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Community Scholars: A Diversity Pipeline Program to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities

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Community Scholars: A Diversity Pipeline Program to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities

by

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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my family who both inspired this work and offered me their unending support. To my mom, who never doubted my potential. To my niece, for allowing me to see the world differently and more compassionately. To my husband, Omar, who believed in me, sustained me, and loved me when I could not find the energy to do it myself. And to my daughter, Luna, the light of my life. Knowing those little eyes looked up to me made me want to work harder each day. Your love lifted and carried me through this long and arduous process. I love you and thank you with all my heart.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation in practice documents the program evaluation of the Community Scholars (CS) program at the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the University of South Florida (USF). CS is part of a diversity pipeline program that recruits youth with disabilities to engage in paid on-the-job training (OJT) with FCIC. Scholars are community members (youth with disabilities) that are enrolled as FCIC trainees and receive mentoring, development of basic administrative competencies, individualized career coaching, college counseling, and disability policy and self-advocacy training. Through the OJT experience, scholars gain skills that can lead to gainful employment and are also introduced to post-secondary education as a real, next-step possibility. Program components were designed using Social Cognitive Career Theory while focusing on self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. Improvement Science (IS) is used as the evaluation conceptual framework. Improvement cycles used the Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect model (SIAR). After each cycle, participants completed a survey evaluating their participation in the program. Empathy interviews were conducted with participants to gain additional feedback. Results show that 100% of participants expressed an interest in pursuing post-secondary education, 100% reported an increase in administrative skills, and 33% reported an increase in self-advocacy skills. The program evaluation findings suggest that CS achieved its goal of promoting post-secondary education attainment as an option for youth with disabilities.

Keywords: Recruitment, Post-Secondary, Capacity Building, Minorities, Participation.

PART I

This dissertation-in-practice tells the story of an aunt and a niece connected by love and grit. It all begins with a young girl named María,[1] whose mother died just a few months after her birth. María's birth mom was very sick while she carried her for a mere seven months. As a result, María was born with developmental disabilities that shaped her life and outcomes. Adopted by her paternal grandparents, who had a 16-year-old and a 12-year-old at the time, María lived a life filled with love. Unfortunately, lack of experience, financial resources, and knowledge about raising a child with disabilities meant María received inconsistent access to early intervention services, putting her at a disadvantage with her peers.

When María finally completed high school at the age of 19, which she did as a homeschooler, she had begun volunteering at her aunt's workplace at a state university. Volunteering provided a distraction and a break from monotony – as her adopted mom/grandma began to age, María found herself spending more and more time as a caregiver. María's volunteer work gave her aunt an opportunity to not only connect with her niece but also teach her work skills and expose her to post-secondary education. María had tried on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities through her Vocational Rehabilitation benefits but found that none met her interests or abilities. In addition, and more worrisome, was the fact that the employers she had worked with were not considering or accommodating her disabilities to help her learn. A slew of

[1] Pseudonym to protect the individual's identity.

bad experiences had left María with high anxiety levels and worried she would not be able to find a job or pursue an education beyond high school.

One afternoon at the office, while volunteering with her aunt and retelling the bad experiences she had with OJT to a few of her co-workers, an idea occurred to her aunt. What if the university center where she worked could become an on-the-job training site? Being a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), they had the tools, knowledge, and resources to help persons like María, who needed a safe and accommodating space to learn employable skills. It also occurred to María's aunt that exposing youth with disabilities to post-secondary education and pairing them with peers and professionals in the field might influence them to pursue academic degrees of their own. This would, in turn, increase the diversity of the university's academic programs, when including disability as a diversity category, and generate professionals that could more easily identify, connect, and serve other members of underserved communities. Thus, with ideas founded on love and a powerful purpose to serve and diversify post-secondary education, Community Scholars was born.

Positionality Statement

I am both the author of this dissertation in practice (DiP) and the Training Director for the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC). My motivation to perform this work is tinged by life experiences deeply rooted in my sociocultural background and family history of disability. I am a first-generation college student and a Latina who, typical of lower middle-class minoritized members, had a difficult path to access higher education. Financial and emotional obstacles made my journey towards being my family's first graduate degree holder a very unpleasant and difficult one. While I do not have a disability myself, I always thought that if me and my family members with disabilities had a mentor or advisor that genuinely cared and

understood our circumstances, it would have saved us a lot of debt, time, and heartache in pursuing post-secondary education. It took me many years to come to this realization, and I did not want to see that pattern repeated with other prospective students like María. In addition, I had been searching for ways to make the academic programs that I coordinated at the FCIC more diverse. So, with my professional and personal experiences as tools and the support of my colleagues at FCIC, I set out to develop a post-secondary diversity pipeline program that would provide a pathway for youth with disabilities to believe in themselves and their potential to be fully included and functional members of society – while also increasing the diversity and accessibility of post-secondary education.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD) at the University of South Florida (USF), provides interdisciplinary education, community services, applied research, and information dissemination to promote the full participation, independence, and productivity of individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. The FCIC, founded in 2005 through a grant award from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, is part of a national network of 67 UCEDDs called the Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD). While the center's Interdisciplinary Training program has been successful in recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, FCIC continues to identify ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and neurodiverse underrepresentation in the behavioral health sciences field as a contributing factor to equity, educational, and behavioral health disparities for members of underrepresented minorities (URMs), to include people with disabilities.

At present, there is a concerning disproportion in the delivery of behavioral health services to URMs. This incongruence in services received results in significant health and educational equity gaps that are difficult for URMs to overcome, perpetuating a vicious cycle of disparity (Crimmins et al., 2019). Metcalfe and others (2017) suggested that increased diversity in the pool of health providers is linked to improved, culturally competent care for underserved communities. In addition, services are more effective when offered by providers belonging to

underserved and underrepresented groups rather than by majority providers trained in cultural competency alone (Metcalfe et al., 2017). Promoting diversity in post-secondary academic programs can result in more widespread and quality early intervention services for entire communities, not just those with more access. However, members of URMs are less likely to pursue post-secondary education, in general, resulting in a lack of minoritized providers in the behavioral sciences field (Byars-Winston, 2011).

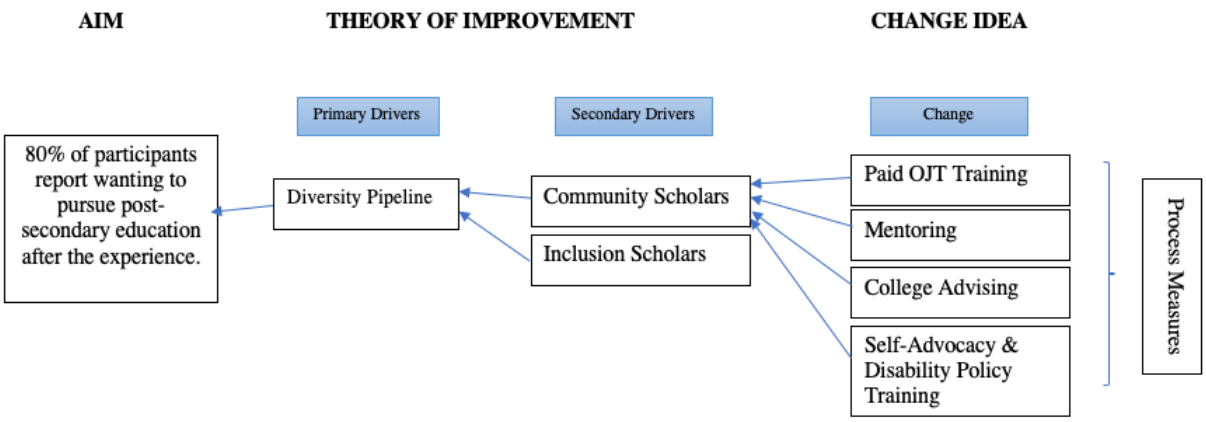
Problem of Practice

To help close the health and education disparities suffered by URMs, the FCIC developed a Community Scholars (CS) program to recruit youth with disabilities as trainees with its Interdisciplinary Training Program. The Community Scholars program collaborates with Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation agency by inviting youth with disabilities to participate in paid on-the-job-training (OJT) with the FCIC, an approved worksite. The OJT experience is designed to provide activities that focus on mentoring, development of basic administrative competencies, individualized career coaching, college advising, and policy and self-advocacy training. In addition, youth are introduced to post-secondary education as a real, next step possibility and offered resources and support in pursuing admission to post-secondary education.

The CS program goal is to offer youth with disabilities a safe space where they can learn meaningful work skills that can help them pursue gainful employment while also offering the opportunity to explore post-secondary education as an option. CS uses social cognitive career theory (SCCT) as a theoretical program framework for supporting youth's self-efficacy beliefs,

Figure 1

Driver Diagram



outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994). The center's desired outcomes are that by recruiting a more culturally, linguistically, and a neurodiverse group of students into its training program, especially youth at the transition stage, these students will pursue academic or professional careers that will prepare and allow them to return to their communities to offer services that help close the health and educational gaps suffered by URMs. The Driver Diagram (see Figure 1), shows the aim, theory, and idea for the problem of practice that is tackled through CS.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework utilized to guide the design and development of the program components for Community Scholars was SCCT. SCCT, which studies how academic and career choices are made, identifies three variables that affect the pipeline journey: self-efficacy believes, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994). While personal inputs and background environmental influences will inevitably influence these variables, the focus of SCCT is on how the individual and their wants, needs, and goals can shape their journey towards

higher education and career interests (Lent et al., 1994). Many diversity pipeline programs have been developed by universities but have not necessarily based their efforts on theory that tackles career choice and persistence; they have not focused on the individual (Byars-Winston et al., 2011). By using SCCT and focusing on the individual, activities dedicated to tackling intrinsic variables will positively influence academic and career choices for participants (Lent et al., 1994).

To guide the implementation and improvement of the CS program, FCIC's training director utilized Improvement Science (IS). IS is a methodological approach that employs disciplined inquiry to solve problems of practice (Perry et al., 2020). IS has six core principles of improvement through which problems of practice are considered, these are: 1) the work is problem-specific and user-centered, 2) it is focused on performance variations, 3) the problem is based within a systemic view, 4) it is measurable, 5) it is focused on disciplined inquiry, and 6) the results should be disseminated through organized networks (Crow et al., 2019). Improvement science also suggests that implementation and improvement in educational settings be tested in short, 90-day cycles called SIAR cycles, which stands for Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect. Very similar to Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, SIAR cycles promote critical thinking, enhance insight into change ideas, and help refine the end product by allowing for modifications along the way (Perry et al., 2020). The work to follow in these pages will encompass the discussion and review of the first three SIAR cycles of CS, focusing on the implementation of change ideas and modifications performed after each cycle was completed. The first three cycles of CS occurred between February 2020 to July 2021. Program implementation started in July of 2019.

Lastly, cycle measurements were collected through a convergent parallel mixed-methods design that allowed for gathering of richer, more nuanced data (Creswell, 2014). Surveys, field notes, and empathy interviews will be presented as foundational data to explain implementation results and program modifications. Including a collaborative research approach, in which the main stakeholders and beneficiaries of CS were included in the development and implementation of the program, was a critical component of this project. "Nothing about us without us" is a tenet of the work for FCIC and its national network, AUCD. IS also promotes collaborative research for broader impact (Crow et al., 2019). CS' participants were active contributors in the implementation, design, and delivery of program components, and their feedback was critical to modifications in each of its iterations.

Improvement Driving Questions

While both *implementation* and *outcomes* of the CS pipeline program are important considerations, the main inquiry question during this program evaluation revolved around implementation:

- How does an OJT program at a UCEDD prepare young people with disabilities to consider post-secondary education as a next step possibility?

The focus of CS is on developing activities conducive to the training of youth with disabilities. Moreover, the inquiry sub-questions focused a bit more on outcomes and short-term impact:

- Can an on-the-job training program rooted in social cognitive career theory help increase participants' *self-efficacy beliefs* and confidence (*outcome expectations*)?
- Does an increase in self-efficacy and confidence lead to an *augmented interest* in attaining post-secondary education for participants (*goals*)?

- How is the program responding and adapting to change, such as the COVID-19 pandemic? How do these changes affect future iterations of the program?

Significance

FCIC identifies ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and neuro underrepresentation in the behavioral health sciences field as a contributing factor to educational and behavioral health disparities for URMs, including people with disabilities. These disparities can be partly addressed by increasing the pool of health and education providers stemming from marginalized groups (Metcalfe et al., 2017). However, members of URM and people with disabilities are less likely to pursue post-secondary education resulting in a lack of minoritized providers (Barnard-Brak et al., 2013; Byars-Winston, 2011). Moreover, only 5% of students with disabilities report pursuing post-secondary education after leaving high school (Sanford et al., 2011).

Recruitment of URM students can be facilitated through diversity pipeline programs that work to achieve increased diversity in post-secondary student populations (Cassuto, 2019). While FCIC engages in activities that aim to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities who are competitively employed in community settings, it does not have a dedicated activity that promotes the recruitment of URMs into the behavioral health field. CS focuses on post-high school transition activities that increase participants' interest in pursuing post-secondary education. Evaluating the implementation of Community Scholars and its preliminary results can lead to establishing a model for diversity pipelines that can be used network wide through AUCD. Dissemination of preliminary results has been well received, with three conference posters having been approved and presented at the national AUCD and AAC&U conferences between 2019 and 2021. In addition, the training director has received two training webinars invitations from AUCD to speak to the national network about the program's

development, implementation, and evaluation. The first training webinar was offered in April 2020, and the second was offered in July 2021. The training director hopes to present the results of the evaluation with the network during its 2023 annual conference in late fall.

Limitations

Some of the current limitations to implementing and continuing the Community Scholars program are financial and logistical. For starters, relying solely on funding support from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) through the only employment agency the program has partnered with limits FCIC's autonomy in recruiting participants. There is a legitimate concern that recruitment efforts are missing eligible community members that cannot participate because they are not represented by the employment agency. Using just one employment agency for referrals limits the pool of applicants exclusively to the agency's clients; FCIC has very little control over whom the agency refers, their background, demographics, or experiences.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the center's capacity to offer in-person training. With the exception of the first four weeks during SIAR cycle one at the beginning of 2020, all program activities have been delivered remotely, which was not part of the original plan. The continued pandemic situation has affected components of the program, such as peer mentoring, which had to be scratched for cycles two and three of the CS evaluation period. Having to go entirely remote during the pandemic also affected the participants' ability to interact with non-disabled co-workers, one of VR's main objectives to promote inclusion (VR, n.d.). While the participants certainly interacted with our workgroup during their time in the OJT, had they been in the office, the number of interactions would have been larger just by virtue of exposure. It would be worth investigating if implementation and outcome results would

be different had program participants, also referred to as trainees, had the option of doing their training fully on-campus.

Organization of the Evaluation

This program evaluation will be organized by chapters. Chapter one offers an introduction to the topic, methodology, inquiry questions, term definitions, significance, and limitations. Chapter two will provide an overview of general literature that focuses on similar attempts at establishing diversity pipeline programs and their successful components. Chapter three will introduce the reader to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks through which community Scholars was implemented and its evaluation measures. Chapter four will offer a discussion of the program evaluation findings — it will help the reader understand the program's implementation steps and whether the program components successfully promoted post-secondary education amongst participants. Lastly, chapter five will summarize the process and findings, discuss implications at the local and national level, summarize dissemination efforts, and offer concluding notes. The chapter format of the dissertation will allow the reader to jump through the different sections of the work and read them in whichever order it is convenient to them. Additional links to resources will be offered should the reader desire to find more information about any given source or organization mentioned in the chapters.

Definitions

To better understand the aim and goals of the Community Scholars program, it is worth reviewing its definitions for key terms:

- Disability is defined by the American with Disabilities Act as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having

such an impairment" (ADA, 1990). Developmental disability is a term that serves as an umbrella for a number of different disabilities that present themselves during a developmental period and may be permanent.

- Diversity is a multifaceted and fluid concept used to describe differences in ethnic or racial identity, tribal or clan affiliation, nationality, language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, religion, spirituality, physical and intellectual abilities, personal appearance, and other factors that distinguish one group or individual from another (NCCC, n.d.). Disability is explicitly included in the definition of diversity for this evaluation.
- Minority are all traditionally underrepresented and disenfranchised groups of people based on race, gender, sexual preference, education, cultural or ethnic identity, religious orientation, social status, or physical and intellectual abilities.
- Pipeline **"**refers to the route students follow from early childhood through post-secondary education and involves educational and socialization processes where intellectual potential and skills are maximized to provide career-building opportunities to future generations of experts in a particular field" (Richardson, 2008, p. 1045-1046).
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) "is an opportunity for an employer to mentor a person with a disability, helping them develop the skills needed to realize their career goals. Trainees interact on a regular basis with employees who do not have disabilities, hold regular positions, and are paid no less than minimum wage. OJT helps people with disabilities get used to the employment environment while gaining valuable work experience" (VR, n.d., p. 1).

- Trainee is a community member or graduate student enrolled in one of FCIC's training or academic programs. All trainees learn about developmental disabilities and how to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities and their families. FCIC trainees become members of AUCD. There are more than 4,000 AUCD trainees nationwide.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine literature that supports the idea of diversity pipeline programs as a solution for recruiting underrepresented minoritized (URM) students into post-secondary education. This literature review intends not to identify gaps in research to suggest a new research focus (though a research-oriented dissertation could find plenty of gaps regarding the impact of post-secondary education attainment for people with disabilities). Instead, it uses current literature to support inquiry into successful recruitment and admission practices for minoritized students into behavioral health post-secondary programs in the United States. This approach to the literature review is supported by the mission of the Education Doctorate, which is to prepare "educators for the application of appropriate and specific practices" in their chosen fields (CPED, 2010). The articles and works reviewed here provide the foundation for applying inquiry as a tool for improving a problem of practice (Perry et al., 2020), in this case, recruiting youth with disabilities into UCEDD-sponsored interdisciplinary training programs. The survey of literature below has a funnel approach, and it includes topics such as the importance of having racially and linguistically diverse behavioral health providers, examples of successful diversity pipeline programs, how social cognitive career theory can support the goal of recruiting minoritized students, and the role of Improvement Science in the development and improvement of pipeline programs.

