Financial aid office
- Peers, e.g., another student
- Scholarship office
- Study abroad office
- Transfer center
- Unsure
- Other (specify)
- Multiple sources (please list)

26. Which of the following BEST describes your interest in applying to the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

26b. Briefly describe why you are uninterested in applying to the Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

The Harry S. Truman Scholarship provides up to \$30,000 for graduate study to those pursuing careers as public service leaders in government, education, the nonprofit sector, or the public interest/advocacy sector. Students can only apply during their junior year of undergrad. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and intend to pursue a graduate or professional degree in a public service-related field (e.g., law, public administration, public health, social work, education, public policy, or international affairs, etc.).

27. Prior to this survey, had you heard of the Truman Scholarship?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

27b. How did you first learn about the Truman Scholarship? Mark more than one if applicable.

- Advisor or academic counselor
- Career center
- Faculty at my institution
- Family member
- Financial aid office
- Peers, e.g., another student
- Scholarship office
- Study abroad office
- Transfer center
- Unsure
- Other (specify)
- Multiple sources (please list)

28. Which of the following statements BEST describes your interest in the Truman Scholarship?

- Strongly uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Neither interested nor uninterested
- Somewhat interested
- Strongly interested

28b. Briefly describe why you are uninterested in applying to the Truman Scholarship.

In this next section, you will be asked questions about your community college campus experience.

29. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

Response options: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly agree

- People at this institution often send me important information about new learning opportunities.
- People at this institution send me important information about nationally competitive awards.
- People at this institution often send me important information about supports that are available.
- People at this institution check in with me regularly to see if I need support.
- If I need support, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me that support.
- If I have a problem, I know a person at this institution who I trust to help me solve that problem.
- If I need information, I know a person at this institution who I trust to give me the information that I need.
- I feel like I am part of the community at this institution.
- I feel like I belong at this institution.
- I feel a strong connection to the community at this institution.

30. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

Response options: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly agree

- In general, people at this institution help each other succeed.
- In general, people at this institution support each other.
- In general, people at this institution work together toward common goals.
- In general, educators care about students at this institution.
- In general, educators at this institution are committed to my success.
- In general, I view educators at this institution as caring human beings.

31. Thank you for completing the survey. Would you like to enter a drawing to win a \$10 Amazon e-gift card?

- Yes
- No

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