Background

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD) at the University of South Florida (USF), provides interdisciplinary education programs, community services, applied research, and information dissemination intending to promote the full participation, independence, and productivity of individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. The objectives of the center are to 1) improve access to effective early intervention and educational supports within inclusive settings for children and youth with developmental disabilities; 2) increase the number of people with developmental disabilities who are competitively employed in the community; 3) build the capacity of individuals and organizations to support full community participation by people with developmental disabilities; 4) enhance the health of people with developmental disabilities through increased provider knowledge and community health education and interactions within the health care system; and 5) *increase the diversity, knowledge, and skills of students and professionals participating in an interdisciplinary program of study*. FCIC works in partnership with a Community Advisory Committee composed of people with disabilities, family members and caregivers, as well as disability agencies representatives and collaboration with the state's developmental disabilities network.

The specific goal of FCIC's interdisciplinary training program, which is one of six core functions of the center, is to increase the knowledge and skills of pre-service trainees, community members, and practitioners participating in an interdisciplinary program of study, mentored by FCIC faculty, and/or completing the core curriculum training modules. Pre-service trainees at FCIC have traditionally been graduate students enrolled in affiliated academic

programs in Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health, Positive Behavior Support, Applied Behavioral Analysis, School Psychology, Social Work, Early Childhood Education, Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling, Medicine, and other related programs. Pre-service training plays a vital role in the delivery of inclusive services as early behavioral health interventions with underrepresented populations help reduce inequalities in health, education, and upward social mobility (Crimmins et al., 2019). Moreover, research has shown that service providers belonging to URMs are more likely to provide services to their communities once they work in the field (Benton, 2008; Leaune et al., 2021). However, members of URMs are also less likely to pursue and persist in graduate education, resulting in a lack of minoritized providers in the behavioral health sciences field (Byars-Winston et al., 2011). For the purposes of this program evaluation, minorities are defined as all traditionally underrepresented and disenfranchised groups of people based on race, gender, sexual preference, education, cultural or ethnic identity, religious orientation, social status, or *physical and intellectual abilities*.

The FCIC has engaged in several activities designed to continue to strengthen the recruitment of trainees from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, including revising recruitment material for cultural and linguistic competence, offering graduate studies workshops and disability focused scholarships, providing travel grants for minoritized trainees attending and presenting at conferences, and focusing recruitment efforts on ethnically and linguistically diverse colleges and student organizations. FCIC and the University have generally done well to increase the number of recruited trainees from diverse backgrounds and support their academic success. As of 2021, FCIC trainees included twenty-two percent (22%) of Hispanic/Latino graduate students, which is higher than the university Hispanic/Latino student population of twenty percent (20.7%) and close to the number of Hispanic/Latino in the city, which stands at

twenty-five percent (25.7%). Twenty percent (20%) of trainees are Black/African American, a number significantly higher than that of those enrolled at the university (10%) and close to the Black/African American population in the city (24.2%). Seven percent (7%) of trainees are Asian, which is the same percentage of Asian students at the university (7%) and more significant than the number of Asians in the city (4.2%). Five percent (5%) of trainees have a disability, and twenty-five percent (25%) have a relationship with disability through family.

However, FCIC continues to identify ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and neuro underrepresentation in the behavioral health sciences field as a contributing factor to equity and behavioral health disparities for URMs. One suggestion to the under recruitment of URM students is fomenting interest in academic programs early on by developing diversity pipeline programs (Cassuto & Weisbuch, 2021). The hypothesis is that the more URM students are exposed to post-secondary education options and enter undergraduate programs, the pool of potential graduate students for the behavioral health field increases long-term (Benton, 2008; Metcalfe et al., 2017).

The following sections examine current works on diversity recruitment from several perspectives: 1) the importance of racially, linguistically, and ability diverse behavioral health providers, 2) recruitment efforts aimed at URM students, especially in the behavioral health sciences field, and 3) interventions that increase the potential of youth with disabilities to pursue post-secondary education. A short discussion of influencing factors such as cultural competence, equity, educational and health disparities, affirmative action, social cognitive career theory, and improvement science is encompassed. Further inquiry on the root causes for the lack of diversity in enrollment of pre-service trainees and the role of FCIC in growing a sustainable diversity pipeline is included.

Racially and Linguistically Diverse Behavioral Health Providers

The social and behavioral sciences field attracts a moderate number of students into graduate programs, securing 34.6% of accepted graduated applications in the U.S. (Okahana & Zhou, 2019). However, data show that minoritized students remain substantially underrepresented in graduate education overall. For instance, in 2018, of all graduate students enrolled in social and behavioral graduate programs in the U.S. (excluding dreamers), only 32% identified as part of an underrepresented minority (i.e., Latino 12.7 %, American Indian/Alaska Native .6%, Asian 5.4%, Black 13.1%, Pacific Islander .2%), compared to 58.6% of their white peers (Okahana & Zhou, 2019).

This lack of diversity in graduate behavioral health programs is problematic for several reasons. For instance, health practitioners belonging to URMs are more inclined than their white peers to provide services to members of underserved communities once they are out in the field (Benton, 2008; Leaune et al., 2021). Furthermore, underserved populations receiving these services tend to value racially and linguistically diverse providers more favorably because of the experience of cultural competence and the benefits it provides (Benton, 2008; Clarke & Majewski, 2013). Having racially and linguistically diverse behavioral health service providers is crucial since early intervention services, especially those addressing behavior challenges in children and youth, can help close the equity gap and educational/health disparities for members of URMs (Benton, 2008). And while there are multiple benefits to hiring diverse providers, there is still little data on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities by industry, in this case, the behavioral sciences field (Lindsay et al., 2018).

Culturally Competent Behavioral Health Services

At present, there is a concerning disproportion in the delivery of behavioral health services to URMs. This incongruence in services received results in significant equity gaps and educational and health disparities that are difficult for URMs to overcome (Crimmins et al., 2019). The number of children with behavioral health disorders has increased in the last few years, with more than one in six children reportedly suffering from some sort of syndrome (Macary, 2020). Metcalfe and others (2017) suggested that increased diversity in the health providers pool is linked to improved, culturally competent care for underserved communities. In addition, services are more effective when offered by providers belonging to underserved and underrepresented groups than by majority providers trained in cultural competency alone (Metcalfe et al., 2017). Promoting multiculturalism in graduate programs has the potential to achieve more widespread and better early intervention services for entire communities, not just those with more access (Sleeter, 2018).

Intersectionality

Children at the intersection of ethnic minorities and disability are at even more risk. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DDs) and belonging to historically underserved racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups, along with their families, experience "pervasive and chronic disparities" in behavioral health and educational services across their lifespan, which lead to poorer educational and health outcomes (Crimmins et al., 2019, p. 3). Moreover, with an increasing prevalence of childhood developmental and behavioral conditions for children in URMs, diagnostic and early intervention services are of utmost importance but continue to be significantly lacking (Zuckerman et al., 2014). While a multiplicity of factors affect access to primary and quality care for URM children, language barriers (which represents a

communication barrier for the parent and a linguistic challenge for the provider), race differences between patient/client and the provider, disability status, and provider bias stand out as main concerns (Zuckerman et al., 2014). Zuckerman and others (2014) suggested that an expansion in the number of minority providers can address some of these access issues by correlating increased patient comfort and satisfaction with race-concordant providers. Simply put, members of URMs prefer to receive care and services from people like themselves (H.H.S. Advisory Committee on Minority Health, 2009).

Recruitment

The need to expand pipeline programs that recruit minoritized graduate students is further supported by the fact that URM graduates tend to return to their communities to practice, increasing in this way important services in historically underserved areas (Benton, 2008; Leaune et al., 2021). However, as mentioned previously, because members of URMs are less likely to pursue graduate education in general, there is a dearth of minoritized providers in the behavioral sciences field (Byars-Winston, 2011; NCES, 2022). College accessibility for minorities has been an ongoing issue that has concerned enrollment management professionals for quite some time, but there is a lack of research on how to effectively increase their representations across graduate programs in the United States (Nichols, 2020; Sampson & Boyer, 2001; Shiner & Modood, 2002; Tate et al., 2015). While minoritized members have lower admission rates to college, admission to selective ones means better retention and higher incomes (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Nichols, 2020). Nevertheless, minoritized groups continue to have unequal access to tertiary education institutions based on race, ethnicity, disability, and social-economic status (APA, 2003; Tate et al., 2015). Some of the variables that keep minoritized students from pursuing admission to graduate programs are social and environmental and include

lack of financial resources, an absence of college counseling and mentoring, fewer opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities, and low-test scores (Ntiri, 2001; Tate et al., 2015).

Affirmative Action

The college admissions process, an activity by which prospective students are evaluated for entry into post-secondary programs, is full of examples of strategies that address tertiary educational access for minorities – including affirmative action. First signed into law in 1965, affirmative action is a collection of policies that support organizational efforts to offer historically excluded groups equal opportunities in the workforce and education (NCSL, 2014). In higher education, these policies are reflected in admissions offices' attempts to adjust recruitment efforts to provide equal access to students from minoritized groups (NCSL, 2014). However, these policies have not always supported these groups and have been deemed controversial (ACLU, n.d.; Potter, 2014). Folks not belonging to URM claim that affirmative action is unfair, taking away opportunities that would otherwise go to them based on merit. But this is not necessarily true. For example, white men tend to have lower admission test scores when compared to white women challenging affirmative action (Goodwin, 2012; Harris, 2009). Ironically, it is white women who have disproportionally benefited the most from affirmative action policies but are in turn one of the largest groups supporting its eradication (Goodwin, 2012; Harris, 2009). Furthermore, it has been white households who have seen most of the gains from affirmative action policies, as white women gaining access to better education and work opportunities has enhanced their financial positions (Goodwin, 2012; Harris, 2009).

Affirmative action has been repealed in some states, such as California and Texas, in favor of race-neutral admission practices (Potter, 2014). Because state universities are funded in part by federal dollars, utilizing race to grant or deny admissions has been an issue of debate and

contention, as evidenced by Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin (Long, 2015). The 2013 decision in this case by the U.S. Supreme Court dictated that universities may use race to make admissions decisions when no other alternative exists to guarantee diversity (Long, 2015). Nevertheless, because of the policy's divisive nature and because some states have already banned its use, research is emerging around alternative strategies for diversity recruitment (Potter, 2014: Long, 2015; Vaccaro, 2010; Walton et al., 2013). In addition, programs like affirmative action focus heavily on race and do not address other diversity categories that also affect entry to post-secondary education, such as disability. Creating and promoting new diversity recruitment strategies is a must to continue to promote all diversity in education, which has been suggested to provide a better learning environment and outcomes for all students in general (Smith, 2015). Some state colleges have implemented diversity recruitment strategies such as targeted recruitment, creating percent plans, blind admissions, and improving financial aid programs and retention supports (Potter, 2014; Arcidiacono & Lovenheim, 2016). Though these efforts provide examples of alternatives to affirmative action policies, they are not easy to replicate and would include significant reformatting of university system-wide practices (Smith, 2015).

Diversity Pipeline Programs

The term "pipeline in education" describes the journey that students from minoritized and other underserved communities take to reach post-secondary education (Richardson, 2008). It is also used when referring to the strategies that academic programs utilize to engage URM students in their programs. A theoretical framework that can prove useful in the design of effective diversity pipeline program is that of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). SCCT, which studies how academic and career choices are made, identifies three variables that affect

the pipeline journey: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994). While person inputs and background environmental influences will inevitably influence these variables, the focus of SCCT is on how the individual and their wants, needs, and goals can shape their journey towards higher education and career choice (Lent et al., 1994). Many diversity pipeline programs have been developed by universities but have not necessarily based their efforts on a theory that tackles career choice and persistence; they have not focused on the individual (Byars-Winston et al., 2011). Diversity in post-secondary education can be increased with the right supports for members of URMs. Here we examine some diversity pipeline programs that incorporate aspects of SCCT by focusing on the individual.

Cassuto & Weisbuch (2021) presented several diversity pipeline programs for undergraduate and graduate education that have successfully increased the diversity of their student bodies. Some of the examples they provided include the Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program (G.O.- M.A.P.) at the University of Washington, dedicated to recruiting and retaining graduate students from underrepresented groups. Alternatively, the Summer Multicultural Access to Research Training program (SMART) at the University of Colorado at Boulder aims to increase the diversity of doctoral graduates through a 10- week, intensive research training and a workshop series. A two-part diversity pipeline program that deserves special attention and that caters to individuals' needs was implemented at the City University of New York (CUNY) with great success. Cassuto (2019) explained:

> CUNY's two main initiatives on this front are its undergraduate and graduate Pipeline Fellows Programs. The first recruits promising undergraduates from the system's many branch campuses and exposes them to graduate school as a next-step possibility. The graduate pipeline program recruits and admits diverse candidates to the

> university's arts and sciences graduate school. The two pipeline efforts are separate but connected — as they are both housed in the graduate school's Office of Educational Opportunity and Diversity Programs — and encompass outreach, recruitment, admission, and retention. (Para. 5 & 6)

CUNY's diversity pipeline program not only saw to increase the number of underrepresented students to its arts and sciences programs, but it did so by addressing the intricacies that underserved and underrepresented students face when pursuing higher education, such as financial challenges and lack of mentoring. More importantly, the success of these programs, and many others, rests on the recognition that it is essential to capture the attention of URM students early on in the pipeline process and not just at the admissions stage.

Furthermore, Metcalfe and others (2017) also recognize that URM students attend universities at lower rates nationwide, perpetuating disparities for minoritized populations. In response, they identified and provided an overview of two pipeline programs at Western North Carolina University (WCU) that successfully promote the diversity of students in the healthcare field. As the population in North Carolina continues to expand and with it the diversity of its residents, the diversification of the healthcare force is imperative to address disparities in medical services received (Metcalfe et al., 2017). In 2013, WCU installed the Nursing Network and Careers and Technology (NN-CAT) mentoring program, which recruited nursing students from minoritized backgrounds. The main tenants of the NN-CAT program were to provide "scholarships, stipends, and mentoring for underrepresented ethnic minority and educationally disadvantaged students" (Metcalfe et al., 2017, p. 137). The program also provided one-on-one tutoring to help prepare students for nursing school entry exams. Out of 22 admitted students, 16

completed their baccalaureate (56% Black, 13% Hispanic, 6% Native American, and 25% White from rural areas), classifying it as a success.

Nevertheless, WCU also wanted to cater to the post-secondary accessibility needs of the local Native American (Appalachian) population. Prevalent social-historical and economic determinants affect the number of Appalachians pursuing studies in the healthcare field (Metcalfe et al., 2017). In response, WCU established a pipeline program called the Medical Careers and Technology Academy (MedCaT). The program curriculum offers its high school participants an opportunity to gain knowledge and exposure to the biomedical sciences field and offers professional development for teachers working with students in related career programs (Metcalfe et al., 2017). This pipeline program centered its approach around recognizing the importance of capturing the students' interest early in the transition stage and the urgency in recruiting a diverse workforce and its impact on reducing inequities, improving quality of care, and increasing cultural competence in services (Metcalfe et al., 2017). As of 2017, "100 percent of participating students demonstrated a significant increase in health and science knowledge and skills, as well as increased interest in careers in the biomedical sciences" (Metcalfe et al., 2017, p. 139).

Regarding recruitment and pipelines for people with disabilities, Haines and Domin (2020) provide a summary of strategies different universities have used to promote the recruitment of students with disabilities. The authors performed a qualitative study in which they investigated the perspectives of students and providers participating in Transition and Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID). They found that one of the main motivations for students with disabilities participating in these programs was not only to find paid jobs but find jobs in their communities (Domin et al., 2020).

The results support the idea that students belonging to URMs are more likely to return to their communities once they have received their training. Haines and Domin (2020) surveyed six universities engaged in TPSID, and while the pipeline strategies varied for all, four common themes emerged: good timing, the right opportunities, appropriate employment setting, and suitable supports. Recruiting students early in the transition stage, offering them paid learning opportunities, partnering with employment settings that provide a safe space with suitable accommodations, and providing individual supports aligned with student goals are essential components of successful pipeline programs for people with disabilities.

The UCEDD Boggs Center in New Jersey, one of 67 seven UCEDDs in the country, developed a recruitment program to produce a more diverse workforce. Not only do more diverse pre-service trainees offer a better representation of the center's home state, but that same diversity promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life (Clarke, 2014). Much like FCIC, the Boggs Center utilizes varied strategies to increase diversity in recruitment. Some of their successful strategies include establishing a pipeline with the field placement office for their university's social work program, creating linguistically competent brochures, offering participation stipends, creating individualized training plans, and having a dedicated support coordinator (Clarke, 2014). With these and other strategies, the Boggs Center has exemplified practices that facilitate student success and trainee diversity and can be applied to other UCEDDs across the nation.

But if we want to achieve diversity in the workforce long-term, successful recruitment of students and trainees needs to home in on theory and research on academic interest and career persistence, as argued by Byars-Winston and colleagues (2011) who developed a diversity pipeline program to recruit minoritized doctoral students into biomedical and behavioral

sciences. The researchers documented many diversity initiatives by other educational institutions that, by not being based on theory, engaged in unsubstantiated efforts that failed to achieve their intended purpose; to recruit and graduate URM students. The authors set out to implement a diversity pipeline program validated by an SCCT framework called Career Development in Graduate Research Training (F-CGRT). Beyond recruiting URM students, the F-CGRT hoped to increase the effectiveness of recruitment efforts while also influencing participants' behaviors related to career outcomes. Their pipeline program's structure, called Graduate Research Scholars (GRS), included recruitment, retention, professional development, and financial support. Five core components were embedded within each of these activities: mentor training, development of fundamental competencies, career coaching, individualized career development, and a SWAT personal career analysis. The use of this program framework delved into self-efficacy expectations and outcome expectations for participants, influencing their interests, choice goals, choice actions, and performance domains and attainments (Lent et al., 1994).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

SCCT is a relatively new approach to the study of career choice. It attempts to explain a person's journey to career choice and selection. SCCT puts together concepts from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and other career models to explain how individuals "develop vocation interests, make or remake occupational choices, and achieve varying levels of career success and stability" (Lent & Brown, 2005, p. 101). While personal preferences and context influence a person's choices (e.g., socioeconomic status, minoritized status, family/environment support, etc.), three main elements in SCCT explain choice and success: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can perform a task, whereas outcomes are the expected results of an action (Foud, 2014). Goals (what one wants to achieve), on the

other hand, are shaped by self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence each other and change with time, though the bulk of self-efficacy beliefs are formed by early adulthood. The interplay between these variables results in a person's cognitive ability to exercise agency over their career choices (agency of choice).

Settings and how they moderate or affect goals can be categorized into two types of contextual affordances: distal (relates to background influences) and proximal (refers to environmental influences, such as accessibility, for instance) (Lent & Brown, 2005). Distal barriers are those that occur a significant amount of time before a decision is made (antecedents) while proximal barriers occur or are present in real time as the person decides (Lent & Brown, 2013). Barriers may include things such as others' biases, type of support or lack of thereof, social status, etc. (Fouad, 2014). While proximal barriers can be objective or subjective from a neutral party's point of view, their importance to the person's decision making depends entirely on their perspective and opinion of the barrier (Fouad, 2014).

Segmental Models

SCCT was initially grounded on three segmental but interconnected models that addressed interest, choice, performance, and persistence. (Lent & Brown, 2013) Later, two additional models were included: the satisfaction and well-being model and the career self-management model (Lent & Brown, 2019). These five models – interest model, choice model, performance model, satisfaction model, and career self-management model – guide the application of SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2005; Lent & Brown, 2013). The choice and interest models predict the career choices an individual will make. The performance model predicts their level of performance on career related tasks, i.e., how much effort an individual will put forth to achieve a goal. The satisfaction model focuses on a person's perception of satisfaction and well-

being while engaged in a task or role (and the variables that affect that perception). And lastly, the career self-management model centers on the adaptive behaviors a person engages in while performing a task which will influence career or choice persistence Lent & Brown, 2013).

The interest model posits a person's surroundings present choices and introduce different areas of interest for which they develop a preference. Interest in different activities will grow if a person perceives they are competent and believe they will perform well (Lent & Brown, 2005). However, according to the theory, while most interests are developed by early adulthood, people can still change their interests later in life based on internal and external influences. As people's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations change based on learning and experience, so will their interests and goals (Lent & Brown, 2005). The unique position of SCCT is that it is focused on the psychological and social effects of difference as it relates to one's context rather than on biological or physical factors of difference in humans (Lent & Brown, 2005). This has allowed for a deeper focus on the application of SCCT to diverse and often underrepresented groups, such as people with disabilities (Lent & Brown, 2019; Szymanski et al., 2009). For example, the social consequences of status, e.g., being a female or a racial minority, can influence self-efficacy or outcome expectations and affect access to opportunities in general (women and science, for example).

On the other hand, the choice model postulates that individuals and their environments are not static; they are dynamic, complex, and ever-changing (Lent & Brown, 2005). This complexity influences career choice. How well an individual can perform a task of interest will serve as a feedback loop that affects an individual's choices in the future. But sometimes "environments also choose people" (Lent & Brown, 2005, p.109). *The receptivity of an environment and its ability to provide learning support and praise for an individual will also*

affect their career choices. For better or for worse, family, economic conditions, and similar influences will also affect choice and "force" a person to choose a career that differs from their interests and self-efficacy beliefs. For example, an individual from a low socioeconomic status but with a talent for medicine may choose to work at their parent's small business to help support their family.

The performance model focuses on the individual's efforts related to quality and persistence. Ability, aptitude, and past performance can affect performance level and self-efficacy beliefs, and vice-versa (Lent & Brown, 2005). While self-efficacy can move people to perform better, it needs to be paired with aptitude; otherwise, interventions can be detrimental to career choice and performance. In addition, culture can influence self-efficacy, i.e., self-efficacy is susceptible to external influences in the environment. Self-efficacy is informed and shaped by past performance, new learning, social influences, and psycho-biological states (Lent & Brown, 2005). For example, low self-efficacy combined with good performance requires non-intensive interventions, while low self-efficacy and low-performance skills require more intensive interventions.

This program evaluation focuses mostly on the first three segmental models and their application to CS. The use of the newer segmental models in SCCT — the satisfaction model and the career self-management model — and are still being explored in the literature (Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent & Brown, 2019; Mohd Rasdi et al., 2020). In general, however, the satisfaction model focuses on domain and addresses the individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals in relation to an accessible environment that promotes self-fulfillment (Lent & Brown, 2019: Mohd Rasdi et al., 2020). Lastly, the career self-management model is unique in that it focuses on variables that affect a person's persistence once they've made an

educational or career choice (Lent & Brown, 2013). The model also has an emphasis on process rather than destination, i.e., focusing on adaptive behaviors instead of the end goal of those behaviors (Lent & Brown, 2013).

SCCT and Community Scholars

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) can help explain why environmental and sociocultural influences help shape minorities' self-efficacy perceptions and have these be perpetuated through time. Lent and Brown (2005) suggested that social advocacy can help break these "standards" and promote career mobility. More importantly, the interest and choice models in SCCT can be "useful constructs in gaining a better understanding in the career development of people with disabilities" (Lent & Brown, 2005, p. 115). SCCT is an ideal framework to develop intervention programs that target young people and promote professional and academic interests. Moreover, the sooner the intervention is applied, the more effective it will be. Hence, targeting youth at the transition stage can prove crucial in diversifying the pool of prospective behavioral health graduate students and providers. However, it is important to note that while self-efficacy and outcome expectations are fundamental in early adulthood, this does not mean they are permanent. They are malleable and can change over time as a person is exposed to new learning experiences and encouragement coming from interventions (Lent & Brown, 2005, 2013, 2019).

The CS diversity pipeline program at FCIC borrowed elements for SCCT to design its program interventions, focusing specifically on self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. The participants' experience is designed to provide activities that focus on mentoring, development of fundamental competencies, career coaching, individualized career development, and self-advocacy and disability policy training to support self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. In addition, youth are introduced to post-secondary education as a real,

next step possibility and offered resources and support in pursuing admission to higher education institutions. Below we explore how the SCCT elements of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals relate to CS program activities.

Mentoring and Career Coaching

Of the areas of need, mentorship and career coaching are essential in the recruitment process (Byars-Winston et al., 2011). Given historical exclusion, stereotyping, and lack of representation, URM students may experience a lack of mentoring that, if otherwise present, would propel them into graduate school (Thomas et al., 2007). Mentoring for URMs is "critical for shaping and raising expectations about an academic career, preparing for the job market, and managing their careers" (Girves et al., 2005, p. 453). Without it, students fail to realize their potential and available opportunities which would in turn affect their self-efficacy believes. Socioeconomic factors also deter URM students from attending graduate preparation seminars or workshops, which can serve as a place to learn about career choices (Cassuto, 2019). Cassuto (2019) suggested that students often cannot attend these workshops due to financial hardship.

Persistence and Retention

Persistence and retention, which are affected by outcome expectations, are also an issue for URM students once they have been recruited into graduate programs. Persistence and retention are affected by the level of student engagement, seen as the amount of effort a student puts forth to "study a subject, practice, obtain feedback, and analyze and solve problems" (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008, p. 101). On the other hand, student engagement is dependent on many intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, self-efficacy, and enriching educational experiences (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Because of the socioeconomic factors previously discussed,

URM graduate students have low engagement and high attrition rates. Mentorship, coaching, and professional development opportunities, often present in diversity pipeline programs anchored by SCCT, can positively impact the engagement and retention of URM students (Byars-Winston, 2011).

Post-secondary Education

Self-efficacy and outcome expectations are dynamic and influence an individual's goals (Lent et al., 1994). Goals guide behavior and define intentions, such as pursuing post-secondary education or choosing a profession (Fouad, 2014). How successful a person is in achieving their goals will reciprocally influence their self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2005). Career intervention explicitly catered to students' interests, combined with mentoring and competency development, can support goals related to pursuing post-secondary education (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008).

The goal of SCCT is to explain how individuals regulate their behavior given social and environmental factors and how this regulation leads to, or not, to the achievement of goals. SCCT can help elucidate a variety of factors that affect "educational and occupational interests, choice, and performance" as well as well-being and career satisfaction through a person's lifetime (Lent & Brown, 2019, p. 1). By understanding how these factors play into self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals we can build intervention models, such as CS, that will support conducive behaviors that will facilitate the journey of person with a disability towards post-secondary attainment and gainful employment.

Improvement Science

To determine whether CS' approach, based on SCCT, has been successful in recruiting youth with disabilities into its diversity pipeline program while promoting self-efficacy, outcome

expectations, and goals for its participants, the program will be evaluated using Improvement Science (IS) as a conceptual framework. IS is a methodological approach that employs disciplined inquiry to solve problems of practice (Perry et al., 2020). It is an appropriate tool to utilize because it accelerates learning for improvement when dealing with specific problems of practice, such as building an on-the-job training program that will encourage people with disabilities to pursue post-secondary education (Perry et al., 2020).

IS has six core principles of improvement through which problems of practice are considered, these are: 1) the work is problem-specific and user-centered, 2) it is focused on performance variations, 3) the problem is based within a systemic view, 4) it is measurable, 5) it is focused on disciplined inquiry, and 6) the results should be disseminated through organized networks (Crow et al., 2019). IS also suggests that implementation and improvement in educational settings be tested in short, 90-day cycles called SIAR cycles, which stands for Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect. Very similar to Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, SIAR cycles promote critical thinking, enhance insight into change ideas, and help refine the end product by allowing for modifications along the way (Perry et al., 2020). IS promotes and improves change; it does not determine it. Therefore, IS fosters continuous evaluation and improvement; it is not static (Langley et al., 2009). By utilizing IS as part of this program evaluation we are striving to drive rapid, sustainable, conclusive, and disseminatable change that will result in our OJT participants expressing an interest in post-secondary education attainment (Langley et al., 2009).

Summary

The FCIC provides interdisciplinary training to graduate students interested in becoming leaders in the behavioral health sciences and champions inclusion and diversity for people with

disabilities and other underserved and underrepresented populations. While the center has successfully maintained some level of diversity in its trainees, it recognizes space for growth, mainly since a more diverse student body indicates a more significant number of ethnically and linguistically diverse providers available to deliver behavioral health services. Research suggests that not only are URM providers more likely to offer services to underserved communities, but members of URMs perceive services offered by providers "like them" as more valuable (Benton, 2008; Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Crimmins et al, 2019). The delivery of behavioral health services to URMs by diverse providers can help close equity gaps and reduce educational and health disparities for these populations (Benton, 2008). However, minoritized students are less likely to pursue post-secondary education overall, primarily due to socioeconomic factors, including a lack of advising and mentoring programs (Cassuto, 2019; Ntiri, 2001; Sampson & Boyer, 2001; Shiner & Modood, 2002; Smith, 2015).

The dearth of accessible and affordable graduate preparation and mentoring programs exacerbates the importance of recruiting URM students into graduate academic programs in the field of behavioral health sciences. While policies such as affirmative action have been implemented to counteract low diversity in higher education, controversies about its implementation and outcomes have deterred many universities from using it (ACLU, n.d.; Potter, 2014). In addition, policies such as Affirmative Action do not address recruitment for other diversity and minoritized categories, such as developmental disabilities. Also, while the literature shows many attempts at developing diversity recruitment strategies, many are not based on research and theory, precariously bypassing essential considerations related to URM student motivation, engagement, and persistence. There is also very little information about the benefits of training and recruiting behavioral health professionals that identify as persons with disabilities

themselves. Queries into how a diversity pipeline program can help increase FCIC's programs' diversity have become a priority, but there is little data about how UCEDDs like FCIC can increase pre-service trainee diversity in their interdisciplinary training programs while aligning program goals with minoritized students' career goals.

SCCT, which is the theoretical framework through which CS was designed, can help in the development of diversity pipeline programs that account for URM students' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent et al., 1994). Byars-Winston and others (2011) utilized SCCT to develop a theoretical framework called career development in graduate research training (F-CGRT). This framework embeds important URM recruitment and persistence concepts into its deployment, including mentor training, development of fundamental competencies, career coaching, individualized career development, and a SWAT personal career analysis. Their Graduate Research Scholars program, aimed at recruiting URM students into the biomedical and behavioral health sciences field, has proven effective at increasing the diversity of their student cohorts and reducing attrition. Nevertheless, inquiry is still lacking on the use of SCCT to develop diversity pipeline programs for UCEDDs and its impact on the production of URM providers for the behavioral sciences field.

While Byars-Winston et al. (2011) offered great insight into the development of recruitment and mentorship strategies for URM graduate students in the biomedical and behavioral sciences at the doctoral level, the dynamics and student population targets of UCEDDs can vary greatly given their interdisciplinary nature. FCIC, for example, offers their academic training entirely online, while mentoring is offered in a blended format. Online education has higher attrition rates (Bawa, 2016). How, then, does a diversity pipeline program for FCIC, based on SCCT, increase trainees' self-efficacy and outcome expectations? Would the

use of SCCT as a framework change the nature of the diversity efforts currently being utilized by FCIC? What can FCIC do as an independent UCEDD to address challenges and grow a sustainable diversity pipeline? These are some of the questions that this program evaluation aims to address.

CHAPTER 3:

THEORY OF IMPROVEMENT

The aim of this dissertation-in-practice was to explore the implementation and effectiveness of Community Scholars (CS) through a program evaluation. Program evaluations measure change and aid in determining improvement. Available information is analyzed to form a value judgement from which decisions are made (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). Evaluations, in general, are important in education to remain accountable and promote the sustainability of new and ongoing efforts (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). The program evaluation of CS is "retroactive", meaning, it looks back at the program implementation process and past performance. CS is an active program that was designed and implemented in early 2020 using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to develop strategies that would encourage youth with disabilities to pursue post-secondary education. Using Improvement Science (IS) as a conceptual framework and convergent parallel mixed methods design as methodology, measures were developed and collected to determine whether the improvements being introduced into CS were causing positive change. The program evaluation for CS will use the results of those measures, taking into consideration the theoretical framework of SCCT, to determine if the improvements were effective in promoting post-secondary education attainment in the participants. But importance will also be given to the process of implementation, that is, which steps were taken during the implementation of the program and how these steps eventually led to successful or unsuccessful outcomes.

Background and Objectives

The Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), the home base of CS, identifies ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and neurodiverse underrepresentation in the behavioral health sciences field as a subsidizing element to equity, educational, and behavioral health disparities for members of underrepresented minorities (URMs), which includes people with disabilities. FCIC leadership share a concern about the alarming disproportion in the delivery of behavioral health services to URMs. The incongruence in services received by these populations results in significant health and educational equity gaps that are difficult to overcome, perpetuating disparities for underserved groups (Crimmins et al., 2019). Boosting the diversity of the pool of health providers can result in improved, culturally competent, and better care for underserved communities (Metcalfe et al., 2017). Developing programs that promote diversity in post-secondary academic programs will be crucial in securing more prevalent and superior early intervention services for underserved communities. Conversely, members of URMs pursue post-secondary education at lower rates when compared to their white peers, resulting in scarcity of minoritized providers and administrators in the behavioral sciences field (Byars-Winston, 2011).

To address the disparities suffered by URMs, FCIC's training director proposed and developed CS, a program that recruits youth with disabilities as trainees within its Interdisciplinary Training Program. The CS program resulted from a collaboration between the center, the university, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Through the CS program, youth with disabilities are invited to participate in paid on-the-job-training (OJT) with the FCIC. The OJT experience is designed to provide activities that focus on mentoring, development of basic administrative competencies, individualized career coaching, college advising, and policy and self-advocacy training. In addition, youth are introduced to post-secondary education and offered

guidance and resources to promote their interest in post-secondary education. The aim of CS is to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities that pursue post-secondary education and that are competitively employed in community settings while also presenting post-secondary education as a real, next step possibility for its participants.

CS program activities are based on SCCT (Lent et al., 1994), and outcomes are measured by reviewing pre- and post-participation surveys, field notes, and empathy interviews. Evaluating the development and implementation of Community Scholars and its preliminary results can lead to establishing a model or framework for diversity pipelines that can be used network wide through the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), FCIC's national network.

The objective of this inquiry was to perform a program evaluation of Community Scholars. The specific aims of the program evaluation were:

Aim 1. Implementation (formative). Learn and document the actions taken to implement and establish the OJT program at the UCEDD (FCIC).

Aim 2. Outcomes (summative). Determine if the program achieved its goals of promoting job preparedness and post-secondary education for participants.

Aim 3. Process. Understand how the OJT program components at the UCEDD (FCIC) helped prepared participants to consider post-secondary education as a next step possibility.

Aim 4. Challenges. Learn how the program adapted to challenges, such as COVID-19, and the impact of those adaptations to future iterations of the program.

Evaluation Framework

To guide the program evaluation of Community Scholars, the evaluator utilized Improvement Science (IS) as a methodological approach that employs disciplined inquiry to solve problems of practice (Perry et al., 2020). IS has six core principles of improvement through

which problems of practice are considered, namely: 1) the work is problem-specific and user-centered, 2) it is focused on performance variations, 3) the problem is based within a systemic view, 4) it is measurable, 5) it is focused on disciplined inquiry, and 6) the results are disseminated through organized networks (Crow et al., 2019). IS also suggests that implementation and improvement in educational settings be tested in short, 90-day cycles called SIAR cycles, which stands for Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect. This program evaluation encompassed the discussion and review of the first three SIAR cycles of Community Scholars, each lasting approximately 13 weeks long, focusing on the implementation of change ideas, modifications and adaptations performed after each cycle was completed, and initial outcomes. The first three cycles of Community Scholars occurred between February 2020 to June 2021. Program design and planning started in Summer of 2019.

Why Improvement Science?

One of the objectives of improvement science is to enhance an organization's capacity for improvement (Crow et al., 2019) and serve as a systematic approach to discover problems and solutions *in* practice (Crow et al., 2019). More importantly, IS allows practitioners undertaking inquiry *in* practice to develop rigorous measures to promptly assess the effectiveness of changes being implemented, which is crucial for organizational success. This thorough approach meets validity and reliability criteria without being subjected to traditional assumptions of parametric analysis (Crow et al., 2019). In other words, IS allows practitioners to use their professional wisdom in a disciplined approach to test theories of change using rigorous measures in a quick and efficient manner. Other evaluation models, such as the logic model, take a very linear approach to evaluation (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). But the reality of the education field is that relationships between variables are not static or undeviating. Complex systems, such as that

of the UCEDD to which CS belongs, require a more nuanced approach to evaluation, one that accounts for variations in performance. And as such, IS excels, fostering a cyclical approach that promotes a formative view of improvement initiatives in practice-based inquiry (Crow et al. 2019).

Theory of Improvement

Community Scholars was established to promote post-secondary education attainment in youth with disabilities. The specific aim of the program and the subsequent program evaluation was to determine if at least 80% of the participants reported wanting to pursue post-secondary education after the experience. Initial program implementation steps, which happened between Summer of 2019 and Spring of 2020, occurred at two levels —program and user— and included:

- #1 Partnering with Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and a VR approved employment site.
- #2 Entering into a Memorandum of Agreement with the employment agency and the University in which the UCEDD is located.
- #3 Becoming an approved On-the-Job (OJT) training site.
- #4 Including CS as a grant deliverable and activity for the UCEDD.
- #5 Disseminating the recruitment and training strategies with the national AUCD network.

User interventions, all based on SCCT (see Figure 1, Ch. 3), included:

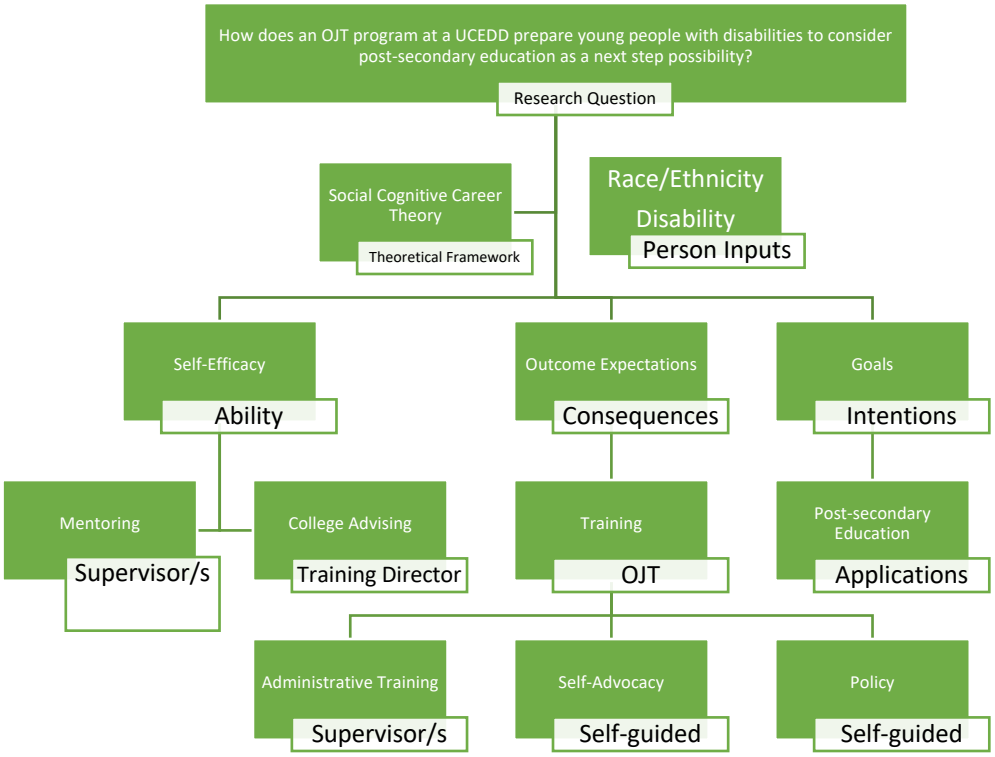
- Paid OJT
- An individualized training plan focused on career exploring and interests
- College advising sessions
- Training in self-advocacy and disability policy

- Mentoring

Figure 2 illustrates the concept map for CS. The concept map is useful because it shows the connections between the different active elements of CS and how each element and intervention must work in accordance with the other to have meaningful impact.

Figure 2

Concept Map



Improvement Measures

Data is at the core of improvement science, allowing practitioners to accurately and methodically determine if a change has resulted in improvement. IS suggests the use of different types of practical measures to accurately achieve and determine improvement. These measures include outcome measures, driver measures, process measures, and balance measures. Outcome measures assess the aim for the theory of improvement and help us determine if change has been

achieved (Crow et al., 2019). Outcome measures can be leading or lagging, meaning they can provide direct analyzable results within a cycle or be summative in nature, i.e., directly relating to the overall aim of the evaluation (Perry et al., 2020). Driver measures, on the other hand, address the question of whether a change being implemented is resulting in improvement; "driver measures assess change" in real time (Crow et al., 2019, p. 53). Process measures assess how a change is working, determining the fidelity of implementation (Crow et al., 2019). Lastly, balancing measures help practitioners determine if a change is working as intended and what effects it may be having on the system in which the change or improvement is taking place (Crow et al., 2019).

Using IS as a conceptual framework and convergent parallel mixed methods design as a methodology, pre and post participation surveys, field notes/observations, and empathy interviews served as the practical measures (data gathering tools). These data were collected from the period of Spring of 2020 to Summer 2021. SIAR cycle results were evaluated individually and then analyzed collectively to identify procedures, outcomes, patterns, and themes.

Surveys for this evaluation are ordinal in nature, with Likert Scale like questions measuring the participants beliefs, attitudes and opinions related to work, self-advocacy, and post-secondary education attainment. Survey results were tabulated, contextualized, and compared to identify themes and/or trends. The results of the surveys supplemented the qualitative data collected through the other measures and looked for changes and/or improvements in the participants' self-efficacy believes, outcome expectations, and goals, before and after the OJT experience. Two-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2021) was used to analyze and interpret the empathy interviews and field notes/observations. The first round of coding used in-

vivo coding to honor the participants' own language in describing their experience. The second round of coding was descriptive to allow for the categorization of statements and opinions. Descriptive coding, which Saldaña (2021) explained is an appropriate approach for evaluation work, promoted the indexing of the codes and fostered the identification of thematic and/or conceptual similarities highlighting subsequent salient categories. After coding and categorizing occurred, themes were identified.

Method triangulation was used to analyze data from the surveys, field notes/observations, and interviews to inductively formulate assertions about the results overall. Method triangulation is most appropriate for this program evaluation as it "involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545) and lends itself as an analytic tool in mixed methodology. Below we will explore the development and use of each data-gathering tool and how these instruments provided rich improvement data crucial for the testing and implementation of program changes. As we move forward, it is important to distinguish that in improvement science measures are used to determine improvement and not to bring about new theoretical knowledge (IHI, n.d.a). Our measurement tools focused on process, outcome, and sequence to bring about and evaluate improvement in each SIAR cycle of CS (IHI, n.d.b).

Surveys

Two surveys were included as part of the program implementation and evaluation and account for the quantitative portion of the program evaluation. A pre-OJT survey was administered to the participants between weeks one and two of the OJT experience (Appendix A) and focuses on the participant's perceived confidence (self-efficacy) in two areas: administrative skills and self-advocacy skills. The pre-OJT survey has eight administrative skills criteria which

the participants self-rated from not confident to very confident. The self-advocacy section has six criteria from which the participants self-rated from not confident to very confident. A post-OJT survey was administered after the end of the OJT experience measuring the same two areas (administrative skills and self-advocacy skills) (Appendix B). The survey also explored the participant's goals regarding post-secondary education and asked whether, as a result of the OJT experience, the participant had any intention of pursuing post-secondary education.

Field Notes and Observations

Field notes and observations can be particularly useful in IS because they allow the practitioner to focus on the everyday functioning of a program, thus bringing to light variations that may otherwise go unnoticed (Perry et al., 2020). Field notes/observations for this program evaluation were collected throughout SIAR cycles to capture activities, changes, perceptions, feelings, and other nuances – for both the practitioner (training director) and the participants. Research suggests that observations can be useful in complementing quantitative results and data when used in mixed methods designs (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The collection of the notes was not structured. They were taken as needed by the Training Director to explore successes, concerns, and failures (example provided in Appendix C).

Empathy Interview

An empathy interview is an inquiry tool that allows the practitioner to gain a better understanding of the participant's point of view regarding the problem of practice and the role they play in it; it focuses on the participant's experience (Perry et al., 2020; UTSA, 2020). In inclusion work, it is important for practitioners to make sure that participants are co-creators of knowledge, practice, inquiry, research, etc. Empathy interviews offered CS participants a unique opportunity to help evaluate the CS program and give direct and actionable input for its

improvement. This activity was especially helpful in allowing the practitioner to expand their view of the problem and incorporate others' perspective in a collaborative way. An empathy interview with participants was conducted within each SIAR cycle once training was concluded. The interviews lasted an average of an hour and included open ended questions. It is important to note that while the nature of the questions was the same, each interview was personalized to the participant. This had to be the case because each OJT participant was unique, and all three OJT experiences evaluated in this inquiry were different and customized. It would have been contradictory to the goal of CS to standardize the delivery of OJT training or the questions of the interviews, though they all had the same general theme as an outcome measure. The focus of the interviews was to understand whether the training was meaningful to the participants and if, as a result of it, they were now interested or inclined to pursue post-secondary education.

Data Management and Confidentiality

The data utilized for the program evaluation belongs to and is managed by FCIC. It is important to note that the surveys, field notes/observations, and empathy interviews from which data was extracted are established components of Community Scholars and these data are collected regardless of whether a program evaluation were to be conducted. For the purposes of the program evaluation, FCIC authorized the use of the data from these surveys, field notes/observations, and empathy interviews to be used by the doctoral student to help evaluate program implementation and program outcomes for dissertation purposes. This is possible because the doctoral student is a scholar-practitioner actively employed with the FCIC as its Training Director and her role grants her access to the program data. All data shared for the program evaluation was de-identified and stored in a secure cloud drive location.

Summary

To determine CS's effectiveness, and share with others in the AUCD network seeking to implement similar programs, FCIC's training director decided to conduct a program evaluation of the first three cycles of CS. The primary objective of the evaluation was formative, that is, determining how the program was designed, implemented, and which steps were taken to effectively apply program components. The inquiry, through the conceptual framework of IS, evaluated how the diversity pipeline program for undergraduates at the UCEDD – which was rooted in SCCT – was implemented (process). The secondary objective, which was summative, was to determine the program's short-term impact/outcomes and whether it was doing what it set out to do, i.e., help promote the transition of youth with disabilities into postsecondary education.

IS was utilized as a conceptual framework to guide the program evaluation (Perry et al., 2020). IS interventions used for the evaluation included SIAR cycles. Convergent parallel mixed methods were used to design and collect measures to determine change and/or improvement. The data came from surveys, field notes/observations, and empathy interviews. SIAR cycle results were evaluated individually and then analyzed collectively to identify procedures, outcomes, patterns, and themes. Program evaluation data used for analysis was triangulated to understand the problem of practice, evaluate the change idea (Community Scholars), review evidence of change or improvement, determine initial outcomes, identify themes, and spread and scale the framework, if applicable. All data used for this program evaluation belongs and is managed by the FCIC. Data was de-identified and stored securely in a cloud drive. The next chapter will present the analysis of data and results of the program evaluation.

PART II:

REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT

I am, in every sense of the word, a scholar-practitioner. I am both the doctoral student performing this program evaluation and the Interdisciplinary Training Director that created and implemented the diversity pipeline program being evaluated. When I began my doctoral program, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for my dissertation project. Before joining USF, I worked in the admissions field, and I completed a concept paper about increasing access for minority students seeking post-secondary education. But it did not feel authentic as I was not passionate about the topic of enrollment management; it was not an area in which I pictured myself climbing into a leadership role beyond what I had already achieved. I was eager to find something different.

When I expanded my family, it gave me the push that I needed to leave enrollment management and venture into other positions within higher education. I am not sure why I had not done it before, probably a combination of fear of the unknown (what if I left and couldn't find something else?) and imposter syndrome (what if I wasn't good enough to be hired for anything else?). Imposter syndrome is a phenomenon that plagues many a doctoral student (Nori et al., 2020; Parkman, 2016), and this is particularly true for minorities (Chrousos & Mentis, 2020). Nevertheless, the drive to have a more flexible and meaningful job so I could tend to my infant daughter while still fulfilling my professional goals was stronger than any other influencing factor. It was then that I found the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC), completely by chance. When I read the job description for training coordinator, my starting role

with the center, it did not seem like the perfect fit. There were tasks in the job description that I had never performed before, but somehow, deep in my gut, I knew that I was capable of learning how to do them and do them well.

The organizational structure of FCIC was quite difficult for me to grasp at first glance. Training Coordinator for the Interdisciplinary Training Program at a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)…I had no clue what I was getting into, but it combined several interests of mine: post-secondary education, recruitment, training, and disabilities. I knew I wanted to remain in higher education administration, I also knew that I was good at managing resources and student affairs, and I had some experience, both personal and professional, in the disability field. I had undergraduate and graduate training in psychology and education as well as short stints as a teacher and behavior assistant. In addition, and more importantly, I had family members with disabilities, and I had witnessed their experiences in the world and was excited about the opportunity to contribute to the field of inclusion through education. And so, in 2016 I took a leap of faith and leaned into my new training role. And, oh my, what a learning experience it has been! Some of my toughest challenges, especially with racism and sexism have taken place during my years in the field of higher education administration; but also, my most pivotal learning curves and professional development. I have encountered the most passionate and caring coworkers — I have never met a group of people more committed to their work than the folks at the FCIC. It was during my time as training coordinator that I secured my very first mentor, Dr. Jolenea Ferro, who had a crucial role in showing me what I was capable of achieving by guiding me, believing in me, and giving me the lessons and tools that I needed to succeed.

A few years into my tenure at FCIC, I was promoted to Training Director. One of my first actions was offering one of my nieces an opportunity to volunteer with me at the UCEDD. I had done this at my previous job, and it was an enjoyable learning experience for her. It was a win-win for me because she helped me around performing some routine office tasks that I did not have as much time to get to with my new responsibilities. At the time, my niece was a young adult with disabilities that was struggling to find her place in the world, just like many other teens her age. I believed that exposing her to different work settings might help give her an idea of what she could do professionally in the future. Her challenges in pursuing professional endeavors were exacerbated by negative On-the-Job-Training (OJT) experiences she had engaged in before.

The state of Florida, through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, offers eligible youth with disabilities the opportunity to gain work experiences that will help them acquire employable skills. My niece had undergone an evaluation process that suggested career paths based on the results of the evaluation assessment, and that was her first obstacle. She had always been inclined towards the arts and office work, but her assessments suggested multiple trades far from her actual interests (baker, animal caregiver, production worker, etc.). The results of her assessments were very frustrating to her. Nevertheless, she had an open mind and accepted several OJT opportunities in the suggested trades, with disappointing results. The placement sites did not offer her appropriate accommodations. In addition, she felt like she was being taken advantage of, and sent to perform grunt work that actual employees did not want to perform. She received no guidance, no mentorship, and no actual skills development. To top it all off, she felt discriminated against based on her race and looks. She was told her hair was too big or not to speak Spanish while on-site (her first language). She left those experiences feeling very defeated.

Through her time volunteering with FCIC, she mentioned that she felt most comfortable when in our office. When we leaned into that conversation it made me realize that the Interdisciplinary Training Program was the perfect setting for an OJT placement site. We had the resources, the capacity, and the understanding of the disability field to create meaningful training experiences for youth with disabilities. In addition, I had been searching for ways to 1) increase the diversity of our trainee cohorts *and* bring in community trainees, i.e., trainees that could go through our training program without being tied to our academic degrees. Many other centers in our network were already successfully incorporating community trainees into their training cohorts and this was something we were lacking. How could we be inclusive as a UCEED if we were not inviting community members to expand their leadership and advocacy skills through our interdisciplinary training program? How could we recruit for diversity if we were not promoting it from within? And so, Community Scholars was born.

When thinking about my own biases as I engage in this evaluation work, which I recognize can put off many an empirical researcher, I first want to say that if it were not for my biases, my lived experiences, my relationship to disabilities, and my professional acumen I would not have engaged in this work. It is because of my biases, which inform my desire to promote inclusion, diversity, and most especially social justice and equity that I have been able to produce a quality OJT program for youth with disabilities...I want to celebrate my biases through my work, not deny them. It was the combination of all these variables that sparked Community Scholars (CS). And I do not know that the program would have been created otherwise. Yes, it was bias that made me want to create a program that would potentially benefit a family member, but also many other people like her. It was because of my personal biases and

not in spite of them that today we have a successful program that is training youth with disabilities, striving to demonstrate that there is much for them to achieve.

Ethical Considerations

I would be remiss to assume readers should blindly trust my judgment without providing any type of reliability and accountability measures for this inquiry. To ensure a fair assessment of the CS program there were steps that I took to increase credibility, which included using Improvement Science as the conceptual framework for my Dissertation in Practice (DiP); the use of critical questions as safeguards to complement the inquiry questions and their analysis; and conducting a Critical Friends Group session with peer reviewers. Below follows a discussion of how each of these strategies guided the development of CS and its subsequent evaluation.

Improvement science (IS) is an applied science that "emphasizes innovation, rapid-cycle testing in the field, and spread in order to generate learning about what changes, in which contexts, produce improvements" (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, n.d., para. 2). It is multidisciplinary drawing from many different fields and relies heavily on a combination of professional wisdom with the use of IS methodologies and change tools (IHI, n.d.a). The use of IS requires planned change backed up by the use of measures and testing. First, a clear measurable goal must be set followed by rapid and iterative cycles of testing. Data from each cycle are used to determine changes and improvement opportunities. Knowledge gained from each cycle is leveraged to expand improvement and scale change up in a sustainable way (Langley et al., 2009). In addition, the use of the Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect (SIAR) cycles not only promotes the use of planning, implementing, and data analysis, but it goes a step further and inculcates reflection and critical thinking (Perry et al., 2020). This exercise in critical thinking and reflection encourages not only the identification of personal

biases affecting the construction of meaning and the selection of methodologies, but it also forces the self-recognition of assumptions that may influence the interpretation of the results. IS promotes the use of data along with reflexivity, helping curb researcher bias. Next, I complemented the use of IS by utilizing evaluation report writing guides for improved validity.

Vassallo (2004a) suggested that evaluation reports are a "management instrument for understanding, monitoring, or improving the performance of a project" (p. 278). These reports can support learning for change and require reflection in the planning, progress, and completion stages of an evaluation (Vassallo, 2004a). Furthermore, Vassallo (2004b) suggested that having an awareness of potential biases can improve the evaluation report and reduce threats to its validity. He suggested that this consciousness can be achieved by employing critical questions as safeguards when evaluating results (Vassallo, 2004b). When analyzing the results of the evaluation, I was guided by the inquiry questions which focused on the program's goals. But I also used the critical questions suggested by Vassallo (2004b) which encompassed the scope of work and also focused on progress, intended or unintended outcomes, objectives, implementation, resources, alignment, policy, stakeholders, and end results. Having this additional layer of questioning supplementing the inquiry questions helped identify potential factors affecting credibility, such as the configuration of survey questions, the timing of observations, the completeness of observations, and attitudes towards participants. Ensuing, an additional safeguard measure that I utilized was that of a Critical Friends Group.

Critical friends are partners in learning and inquiry that support the professional development of a scholar-practitioner by providing insight and subsidizing their autonomy in creating knowledge related to their practice (Kember et al., 1997). Critical friends serve as consultants of sorts and elicit reflection and offer the researcher impartial feedback (Kember et

al., 1997). My critical friends included a fellow doctoral student and a work colleague in a different department. From inception, to implementation, to evaluation, my critical friends provided very honest and neutral feedback, aiding me in brainstorming through areas of concern, and helping me adopt a more objective approach to my inquiry. Beyond having unstructured meetings throughout my dissertation writing process, my critical friends and I held a formal meeting once my data collection and initial analysis were complete. We used a conversation protocol to guide the discussion of my results borrowed from my time at the AUCD Leadership Academy. The format encompassed a 15-minute uninterrupted presentation of my work followed by another 15-minute critical friends discussion which I only listened to but did not engage in. The last part of the protocol involved a free-associating conversation in which I had to be willing to receive suggestions and feedback. In the meeting, the critical friends or peer reviewers, delivered reactions and opinions that deepened my understanding of the results by infusing perspectives different than my own, scrutinizing my process, and questioning my assumptions (Blake & Gibson, 2021; Creswell, 2014). These conversations enhanced my inquiry process, supported my professional integrity, and reflectively helped inform my next steps.

I did not engage in this inquiry without awareness of my own biases, and I made use of the tools and strategies mentioned in this section to ascertain that the work inspired by my biases did not taint the results of the evaluation. I believe the narrative and analysis presented in chapters four and five will clearly show that results were not influenced or swayed to achieve my desired program goals, to the contrary, the results will show both successes and failures and provide plenty of opportunities for improvements from cycle to cycle. I will never discredit or undermine how my background, my family, my personality, my beliefs, and the way I interface with the world were the foundation on which CS was built. My field of study, my energy,

emotionality, mentality, and professional wisdom guided me. The way that my brain works, how I care for people, and the way that I infused my ideas and spice into creating this program made it unique. Furthermore, it is because I have been in contact with myself while engaging in this work that I was able to identify and use my biases in the creative process without letting them sway the final report, which would have made my Dissertation in Practice (DiP) an exercise in futility. Putting my life force into CS and my DiP transformed me completely and will forever be a pivotal part of my journey. As a scholar-practitioner, the most valuable lesson I will take with me from this experience is the knowledge that I can both celebrate my biases while also being reflective about their role in my inquiry. I end this reflexivity statement with a quote from one of my favorite philosophers, Immanuel Kant, which illustrates my work philosophy:

"Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play."

CHAPTER 4:

MEASURES

The Community Scholars (CS) program was created to promote post-secondary educational attainment for youth with disabilities while training them on employable administrative skills. Furthermore, the program aimed to increase the diversity of the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC) interdisciplinary training programs by serving as a recruitment pipeline. Ultimately, the long-term outcome of CS would benefit the participants and the FCIC and promote equity for minoritized groups by infusing the field of behavioral health with prospective culturally competent and diverse providers. To improve and change the program constructively and proactively, the scholar-practitioner decided to engage in an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of CS in achieving its goal of promoting post-secondary educational attainment in its participants, the focus being not so much on employment pathways but on enrollment management strategies. This chapter will present the evaluation results in a report format. An evaluation report is a "management instrument for understanding, monitoring, or improving the performance of a project" (Vassallo, 2004, p. 278). Therefore, this format will allow for the data review to determine the Community Scholars' process (implementation) and performance (effectiveness).

To accelerate learning for improvement, the training director decided to employ Improvement Science (IS) as an evaluation framework. IS evaluation efforts are user-centered and problem-focused, with an approach that involves an iterative process that results in continuous improvements that spread faster and effectively (Langley, 2009). This means that as a

program is being implemented, it can change from cycle to cycle because the purpose is to find what's not working and change it or improve it. For the evaluation of CS, the focus will be on the first three Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect (SIAR) cycles (Perry et al., 2020). SIAR cycles lasted an average of 13 weeks (93 days), and they tested for change and improvement through a repetitive approach (Perry et al., 2020). Data gathering tools included empathy interviews, surveys, and field notes. The following pages will present the data gathered for each cycle, successes, challenges, failures, and implemented improvements after each iteration. In addition, the results of the interview coding analysis and resulting themes will be shared.

Improvement Driving Questions

Implementation *and* initial outcomes of the CS pipeline program were important considerations while analyzing the evaluation results. The central inquiry question and sub-questions during this program evaluation revolved around implementation. How does an OJT program at a UCEDD prepare young people with disabilities to consider post-secondary education as a next step possibility? Can an on-the-job training program rooted in social cognitive career theory help increase participants self-efficacy beliefs and confidence? Furthermore, does an increase in self-efficacy and confidence lead to an augmented interest in attaining post-secondary education for participants? And how did the program respond and adapt to change, such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

Initial program outcomes will be included in this report; understanding how the program was implemented was the primary consideration during the evaluation process. While the results of this inquiry are not meant to be generalizable — the evaluation sample is too small to guarantee reliability — the pragmatism in sharing the implementation steps to help similar disability research centers cannot be underestimated. As a network, the Association of University

Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) serves as a hub to which University Centers on Disabilities (UCEDDs), like FCIC, turn for guidance and technical assistance. The main purpose of the UCEDDs is to connect research with practice and to translate inquiry into exercise. This evaluation report is meant to serve as a technical assistance tool to facilitate change and build the capacity of our network members to develop practices based on research that improve the lives of people with disabilities; there is value in sharing the implementation process along with the results.

General Implementation Process

As discussed in chapter three, program implementation started during the Summer of 2019 and extended to the Spring of 2020, when the first referral was received. However, the process was not straightforward. The first step after the conceptualization of the program was to partner with the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and become a VR-approved employment site. But VR in Florida does not provide or secure On-the-Job-Training (OJT) opportunities directly with its clients; instead, it sources out this activity by contracting employment agencies as vendors. These employment agencies are typically non-profit organizations specializing in career and workforce development and offer employment services as part of their services. Employment agencies, in turn, work with employers to certify them as approved employment sites.

Because FCIC is a university center, it is guided and bounded by its university's policies and procedures. The center cannot decide autonomously to partner with an outside agency. As such, the unit administrator worked with the university's legal department to draft a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the employment agency and the UCEDD. While the terms of the MOU were relatively simple, the review and approval process took six months.

Documents had to be sent back and forth a few times until the employment agency and the university's legal team were satisfied with the terms, especially regarding worker's compensation, should there be an incident. It is worth noting that the employment agency assumed that responsibility in its agreement with FCIC, which ultimately made the agreement possible.

Once the MOU was finalized, and FCIC was approved as an employment site, the Training Director included CS as a grant deliverable and activity for the UCEDD. This step ensured the program's sustainability by guaranteeing time (or FTE) to be dedicated to completing this activity. The Employment agency then requested the creation of a job description, similar to a job posting, with requirements and expectations. Candidates were to be referred to FCIC, and the program would receive a resume, a candidate summary, and the opportunity to interview the referral before accepting or declining the placement based on need and capacity (it is important to note that the training director does not pick out referrals). Lastly, the Training Director began sharing the CS program information with the national network to gain traction and support. One of the goals of IS is to disseminate resources and join together with others in improvement networks (Perry et al., 2020). This guidance has been followed since the beginning of the implementation process by presenting several posters at the annual AUCD conference and offering training webinars to the network on diversity recruitment practices.

Collective Results

Convergent parallel mixed methods were used to design and collect the measures used to determine change and improvement for the CS program. The data were collected from surveys, field notes/observations, and empathy interviews and triangulated to review evidence of change or improvement, determine initial outcomes, and identify themes.

Surveys

The pre-OJT and post-OJT surveys account for the quantitative portion of the evaluation. Surveys were created using university-provided web-based software and distributed electronically to each participant. All participants were provided with access to a computer and internet connection to complete the surveys, or they could complete them at home. The pre-OJT survey was administered to the participants between weeks one and two of the OJT experience and focused on the participant's perceived confidence (self-efficacy) in two areas: administrative skills and self-advocacy skills. The pre-OJT survey had eight administrative skills criteria which the participants self-rated from not confident to very confident. The self-advocacy section had six criteria from which the participants self-rated from not confident to very confident. The post-OJT survey was administered after the end of the OJT experience. It measured confidence in the same two focus areas – administrative skills and self-advocacy skills – and whether the participant had intentions of pursuing post-secondary education due to their participation in the CS program, which was correlated to goal setting.

The survey results for all three participants show an overall increase in confidence in performing administrative skills (see Table 1). Additionally, the results show that in the self-advocacy skills category, there was no real change in confidence levels, except for the very confident scale point, for which there was a slight increase. The post-OJT survey also asked participants if they were interested in pursuing post-secondary education due to the OJT experience. 100% of participants responded that they strongly agreed with that statement. The interview results, for which a collective analysis is offered next, mirrored the results of the surveys.

Table 1

Crosstabulation of Survey Results

Scale	Pre-OJT admin		Post-OJT admin		Pre-OJT self-advocacy		Post-OJT self-advocacy	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Very confident	1	4	2	8	4	22	5	28
Confident	9	38	16	67	7	39	6	33
A little confident	9	38	5	21	6	33	6	33
Not confident	5	21	1	4	1	6	1	6
Total	24	100	24	100	18	100	18	100

Note. Cycles #1 through #3. Confidence is correlated to self-efficacy.

Interviews

The empathy interviews used as part of the CS program, which serve as qualitative measures for this program evaluation, were unique because they were meant to elicit an understanding of the participants' experience and emotions with a system or process (Perry et al., 2020). While an interview protocol was used to guide empathy interviews for all participants (see Appendix D), natural conversation was encouraged, and organic responses were accepted and celebrated. Three very different conversations illustrated the participants' feelings about the OJT experience, their struggles, successes, and goals. Individual interview details are shared in the cycle discussion following this section.

Coding

The three interviews rendered 136 open codes. Interviews were recorded via video conferencing and then transcribed. Transcriptions were uploaded to MAXQDA to perform coding, add comments, and organize the codes. Based on Saldaña's (2021) guidance, the evaluator used a two-cycle approach to code the data. In the first round of InVivo coding, the evaluator utilized the participants' own words to create codes. This allowed for a more nuanced approach to understanding the participants' feelings and perceptions of their OJT experience

within CS. During the second round, the codes were reduced through descriptive coding. This descriptive approach allowed the evaluator to hone in on the general tone of the responses to questions (Saldaña, 2021). From the descriptive codes, four main categories were generated: self-improvement, individualized training, mentorship, and post-secondary education (see Figure 3). The categories were then further collapsed into themes of Self-Efficacy (self-improvement), Outcome Expectations (individualized training and mentorship), and Goals (post-secondary education). The main categories in the coding analysis match the intervention components of the Community Scholars framework, which suggests that the original design based on SCCT to promote self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals was practical.

Self-Efficacy was a big topic during the interviews. Participants reflected on how their OJT experience and administrative training helped them improve in several areas, including confidence in their abilities to work, grow, learn, communicate, cope with stress, develop time-management skills, and foster work and academic interests. Self-efficacy codes shared by Scholar #2, and which related to their participation in the program included: *"I am improving, breaking out of my shell"*, "*allowed me to flourish*", and "*allowed me to grow*". Scholar #1 shared: "*I didn't get nervous*", "*I can actually perform these tasks*", and "*I feel more independent*." Consequently, all participants expressed a conclusive belief that they were now better prepared to embark on their next academic or work-related journey with a strong sense of capacity.

Regarding Outcome Expectations, their outlook on what they could now do was broader than when they started the OJT process. Participants acknowledged the impact of an individualized training plan on their ability to focus and engage in creative work of interest to them. Furthermore, they engaged in substantial conversation about what they thought the OJT

program would be and what it actually felt going through it. For example, Scholar #3 shared: "*it'll be hard to focus*", "*online is not for me*", and "*what is the point of this?*" Those preconceptions of the OJT turned into positive reviews praising the flexibility of the online environment, the benefits of collaborating and interacting with others, the gains in practical knowledge, and feeling safe and engaged in the OJT environment. Furthermore, the participants all appreciated the value of the experience for the personal and professional growth they achieved through the exercise.

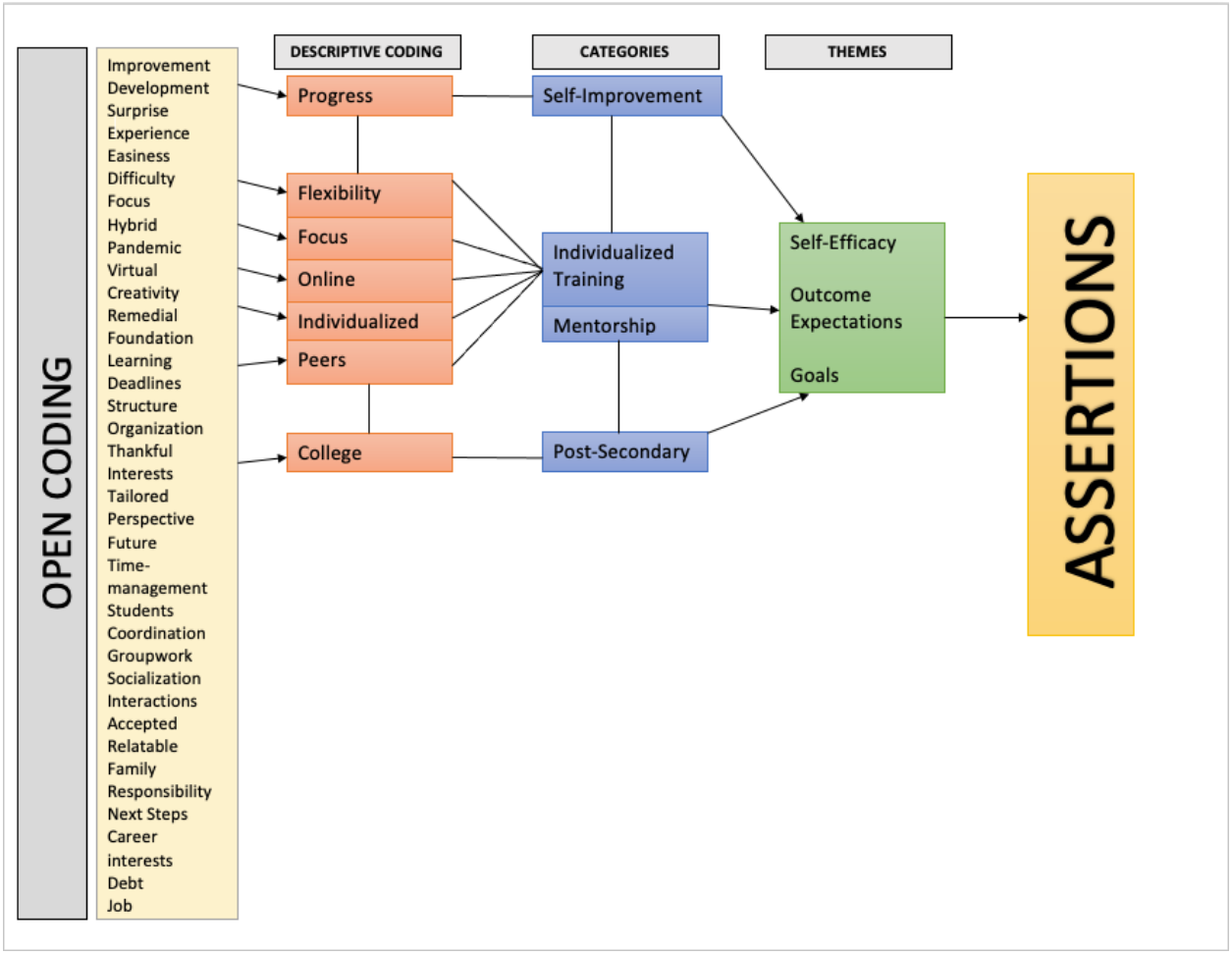
Perhaps, the most telling part of the interviews came when exploring the theme of Outcome Expectations which included the mentorship component. The participants felt strongly that this was an impactful factor of the OJT experience, and important statements were made that corroborated that assertion. Related to working with mentors or peers, Scholar #1 shared: "*it was eye opening*", "*I felt accepted*", "*they are just like me*", "*I don't have to do it alone anymore*", "*relatable*." Scholar #3 shared: "*I loved talking to you guys*", "*it makes it easier*." Scholar #2 shared: "*I got the better part of the deal*" and "*it's been beneficial to me*." It is important to point out that all the participants were purposely or organically matched with at least one mentor or peer that shared some of their same demographics, like race, age, or disability status. And the most insightful interview comments regarding enjoying the mentorship component were directed at those mentors with whom the participants shared a similar background.

Lastly, for the Goals theme, participants confirmed during their interviews that they intended to pursue post-secondary education soon. Interestingly, they all confessed to being nervous about the concept of pursuing new or continued post-secondary education before their participation as CS. For instance, Scholar #1 shared: "*I didn't see this in my future*." Scholar #2 mentioned: "*I feel like graduate school would be the necessary next step*." Scholar #3 shared: "*it*

is really big", "*it looks like it'd be hard*", "*I'll regret going to college*", and "*I don't know what to do*". Ultimately, they all stated their increased interest in pursuing post-secondary education and affirmed that the college advising sessions helped them understand which steps to take next should they decide to move forward with college applications. The following section will delve into each CS cycle's individual survey and interview results.

Figure 3

Coding of Empathy Interviews



Note. This figure contains some but not all of the open codes for the empathy interviews.

SIAR Cycles

As discussed in chapters two and three of this dissertation, the ISDiP model of improvement recommends using SIAR cycles to test implementation and improvement in educational settings (Perry et al., 2020). Borrowing from the Plan-Do-Study-Act framework (PDSA), SIAR cycles support a disciplined approach to evaluating a program's design and execution. Furthermore, this framework helps practitioners gain insight into change ideas while allowing for program modifications along the way (Perry et al., 2020). The use of SIAR cycles through the implementation of CS resulted in rapid and sustainable program improvements that were crucial for effective program delivery. As a reminder, the SIAR cycles for this evaluation lasted an average of 13 weeks (93 days). Below you will find a thorough look at the first three cycles of community scholars.

Each cycle presentation will offer a short participant profile with a demographics table and be broken down into the four main SIAR components. In the Strategize sections, you will learn about cycle planning, specifically the working details before implementation takes place; in the Implementation sections, you will learn about how the planning was executed and how each component of CS (training, mentoring, and college advising) was accomplished; in the Analyze sections, cycle data collected from the measures discussed in chapter three will be presented and interpreted to allow for learning for improvement (Perry et al., 2020); and finally, the Reflection sections will provide insight into opportunities and challenges as well as suggested improvements for following cycles. The evaluator's field notes and observations are infused into the narrative of the cycles to offer reflections on happenings, challenges, improvements, and possible biases.

SIAR Cycle One

Scholar #1 was a 19-year-old female Latina that joined the OJT program as its first participant. She was living with both developmental disabilities and special healthcare needs when she started her experience. She completed her high school diploma through a Homeschooling program and was interested in both administrative office work and the arts. Anxious, shy, and very charismatic, Scholar #1 had no formal work experience and a few failed OJT placements. In sharing about her experience during her participation in CS, Scholar #1 (personal communication, October 28, 2021) said that completing her OJT with the FCIC:

> It taught me to approach situations differently with a lot less anxiety. It taught me I was capable of working a real job where my disabilities would not stop me. The training did truly help me socialize. I learned things like sending and writing emails. I was able to show visitors where to go. It was an experience I really enjoyed and was able to use in further parts of life. I would recommend to others because we all learn in different ways, but I really think someone else may benefit from it too. Not just in the ways I was able to learn, but maybe even more.

Table 2

SIAR Cycle #1 Summary

SIAR Cycle #1	Details
Duration	12 weeks
Location	On campus (first six weeks) Remote (last six weeks)
Challenges	IT, COVID-19, Entry-Level Skills, Interview Work Account, Remote Work, Job Description, Interview
Improvements	Process
Participant	**Demographics**
Gender	Female
Age	19-year-old
Ethnicity	Latina Self
Disability	Special Healthcare Needs
Schooling	Highschool Diploma, Homeschooled
Housing	Living with parent-caregiver Participated unsuccessfully in previous OJTs No work or college experience
Work Experience	Volunteer with FCIC
Academic Interests	Arts MS Office Archiving
Administrative Training	Web Photography
Self-Advocacy & Disability Training	YouthHood, Webinars, Symposium, Advocacy Group Training Director Faculty member Communications & Marketing Officer
Mentoring	Peer Mentors
College Advising	2.5-Hour Session, College Visit
Outcomes	Increased confidence in Administrative Skills. No change in confidence for Self-Advocacy skills. Reported interest in pursuing post-secondary education

Strategize

Cycle one lasted 12 weeks, starting in February 2020 and ending in April 2020. The Training Director requested an onboarding meeting with Scholar #1 before the beginning of her OJT to create the individualized training plan, which included interests, needs, goals,

motivations, expectations, concerns, requests for accommodations, and the Trainee Enrollment Form. The individualized training plan provided the information necessary to ensure that the training activities offered to the Scholar were appropriate, of interest, and met her expectations. It also facilitated the selection of mentors. The Scholar was scheduled to work in the office 20 hours a week. The schedule was made flexible and reviewed each week to allow the Scholar to attend other activities as needed, such as medical appointments. During onboarding, Scholar #1 indicated that she was interested in the arts field. In her free time, the Scholar painted, drew, created artisanal jewelry, and engaged in photography. With this information, work opportunities that would incorporate her artistic talents and job interests were created. Based on her interests and skills, the Scholar was matched to work with the Training Director, the Communications and Marketing Officer, and a faculty member as mentors.

Implement

During SIAR Cycle #1, the scholar was provided with several opportunities and activities, both in-person and remote, to learn administrative skills while engaging in work that interested her personally. Administrative training activities for which the Training Director served as a mentor included essential training in word processing software, email, business writing (emails and letters), mailing, document archiving, creating a LinkedIn account, and video conferencing tools. The Scholar received formal certificates of completion for all these training activities to add to her portfolio, resume, and LinkedIn account. The Scholar also engaged in a website design project with the Communications and Marketing Officer and a Faculty member. These creative training activities appealed to the Scholar's interests. They included tasks such as selecting photographs for a new inclusion resources website and gathering quotes from people with disabilities to have on the website's education resources section.

Scholar #1 also participated in self-advocacy and disability policy training through several tools and activities. The most comprehensive was the use of a self-directed transition module called YouthHood, which focuses on secondary education and the transition of youth with disabilities (http://www.youthhood.org/index.asp). This module was developed by the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET) at the Institute on Community Integration (ICI) at the University of Minnesota. The Minnesota ICI is a UCEDD like the FCIC, which has an intensive focus on disability policies and practices to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities (ICI, n.d.). In addition to the course, the Scholar attended USF's 5th Annual Learning Symposium: Civic & Community Engagement Across the Curriculum. Participation in this symposium was valuable for two main reasons. The first was that it focused on intrapersonal development, which helped the Scholar learn about the value of their voice and its power through civic and community engagement. Secondly, the event allowed her to network with other university staff, which was part of her OJT contract. Other self-advocacy and disability policy activities included watching a transition planning video tutorial and joining the Think College Emerging Advocates Group. The purpose of the ThinkCollege group is to have participants learn and share information about advocacy and self-advocacy, and it is led by and for people with disabilities (ThinkCollege, n.d.). ThinkCollege is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion, a UCEDD at UMass Boston.

The final implementation step was the college advising session. College advising was a two-step process for Scholar #1. At program completion, the training director offered Scholar #1 a one-one extended college advising session, which took about two-and-a-half hours. Preparation for the advising session included having the Scholar bring a list of at least five possible careers of interest. The Scholar mentioned during the interview, which will be discussed in the next

section, that she had discovered ways in which what she learned in the OJT could be applied to art-related jobs. For example, she associated file archiving with becoming a museum curator. She showed interest in obtaining certificates from non-accredited art institutes but understood that their face value was less in the job market. Because of her financial and personal situation, it was recommended she start her college experience at a community college and then transfer, if she wished, to a university. The session also covered mention of financial aid and scholarships she was eligible for to help pay for tuition expenses. The college advising session was supplemented by a visit to the College of the Arts (CAS) at USF. During the symposium, Scholar #1 networked with CAS's assistant dean, who invited her for a visit to discuss her interest in the arts, academic offerings, and a tour of the facilities.

Analyze

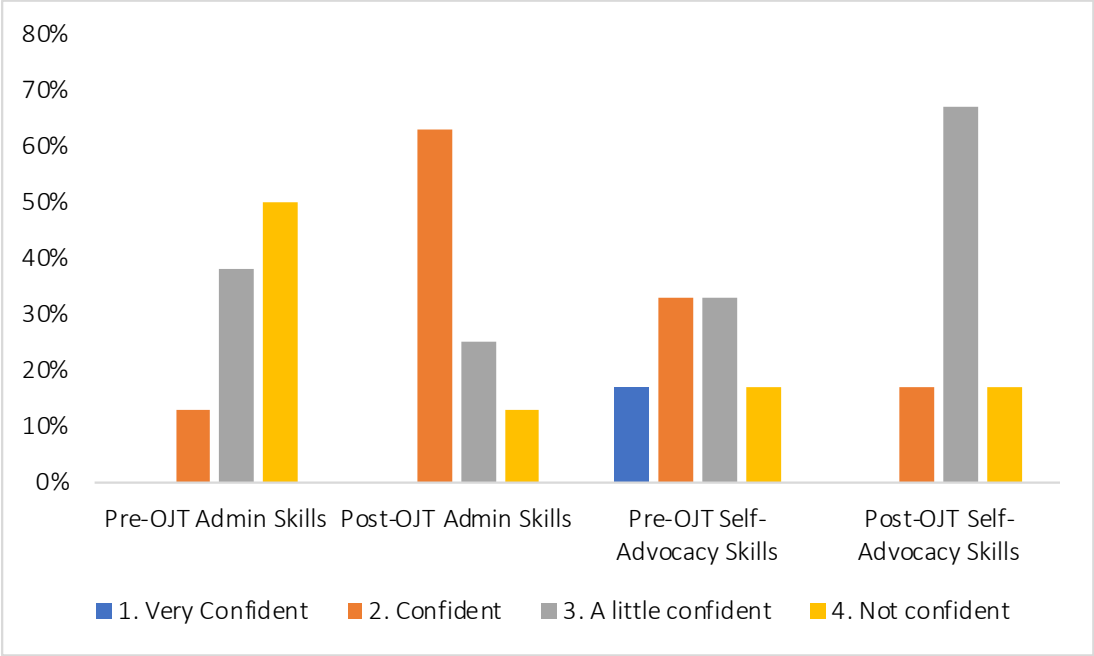
Scholar #1 completed a pre-OJT survey, a post-OJT survey, and an empathy interview. In addition, the Training Director took notes throughout the 12 weeks of the OJT to reflect on the Scholar's participation in the program and possible biases. Notes are infused into the narrative of the cycle.

Survey. The results of the post-survey indicate a 50% increase in confidence in the performance of basic administrative skills for the participant compared to the pre-survey. However, in the self-advocacy category, there was a 33% decrease in confidence in the post-survey results when compared to the pre-survey. The main decreases in confidence occurred in the survey points related to listening and learning, self-determination, and reaching out to others. When her survey responses are compared to her comments about self-advocacy questions for the empathy interview, there is a stark difference in opinion and attitude. This discrepancy leads us to believe that maybe this was an odd survey result, meaning she may have misunderstood the

questions or the rating scale. Furthermore, Scholar #1 indicated in the post-OJT survey that she intended to pursue post-secondary education at the community college level due to her participation in CS. This intention was confirmed during the interview.

Figure 4

Survey Results SIAR Cycle #1



Interview. Some of the themes captured in the interview with Scholar #1 included the impact of peer mentoring and self-improvement. She reflected on how much she valued and enjoyed having the opportunity to interact with peers with whom she shared age, race, and interests, among other things. Scholar #1 indicated that her peer mentors told her "You are like us." She repeatedly indicated that these interactions, which occurred organically through working in person at the office, increased her self-confidence and boosted her morale. She went as far as saying that it was because she could see so much of herself in her peers that she now believed that going to college was a possibility when before, she considered it out of her reach. She also revealed that she could now do things she did not think she was capable of doing before

the OJT, such as writing emails or asking for accommodations. And while the participant indicated an interest in pursuing post-secondary education, this interest was not in the behavioral health field, but in her initial expressed interest of the arts.

Employment. Finally, one of the objectives of OJT placements is that they result in employment, either with the OJT site or elsewhere. Though Scholar #1 was not hired by FCIC immediately after OJT completion, in the Summer of 2022, she was contracted through one of FCIC's projects as talent for a video production for a community awareness campaign. While this was a temporary placement, it gave Scholar #1 an entry-level, paid assignment in the behavioral health field in which she could impact her community.

Reflect

Several challenges and opportunities for improvement were present during this cycle. Challenges included technical difficulties with the new accounts system, misalignment of entry-level skills, transitioning the training experience to virtual, and losing the peer-to-peer interaction opportunities with campus closures provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon completing this training cycle, several improvements were made to the CS program. These included updating the department's approval flow for new staff accounts, offering a remote OJT experience, creating a more thorough job description, and assessing the interview process.

Visitor Staff Account. Scholars joining the OJT program at FCIC are entered into AUCD's National Information and Reporting Systems database (NIRS), and a new visitor staff account is created for them. The visitor staff account allows them to gain access to a work email as well as other university resources used in everyday work activities, such as access to desktops, MS office, etc. Visitor staff accounts are created by request to the department through Archivum. Unbeknownst to us, the designated department contacts who received the request during Cycle

#1 were outdated. This technical difficulty resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to generate a visitor staff account for Scholar #1 and limited her access to work resources. The resulting improvements included updating the designated contacts for account creation requests at the department level. The request flow was also modified to include emailing designated contacts ahead of time to inform them that a request is coming and the level of urgency for processing.

Job Description. Before CS started, a basic job description with minimum qualifications and expectations was submitted to the employment agency to recruit referrals. It was quickly learned that thoroughness was needed in the recruitment process regarding basic entry skills for successful participation of scholars in the CS program. For Scholar #1, the base knowledge was not what expected. An assumption of basic computer competencies was made, such as using emails or word processors, which the Scholar did not possess. A great deal of the time during the first two weeks was used to teach the Scholar how to use basic communication tools to perform the required training. As a result, an updated the job description was created for the next program cycle to clarify the necessary entry-level skills. The agency committed to screening candidates and testing them in this area before referring them to FCIC for placement.

Remote Work. Cycle #1 started at the beginning of February 2020 and extended to April 2020. Unfortunately, the timing of this cycle coincided with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States and the myriad of campus closures that followed it, which included that of our university. The Interdisciplinary Training program office started remote work mid-March of 2020, which meant that Scholar #1 would not be able to work in person any further. To remedy this situation, and with agreement from the Scholar, a proposal was created to continue the OJT remotely and presented that to the employment agency as a viable option. The proposal described how all the proposed activities could be accomplished through remote

communication, tools, and software. The employment agency accepted, and a transition to remote work was made for the remainder of the experience. Transitioning to remote work did not come without its challenges, including, most notably, the loss of peer mentors.

Empathy Interview. The interview with Scholar #1 was in person, lasted a little more than an hour, and was conducted after completion of the OJT. It was a unique conversation because her mother and caregiver attended the interview appointment, remained throughout, and participated by offering responses to questions and interjecting Scholar #1 on several occasions. From a cultural standpoint, it was unsurprising that the mother attended the interview, and her participation was meaningful. The mother was able to infuse the interview with her perspective and concerns as a caregiver, expressing, for example, frustration with the OJT career suggestions and placement process. She felt as though the guidance her child was receiving was not personalized to her needs and interests and it needed to be in order to be engaging and meaningful for Scholar #1. In Latino culture, parents are known to be very involved in their children's lives well into adulthood; this can be exacerbated by having a child with a disability (Magaña, 2006). While the training director explained on several occasions that it was preferred that Scholar #1 give her answers uninterrupted, the contributions of the parent-caregiver certainly enriched the information collected for the program evaluation.

The mother's participation in the interview was also likely intensified by the willingness of the training director (the interviewer) to allow her to contribute to the session. The training director, as a Latina, internalized, given her socio-cultural background, that asking the mother to leave the interview would have been perceived as disrespectful and unproductive to the overall interview session as it might have created tension for all participants. Nonetheless, participation of the parent likely inhibited Scholar #1's responses. To avoid this type of third-party interjection

in future cycles, subsequent scholar interviews were to be conducted via video conferencing, and a request was made for participants to attend the interviews alone. Furthermore, for SIAR Cycle #3, the training director invited a second interviewer, a training staff assistant, to the final interview to help identify any possible factors or biases that could affect the interview results. The rationale behind this decision was that in the event that a scholar's guest was to join the interview unprompted or uninvited, the second interviewer would serve as a facilitator and gently guide back the conversation to the scholar and their responses. In addition, after the interview, both the training director and the staff assistant could compare notes. This comparison exercise would allow the training director to get a second opinion on the undertakings of the interview and its final results for an additional layer of validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014).

SIAR Cycle Two

Scholar #2 was the second participant with the CS program. He was a 30-year-old Latino male with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Timid but incredibly resourceful, Scholar #2 already possessed an undergraduate degree and had no job experience. He came into the OJT wanting to learn more about professional writing, web design, and resource dissemination. Scholar #2 (personal communication, October 28, 2021) regarded his experience:

> As someone who is disabled, I quickly arrived at the realization that the job market can be an intimidating space that is full of uncertainty. I immediately identified with FCIC's mission, and felt it was the perfect fit for me…However, certain social structures still exist in the United States and continue to be perpetuated. These barriers often discourage people with disabilities from pursuing continued successful careers. When it came to pursuing my own career after college, I too was met with said barriers. When it came to joining the workforce, I was hesitant for years. My

hesitancy stemmed from my fear of losing vital benefits that supported many aspects of my daily living. Confronting the idea of pulling the social safety net that played a fundamental role in my survival proved to be extremely disheartening and terrifying. Going from being dependent to independent seemed improbable. FCIC helped me to become more independent and confident in my own abilities.

Table 3

SIAR Cycle #2 Summary

SIAR Cycle #2	Details
Duration	18 weeks
Location	Remote
Challenges	Return to Campus, Degree level
Improvements	Permanent Remote Offering, Degree level
Participant	**Demographics**
Gender	Male
Age	30-year-old
Ethnicity	Latino
	Self
Disability	Special Healthcare Needs
Schooling	BA. Political Sciences
Housing	Living with family
Work Experience	None
Academic Interests	Law & Policy
	Scholarly Writing
	Web Design
Administrative Training	Outreach & Social Media
	Disability Policy Brief
Self-Advocacy & Disability	Self-Advocacy Brief & Module
Training	Seminar
	Training Director
	Faculty member
Mentoring	Communications & Marketing Officer
College Advising	2, 1-hour Sessions, Recommendation Letter
Outcomes	Increased confidence levels for Administrative and Self-advocacy skills. Reported interest in pursuing additional post-secondary education at the graduate level.

Strategize

Cycle #2 had a duration of 18 weeks, thanks to an extension requested by Scholar #2 at the end of the regular 12-week period. Cycle #2 started in September 2020 and extended to February 2021. During week one, considered the onboarding week, an individualized training plan was created, and the Trainee Enrollment Form submitted. The individualized training plan provided the information necessary to create training activities for the Scholar appropriate to his level of education and interest. It also facilitated the selection of mentors. The Scholar was scheduled to work remotely, 20 hours a week. The schedule was made flexible and reviewed each week to allow the Scholar to attend other activities as needed, such as medical appointments. During onboarding, Scholar #2 indicated that he was interested in law and policy. He expressed having an interest in writing, design, and disability policy. Planning training activities for Scholar #2 required creative thinking, as he already possessed a bachelor's degree. Any actions assigned to him needed to be more advanced but modest enough not to overwhelm someone who had never held a professional job before. Based on his interests and skills, the Scholar was matched to work with the Training Director, the Communications and Marketing Officer, and a faculty member as mentors.

Implement

During SIAR Cycle #2, the Scholar was provided several opportunities and activities to learn administrative skills while engaging in work that was of interest to him. All three mentors collaborated in guiding the Scholar through completion of these activities. The Scholar engaged in creating written content for one of the center's resource websites, such as education guides. He collaborated with the faculty member in writing these guides to be of professional and scholarly quality. He also helped design the website, selecting images and editing previously created

content to meet quality standards. He collaborated with the Communications and Marketing Officer to create a social marketing campaign to increase the center's outreach to the community through social media. Additional social media tasks included creating posts and using several platforms to post content and resources. Lastly, he was assigned by the training director to write two policy briefs on self-advocacy and disability policy. These briefs' purpose was threefold. The briefs would increase the Scholar's research and writing skills, meet CS's self-advocacy and disability policy training component, and later serve as the building blocks for an FCIC Self-Advocacy core curriculum training module.

Scholar #2 received two advising sessions of one-hour each. Potential academic programs, format, and application time frame were discussed during the first session. In particular, it was stressed how his interest in law could translate to a job in the behavioral health field through an emphasis on policy. During the second college advising session, Scholar #2 seemed to believe that he could not apply to graduate school until he had sufficient professional experience in policy and law. This misconception was address and tips were offered on how to strengthen his resume to submit a robust application to law programs. Scholar #2 was provided with a recommendation letter to include in a graduate or job application.

Analyze

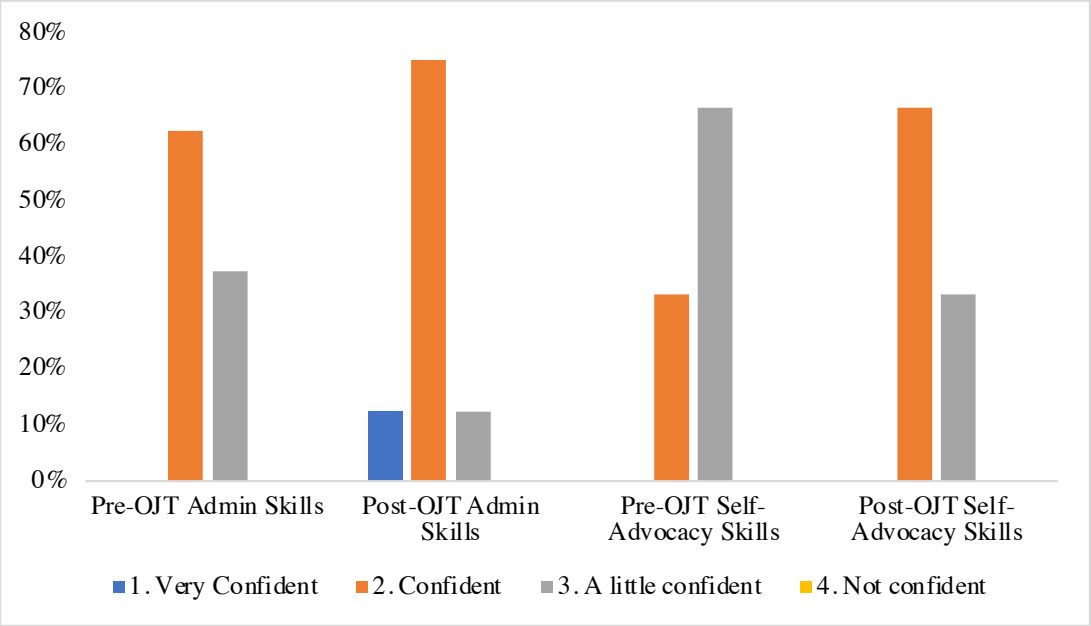
Scholar #2 completed a pre-OJT survey, a post-OJT survey, and an empathy interview. In addition, the Training Director took notes throughout the 18 weeks of the OJT to reflect on the Scholar's participation in the program and possible biases. Notes are infused into the narrative of the cycle.

Surveys. The results of the post-survey indicate a 25% increase in confidence in the performance of basic administrative skills and a 34% increase in self-advocacy skills for the

participant compared with the pre-survey. Furthermore, Scholar #2 indicated in the post-OJT survey that he intended to pursue graduate education due to his participation in CS. This intention was confirmed during the interview.

Figure 5

Survey Results SIAR Cycle #2



Interview. Some of the main themes in Scholar #2's interview were self-improvement, collaboration, and communication. Significantly, he mentioned that as the OJT went along, he started feeling like his contributions to the team were valuable, an incredible statement of self-efficacy. Scholar #2 shared that "especially when it came to working with a team, breaking out of my shell, improving on my communication skills, working virtually with others, and especially when it came to the creative aspects, you actually allow me to flourish." He indicated that he planned to apply to graduate programs in 3-5 years.

Employment. Scholar #2 was hired by FCIC at the end of the OJT experience as a staff assistant with the Interdisciplinary Training Program.

Reflect

Several challenges and opportunities for improvement were present during this cycle. The most significant challenges included the return to campus and the participant's level of education when entering the program. Upon completion of training cycle #2, improvements made to the CS program encompassed an extension of the remote OJT experience, making it an available format for incoming participants, and readjusting the implementation process to accept and accommodate scholars with higher levels of education.

Return to Campus. When FCIC's campus was approved for a partial return to the office, it was requested that Scholar #2 return to the office to continue his OJT activities. There was an expectation that having him come to campus would allow him to interact with student peers, which had a positive impact on Scholar #1 in the previous cycle. However, Scholar #2 was not amenable to returning to campus and felt more comfortable and safer, continuing to work from home given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, and unable to foresee an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that a remote OJT experience be made a permanent delivery option for Community Scholars.

Level of Education. As mentioned in the review of this cycle, Scholar #2 came into the OJT experience having already earned a bachelor's degree. This fact was not perceived as a threat to the structure and function of CS but rather as an opportunity to have the Scholar engage in more advanced tasks and collaborate more closely on activities given his level of academic preparation. One of the goals of CS is to launch its participants into the world of post-secondary education so that they achieve careers that will ultimately allow for the improvement in outcomes for people with disabilities. Consequently, it becomes irrelevant if this is done by assisting community scholars in developing an interest in what would be their next educational

level, whether that be undergraduate or graduate. Most FCIC trainees, composed of trainees who join us through our academic programs, are graduate students as well. While pursuing a career in the behavioral health/sciences field does not necessarily require an advanced degree, many of the career paths available require at least a master's degree level of education (e.g., ABA, SW, Mental Health Counseling, etc.). While the original plan of CS was to promote undergraduate education attainment for its participants, the training director assumed that most of them would only have a high school diploma. Those assumptions had to be confronted and adjusted to meet the reality of the referrals being received. As such, participants with higher education levels were embraced for cycle #2 and future cycles.

SIAR Cycle Three

Scholar #3 was a young, 19-year-old white man with developmental disabilities that joined the CS program as its third participant. He possessed a high school diploma and no previous job experience. Reticent at first but blossoming by the end of the experience, Scholar #3 was searching for an OJT opportunity in which he could learn more about providing IT support in an administrative environment. Scholar #3 shared that the OJT experience with CS met his expectations through offering flexibility and allowing him to figure out his interests and skills at his own pace and as he went along (personal communication, June 18, 2021).

Table 4

SIAR Cycle #3 Summary

SIAR Cycle #3	Details
Duration	10 weeks
Location	Remote
Challenges	Lack of IT work, Poor Connection with Mentor, Self-Advocacy Training Module
Improvements	Trainee profiles, Final OJT Product
Participant	**Demographics**
Gender	Male
Age	19-year-old
Ethnicity	White
Disability	Self
Schooling	Highschool Diploma
Housing	Living with parents
Work Experience	No
Academic Interests	IT
Administrative Training	Form Building, Module development
Self-Advocacy & Disability Training	YouthHood
Mentoring	Training Director, Communications & Marketing Officer, Training Staff Assistant
College Advising	1-hour session, College Fair visit
Outcomes	Reported interest in pursuing post-secondary education

Strategize

Cycle #3 was shorter than the first two, lasting ten weeks, starting in late April 2021 and extending to June 2021. An individualized training plan and the trainee enrollment form were created and submitted during onboarding week. During the introduction interview and onboarding, Scholar #3 indicated that he was interested in IT and design. The individualized training plan provided the information necessary to create training activities for the Scholar appropriate to his level of education and interest. It also facilitated the selection of mentors. Planning training activities for Scholar #3 was a bit challenging as his IT interests did not precisely match our available administrative tasks. The Scholar was scheduled to work remotely,

10 hours a week. The schedule was made flexible and reviewed each week to allow the Scholar to attend other activities as needed, such as medical appointments. Based on his interests and skill level, the Scholar was matched to work with the Training Director, the Communications and Marketing Officer, and the Training Staff Assistant.

Implement

During SIAR Cycle #3, the Scholar was provided limited opportunities and activities to learn administrative skills while engaging in work that was somewhat related to his interests. His mentors cooperated in guiding the Scholar through completion of several activities. The Scholar was involved in creating an academic planning form for a graduate program within the department. He collaborated with the Communications and Marketing Officer in completing the form so that he could engage not only with the content for the document but with its design and accessibility features. Scholar #3 also worked with the training director in completing the Youthhood training for self-advocacy and disability policy development. Additional tasks included creating a PowerPoint with ideas for a new self-advocacy core curriculum training module, for which he collaborated with the staff assistant (previously scholar #2).

Scholar #3 received one college advising session during his last week, which lasted one hour. It was complemented earlier in the cycle by a virtual undergraduate college fair. A discussion of potential academic programs, format, and application time frame ensued during the college advising session. This particular advising session had a heavier focus on the topic of financial aid as it was a primary concern for the Scholar. Scholar was provided with a recommendation letter to include in a college or job application.

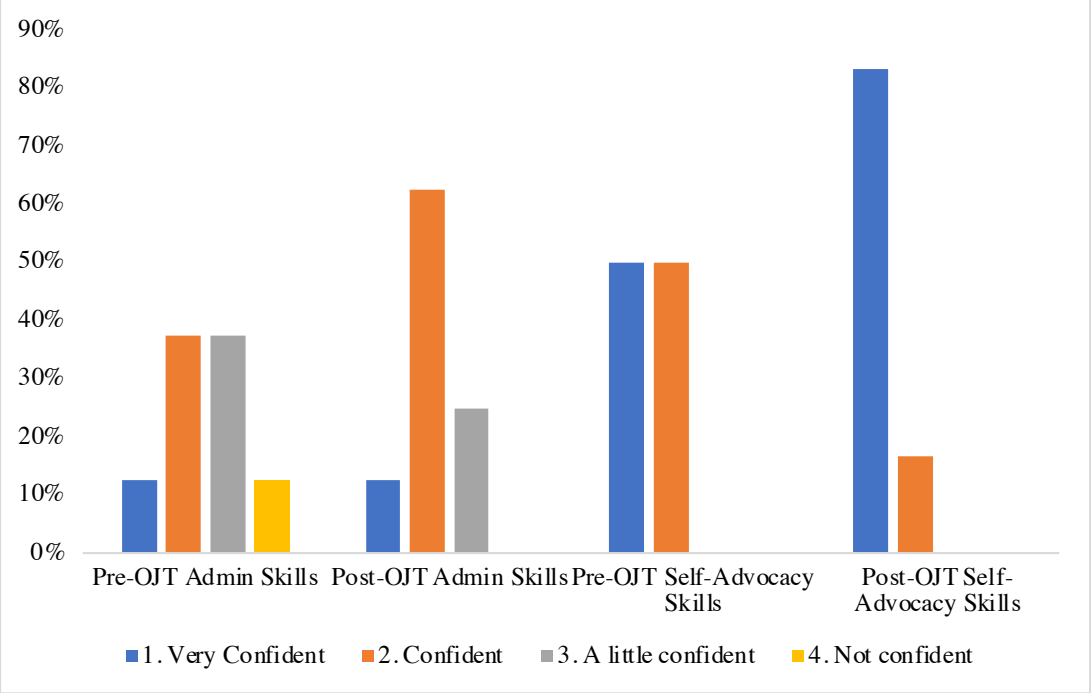
Analyze

Scholar #3 completed a pre-OJT survey, a post-OJT survey, and an empathy interview. In addition, the Training Director took notes throughout the ten weeks of the OJT to reflect on the Scholar's participation in the program and possible biases. Notes are infused into the narrative of the cycle.

Surveys. The results of the post-survey indicate that there was a 25% increase in confidence in the performance of basic administrative skills. Confidence in self-advocacy skills remained even when compared with the pre-survey, though there was an increase of 33% on the very confident scale point. Furthermore, Scholar #3 indicated in the post-OJT survey that he intended to pursue post-secondary education at the college level due to his participation in CS. This intention was confirmed during the interview.

Figure 6

Survey Results SIAR Cycle #3



Interview. Some central themes in Scholar #3's interview were resourcefulness, flexibility, and interaction and collaboration. He enjoyed having access to resources that helped him grow his skills mentioning that the resources offered were “very useful.” In addition, he valued the flexibility of the training plan and its remote delivery saying that it offered him “a training experience with an easier pace”, though he stated not always being fond of online environments. Lastly, he was surprised to have grown to appreciate working with others and collaborating on tasks, which made him feel "very awkward" in the past. Scholar #3 confirmed his intent to pursue post-secondary education during the interview, likely in a science-related field. Interestingly, he mentioned several times during the interview that while he wanted to pursue post-secondary education, he was nervous about accruing potential debt.

Employment. Scholar #3 did not express interest in being hired by FCIC at the end of the OJT experience.

Reflect

As with cycles #1 and #2, there were challenges and opportunities for improvement during this cycle. The most significant challenges included not having an administrative task to provide the participant directly related to his IT interests. Another challenge was a weak initial mentoring relationship between the training director and the participant. And a repeated challenge during this cycle was the ineffectiveness of the self-advocacy training curriculum used with Scholar #1 and Scholar #3. Upon completion of training cycle #3, improvements to the CS program encompassed assigning all future OJT participants a final product they had to create through their experience as a community scholar, which would be determined during the beginning of the cycle to ensure interest and satisfaction. Another improvement was adding a previous Community Scholar as a mentor. Lastly, a reflection on the weakness in using the

Youthhood curriculum to promote self-advocacy in community scholars resulted in the development of an FCIC-owned self-advocacy and transition module for future participants.

IT Tasks. As mentioned previously, Scholar #3 commenced the OJT experience by verbalizing an interest in engaging in IT-related work. At the time of this cycle**,** there were no specific IT-related tasks that could be made available to Scholar #3. After some rumination, it was determined that he would work on the development of a graduate planning form and a PowerPoint draft that could be used as the base point for a future self-advocacy and transition core curriculum training module for trainees. These activities would at least get him working on software that included a design component, another area of interest for him. However, not having IT tasks assigned to the participant made it difficult for him to engage with the work genuinely. During the interview, he mentioned, "not understanding the point of the training" (personal communication). His confusion was resolved by the end of his OJT cycle. It was agreed that moving forward, it would be of value to assign scholars a final OJT product, i.e., at the time of completion, community scholars would have manufactured an activity or item based on their interest and the center's core values that could serve as a resource for other participants or FCIC's constituents.

Mentor. A noteworthy opportunity was having the training staff assistant, previously Scholar #2, serve as a mentor for Scholar #3. Unfortunately, the training director and Scholar #3 did not share a significant connection. The training director noted this perceived attitude in her reflections of the cycle, and it became a concern whether this would affect Scholar #3's OJT outcomes. Nevertheless, scholar #3 bonded with the training staff assistant and built their relationship upon their understanding of shared experiences, including going through the OJT and the challenges that their disabilities presented them when trying to enter the labor force and

pursuing post-secondary education. Ultimately, it was a lesson to the training director on the value of assigning more than one mentor to the participants to increase the possibility of having significant matches that will improve community scholars' overall performance and experience.

Self-Advocacy Training. The unsuccessful implementation of the YouthHood curriculum with Scholar #1 and Scholar #2 prompted us to create our own self-advocacy and transition learning module for OJT participants. The YouthHood curriculum is excellent, but it is designed to be worked on collaboratively, not as an independent activity, which is how it was being utilized with scholars. An FCIC-developed self-advocacy and transition learning module, made in collaboration with the participants, made the content of the self-advocacy and disability policy training more meaningful and relevant to our participants. While the self-advocacy core curriculum training module was not completed immediately after this cycle, it was made utilizing the contributions of all three participants, and it was ultimately developed by Scholar #2, later hired as staff for FCIC.

Summary

Chapter four presented the results of the data gathering and practical measures for the first three SIAR cycles of Community Scholars (CS), as well as analyses of the survey results and interview coding, both collectively and per cycle. Field notes and observations were woven into the narrative and used to supplement the reflections on CS's implementation and short-term outcomes and any evaluator biases or particularities within each SIAR cycle. Improvement Science (IS) served as the evaluation framework, while Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) pinned the cycle interventions and was used to examine the results. Evaluation of the SIAR cycles was broken into four parts; Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect. The strategize subsections elaborated on the steps that were taken to plan and set up each cycle; implementation

covered what was accomplished; the analyze subsections offered an opportunity to reflect upon the evaluation's inquiry questions and determine the results from each cycle; and the reflect subsections presented what improvements were developed at the end of each cycle.

The inquiry questions for this program evaluation asked how an OJT program at a UCEDD prepared young people with disabilities to consider post-secondary education as a next step possibility? Could an on-the-job training program rooted in social cognitive career theory help increase participants' self-efficacy beliefs and confidence? Did an increase in self-efficacy and confidence lead to an augmented interest in attaining post-secondary education for participants? And how did the program respond and adapt to change, such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

The main components of CS, which were guided by SCCT, included offering OJT participants opportunities to receive training, mentoring, and college advising. The program measures for the first three cycles of CS demonstrated that the program was effective in preparing young people with disabilities to consider post-secondary education as a possibility for themselves, with 100% of participants indicating that they intended to pursue post-secondary education as a result of their participation. The program was also effective in helping increase participants' confidence levels for self-efficacy beliefs related to administrative skills, though this was not the case for self-advocacy skills. After each cycle, results were evaluated to identify and respond to changes and needs. Improvements resulting from each cycle included things like creating better job descriptions, adjusting the complexity level of the training components to meet the needs of more advanced participants, and producing tangible OJT results such as briefs or learning modules. Some of the improvements addressed challenges outside its scope of

influence, such as adjusting to accommodate for campus closures and transitions to remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, a list of 136 codes was synthesized from careful review to derive categories and key themes. Criteria used to create the codes demanded that they reflect the participants' voices and that the resulting themes were driven by SCCT's career development model. Four categories emerged from the coding analysis: self-improvement, individualized training, mentorship, and post-secondary education. The categories were collapsed into the themes of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Chapter five will reflect on the program evaluation results, themes, implications, dissemination efforts, and future plans.

CHAPTER 5:

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Community Scholars program at the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities (FCIC) was designed as part of a diversity pipeline program to recruit youth with disabilities to on-the-job (OJT) training opportunities with the center. The OJT experiences aimed to prepare participants to join the workforce in the administrative field while also encouraging the attainment of post-secondary degrees. The program was designed based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) concepts. SCCT as a theoretical framework promotes the development of interventions that can enhance self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal setting for youth with disabilities, therefore boosting career and academic aspirations for this population (Lent & Brown, 2005; Szymanski et al., 2009). Building such a program within the interdisciplinary training function of FCIC was important to its mission of promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The implementation of this program wanted to address a few problems. At the systemic level, it recognized disparities in the delivery of behavioral health services for minoritized people, including people with disabilities, perpetuating inequities for these populations. One of the reasons that these minoritized groups lack access to quality behavioral health services is because there is a dearth of culturally concordant, culturally competent, and disabled providers in their communities (Benton, 2008; Clarke & Majewski, 2013). The lack of diverse providers can be addressed by promoting post-secondary education attainment for minoritized groups (Benton, 2008). However, members of minorities pursue post-secondary education at much lower rates

than their white counterparts (Barnard-Brak et al., 2013; Byars-Winston, 2011). This scarcity of diverse students was also reflected in the training cohorts for FCIC.

The Interdisciplinary Training Program at FCIC is an integrated education program that provides student-trainees with instruction, support, and mentorship from faculty and staff nationally recognized in the field of developmental disabilities. The goal is to enrich the students learning experience and curriculum so that they are more inclusive of people with disabilities in their future practices. The FCIC recruits student trainees from several graduate academic programs, including those that it hosts in collaboration with academic departments at the University of South Florida (USF). Graduate students in these programs are primarily white, female, and identify as not having disabilities. To address the lack of diversity in our training cohorts, it was determined that there was a need to develop a diversity pipeline program. Diversity pipeline programs serve as tools that provide their target populations with experiences or services that will promote educational attainment (Lent & Brown, 2005). Nevertheless, these pipelines work better when implemented earlier in the student's academic career. As such, the training program determined that it needed to address the problem of encouraging youth with disabilities to enroll in post-secondary programs, creating CS.

To assess the effectiveness of CS and understand its implementation process and outcomes, FCIC's training director decided to conduct a program evaluation. The conceptual framework for the evaluation was based on Improvement Science and its use of Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect (SIAR) cycles. The benefits of evaluating the implementation of CS through SIAR cycles rested in its iterative process, which promoted quick and continuous improvement (Perry et al., 2020). The evaluation would use a convergent parallel mixed methodology to extract measures from program surveys, field notes, and empathy interviews.

Evaluation of these measures would help answer: 1) how the OJT program at the UCEDD prepared youth with disabilities to consider post-secondary education, 2) Determine if the program could help increase the participants' self-efficacy beliefs, 3) If an increase in self-efficacy beliefs resulted in augmented interest in post-secondary education, and 4) How the program adapted to change based on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, if successful, the CS program could be scaled up and shared through the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) network as a framework to recruit for diversity.

Discussion of Results

SCCT offers a way to study how individuals make career choices. The theory posits that individual choices are affected by internal and external drivers, which influence each other bidirectionally, affecting career choice (Lent & Brown, 2005). Three main elements in SCCT explain choice and success: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. Self-efficacy is a belief about how well one can perform a task, whereas outcomes are the expected results of any given action (Foud, 2014). Goals are shaped by the interplay between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. SCCT's concepts of self-efficacy and outcome expectations are considered functional constructs for understanding career choice in people with disabilities because they take into account personal preferences, aptitude, and contextual influences in the decision-making process (Lent & Brown, 2005; Szymanski et al., 2009).

The CS program developed several interventions based on SCCT that allowed participants to increase their self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal setting. Creating an individualized training plan provided participants with customized activities revolving around career coaching and training in administrative skills, self-advocacy and disability policy training, mentoring, and college advising. To measure whether or not the

program interventions increased self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations to promote post-secondary education attainment, an evaluation of the results of several data gathering measures the participants completed as part of the program activities was conducted. These measures included pre-OJT and post-OJT surveys and empathy interviews. In addition, the training director took field notes which were integrated throughout the narrative of the evaluation report.

Surveys

The pre-and post-OJT surveys accounted for the quantitative portion of the program evaluation. They were created using a web-based survey software and distributed electronically to each participant at the beginning and end of their OJT experience. The surveys measured confidence levels in the participants' administrative and self-advocacy skills before and after the experience. Confidence levels were correlated to SCCT's self-efficacy beliefs. The survey results for all three participants showed an overall increase in confidence in the performance of administrative skills. Nevertheless, the results showed no significant change in confidence levels for the self-advocacy skills category.

The post-OJT survey also asked participants if they were interested in pursuing post-secondary education due to the OJT experience associated with SCCT's goal setting. All three participants responded that they strongly agreed with that statement and confirmed their desire to pursue post-secondary education. Overall, the survey results show that participation in CS promoted confidence in administrative skills for the participants but was ineffective at increasing confidence levels for self-advocacy skills. The analysis of the interviews paralleled these results.

Themes and Assertions

All CS participants completed an exit empathy interview. The interviews accounted for the qualitative portion of the evaluation measures. Interviews were recorded via video

conferencing and then transcribed. Transcriptions were uploaded to MAXQDA to perform coding, add comments, and organize the codes. There were two rounds of coding, InVivo and descriptive. One hundred thirty-five codes were generated in total.

Further review of the codes revealed emerging patterns in the participants responses yielding four main categories: self-improvement, individualized training, mentorship, and post-secondary education. These categories formed the basis for the three main coding themes of Self-Efficacy (self-improvement), Outcome Expectations (individualized training and mentorship), and Goals (post-secondary education). The interview analysis revealed that participants reported increased self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities and talents because they participated in CS. They also felt better prepared to pursue an administrative job in their fields of interest and confirmed an augmented interest in attaining post-secondary education.

Self-Efficacy

The training interventions for the CS' experience were meant to develop or improve participants' skills in performing administrative and office tasks, expand their understanding of disability policy and their rights at school and the workplace, and explore career and college options. Lent and Brown (2005, 2013, 2019) suggested that an individual's aspirations can be restrained or increased based on the learning settings they have been exposed to, and even more so if the learning environment supports such learning. The individual's perceived improvement on a task or concept positively influences their self-judgment in their capacity to perform that task, the rewards for performing it, and their aspirations to pursue it (Lent & Brown, 2005, 2013, 2019). Through the interview discussions, the participants reflected on how much they felt they had self-improved. They did not necessarily tie their perceived improvement to a specific skill – though they did mention things like communication and writing – but were engrossed in their

general ability to now pursue potential jobs and post-secondary education. These findings suggest that the activities provided through CS offered participants an appropriate learning environment and sufficient supports and were effective at increasing their general self-efficacy beliefs to pursue jobs and post-secondary education.

Outcome Expectations

Individualized training and mentoring were offered as interventions to improve outcome expectations. Outcome expectations are anticipated results stemming from an action (Foud, 2014). Individualizing tasks in areas of interest allowed participants to practice their skills and explore career aspirations. Mentoring, in particular, was critical as it can guide participants' development and career interests (Anderson et al., 2022). Participants reported liking the individualized training and mentorship opportunities reflecting how the learning resources and the training's focus, flexibility, and delivery format positively changed their perception of work. Mentoring proved to be a powerful tool, eliciting the most emotional reactions from the participants, and seemingly influencing the participant's attitudes towards engaging in the OJT and pursuing post-secondary education the most. The outcome expectations theme produced the most considerable amount of codes at 60%, with 43% of those codes relating to mentoring (see Table 5). Peer mentoring stood out as particularly influential, though interestingly, this was not a planned component of CS. The peer mentoring interactions that occurred were formed organically by exposure but proved influential nevertheless in advancing the goal of increasing outcome expectations in the participants.

Table 5

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Theme	Categories	Codes	
		n	%
Self-Efficacy	Self-improvement	39	28
Outcome Expectations	Training (46)	81	60
	Mentorship (35)		
Goals	Post-Secondary Education	16	12
Total		136	100

Goals

The participants all came into the OJT experience unsure of what to expect from it and had no clear goals. In the interviews, they expressed trepidation about their initial ability to pursue post-secondary education. As they explained their journey through the CS program, they reported feeling like post-secondary education was the logical next step. Goals are affected by the interplay between self-efficacy and outcome expectations, so it is not surprising, given the positive impact of the CS interventions on those two concepts, that the participants conveyed an augmented interest in pursuing post-secondary education (Lent & Brown, 2005, 2013, 2019). The analysis of the interviews confirmed that creating training tasks that build upon a participant's skills influence self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, consequently transforming their goals and career and academic choices. The evaluation of the individual cycles provided a more detailed view of the measurement results and the resulting improvements to the CS program.

SIAR Cycles and Improvements

SIAR cycle #1 took the most effort to plan, being the first and the most challenging, having to switch from an in-person delivery to remote work given the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. The cycle lasted a total of 12 weeks. Other challenges during this cycle included IT

difficulties, mismatched entry-level skills, and having a caregiver join the participant's empathy interview. Scholar #1 reported increased confidence in administrative skills but no substantial change in confidence for self-advocacy skills. She also reported an interest in pursuing post-secondary education. Improvements resulting from this cycle involved improving IT workflows, changing the delivery of CS to remote, updating the OJT job description, and making the interview a participant-only event. Scholar #1 was later hired by FCIC to participate in a community awareness campaign.

SIAR cycle #2 was offered fully remote and lasted 18 weeks. This cycle was interesting as Scholar #2 already possessed a bachelor's degree. As a result, the cycle interventions were adjusted to promote higher-level on-the-job training tasks and post-graduate education. Another challenge during the cycle was planning a potential return to campus as the university eased its COVID-19 restrictions. The evaluation showed that the participant had increased confidence in administrative and self-advocacy skills. He also confirmed his intent to pursue post-graduate education. Cycle #2 improvements included formally making CS a remote experience and adapting the cycle interventions to appeal to more academically advanced participants. Scholar #2 was hired to the center as a staff assistant at the culmination of SIAR cycle #2.

SIAR cycle #3 was the shortest, offered online and lasting only ten weeks. Some of the challenges during this cycle encompassed not having interest-specific activities for Scholar #3 to complete in the area of IT, a poor mentor-trainee relationship, and disengagement with the self-advocacy training. The results of the cycle showed that the participant had an increase in confidence for administrative skills but no significant change in confidence for self-advocacy skills. He did report wanting to pursue post-secondary education due to his experience. One improvement from this cycle resulted in the creation of trainee profiles to highlight community

scholars' work on the center's website. Another significant improvement was adding a final tangible product, such as a form, a policy brief, or a learning module that would demonstrate the participants' growth and experience and that could be used in a portfolio for applying for a job or post-secondary program. Lastly, the subpar results of the self-advocacy training component for CS overall demonstrated the need for an in-house self-advocacy and disability policy training module that was made specifically for our scholars and stakeholders. Scholar #2 (hired as a staff assistant) worked with Scholar #3 to lead the development of FCIC's new core curriculum training module on *Self-Advocacy Strategies for Transition-Age Individuals and Beyond*. The module is now used as CS's main self-advocacy and disability policy training tool.

Implementation *and* initial outcomes were the focus of this program evaluation. The program was successful at preparing young people with disabilities to consider post-secondary education as a next step possibility through creating a framework that focused on offering targeted interventions that provided individualized coaching dedicated to administrative skills, mentoring, disability policy and self-advocacy preparation, and college advising. These interventions, rooted in social cognitive career theory, helped increase participants' self-efficacy beliefs and confidence resulting in an augmented interest in attaining post-secondary education. The aim of CS for this evaluation period between 2020 and 2021 was to have 80% of participants report an interest in pursuing pot-secondary education after the experience. The results showed that 100% of the participants confirmed their interest and intention in pursuing pot-secondary education.

Implications and Recommendations

This program evaluation provided a detailed overview of the CS program at FCIC, how IS served as a tool to test for improvement, and how the program can be used as a framework to

recruit for diversity. The following section frames the challenges and lessons learned along with implications and recommendations for practice.

Impact on Practice

The most revealing lessons from the evaluation included celebrating the creative power of personal bias and professional wisdom; discovering the practicality of IS in the disability training field; understanding the importance of organically formed mentoring relationships and their positive impact on the participants' self-efficacy beliefs; harnessing the power of collaborative work to produce training materials; emphasizing the need for added practical measures to better assess improvement for the CS framework; highlighting the need for more inquiry on effective diversity recruitment practices; identifying funding opportunities to support disability recruitment and training work; and disseminating frameworks and evaluation results to scale up diversity recruitment efforts at the national level.

Professional Wisdom

Traditional research standards require that researchers take an objective look at a problem or phenomenon, distance themselves from it personally and emotionally, and extract a truth independent of the subjectivity of the world in which the problem exists. IS on the other hand, focuses on problems that are "embedded in the work of a professional practitioner" (Perry et al., 2020, p. 54) and allows that practitioner to "be proactive, inclusive, and collaborative" in their approach to that problem (p. 55). The Interdisciplinary Training program at FCIC will continue to use IS principles to promote change and seek improvement based on actionable and nascent problems of practice while welcoming, honoring, celebrating, and highlighting the professional wisdom of practitioners and the voices of people with lived experiences.

Mentoring

The participants mentioned mentoring as having a profound effect on self-efficacy and outcome expectations, especially peer mentoring. Mentoring, if delivered effectively, can have critical impact on the academic and professional success of minoritized students (Wyatt & Belcher, 2019). But not all mentoring activities are the same. Having culturally congruent mentors and/or mentors with lived experience can prove more effective in producing professionals that will be empathetic, understanding, and collaborative with the disability community when compared to racially or culturally discordant mentoring relationships (ITAC, 2022; Wyatt & Belcher, 2019). As a result of this evaluation, the FCIC's training leadership has been compelled to consider fine-tuning the mentor selection process for scholars and finding a way to incorporate peer mentoring to its virtual delivery. One alternative gaining traction in the AUCD network is that of self-advocacy mentors.

Self-Advocacy Mentors. The Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) programs across the AUCD network are similar to UCEDDs in that they provide interdisciplinary training to community members and preservice professionals with the aim of improving the health of infants, children, and adolescents with disabilities (AUCD, n.d.). While their focus in more on health, the guiding principle is the same, promoting inclusion for people with disabilities. One tactic they have been using to make their training on the topic of self-advocacy more effective and meaningful is that of establishing self-advocacy mentors. Self-advocacy mentors are people with lived experiences in disability, many times past trainees themselves, who offer community and pre-service trainees a view into what it means to have a disability and the importance of appropriate policies, systems, services, and supports for full inclusion. The connections and guidance a dedicated self-advocacy mentor can have on trainees

can improve their future responsiveness to the needs of the communities they serve and promote collaboration (Wyatt & Belcher, 2019). When incorporated appropriately, virtual mentoring for students with disabilities can increase their self-efficacy beliefs leading to improved outcome expectations and goals (Gregg et al., 2017). As such, FCIC's Interdisciplinary Training Program will consider how it may incorporate a self-advocacy mentor into its virtual training offerings in the future.

Inquiry Recommendations. Anderson and others (2022) conducted a study to investigate the role of mentors in the contextual barriers impeding trainee choice action. The authors used SCCT to measure self-efficacy beliefs in mentors and whether these would affect the trainees' choice attitudes and behaviors (Anderson et al., 2022). It would be worthwhile to include a formal peer mentoring component in the CS framework and test for improvement in all categories. In addition, a similar inquiry to that of Anderson and others (2022) focused on mentors for youth with disabilities could help determine which type of mentoring would prove most effective at increasing this population's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations regarding post-secondary education attainment.

Self-Advocacy Module

The work performed in the disability field must focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice (EDI&SJ). Moreover, work focused on EDI&SJ has to be collaborative and involve the communities for which it advocates. The evaluation of CS highlighted how important it is to listen to participants, include their voices, encourage their involvement, and provide a space for them to create. As such and given CS' substandard results for the self-advocacy training interventions at improving self-efficacy beliefs, scholars #2 and #3 were tasked with collaborating on a core curriculum training module that would focus on self-advocacy strategies

for transition-age individuals and beyond. Because this module was produced by persons with disabilities for persons with disabilities, it has a more nuanced approach to community integration and inclusion. The CS program has been using this module as the core self-advocacy curriculum and the training director will be testing for change and improvement once three more full cycles of CS have been completed. If effective, this could be a great opportunity to highlight the importance of collaborative research (Joss & Oldenburg, 2016).

Inquiry Recommendations. The program evaluation results pointed to the ineffectiveness of CS's interventions at improving self-advocacy beliefs, but they did not provide sufficient data to determine why they were ineffective. A recommendation for future inquiry would be to investigate and develop measures to elucidate which contextual factors produced barriers for the participants and why they prevented their growth in self-efficacy beliefs regarding self-advocacy (Anderson, 2022).

Measures

For this DiP, the main focus were the outcome and driver measures, that is, data were evaluated to determine whether the interventions introduced through CS were effective and resulted in improvement. Because the evaluation of the first three cycles of CS occurred after the fact, process measures and balancing measures were given less of an emphasis in the discussion. However, moving forward, fidelity and impact are also a concern and will be weighted just as heavily in future improvement discussions. Special consideration will be given to the surveys as SIAR Cycle #1 showed a potential flaw in their design resulting in contradicting results for the self-advocacy category when compared to the results of the empathy interview. As such, process measures will continue to be collected but expanded to better understand if changes are having the impact intended. Surveys will be revised to adjust both Likert-scale question items for

improved readability and open-ended questions added to allow participants to express queries or concerns at different points in the SIAR cycle. Balance measures will be lagging to accommodate for the evaluation of systemic impact within a larger timeframe but discussed in a future evaluation of CS once three more cycles have been completed.

Inquiry Recommendations. The results presented for this evaluation provided an aggregated data analysis. While that approach worked well to offer a summary of outcomes for CS, it neglected the analysis of the individual administrative and self-advocacy competencies that the program's interventions were trying to improve. As such, we recommend that evaluation for programs using the CS framework include a disaggregated data analysis of the survey data. A disaggregated data analysis should help better explicate underlying trends, patterns, or issues for the participants and provide guidance not only on the effectiveness of the interventions, but also for areas that need more attention to improve behavior and achievement. To make that analysis even more robust, a third survey can be added and offered mid-SIAR cycle. A mid-cycle survey can allow for improved collection of process measures and a more thorough examination of their impact on program performance.

Inclusion Scholars

As discussed in chapter two, members of URMs are less likely to pursue graduate education and their line of access to tertiary institutions that offer quality graduate programs is inequitable and unequal (APA, 2003; NCES, 2022; Tate et al., 2015). "Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may never learn about opportunities available to them on the graduate level. If they do go to graduate school, many feel isolated within a community where few others (if any) look like them or share their experience" (Cassuto, 2019, para. 3). The Diversity Pipeline program strategy proposed by FCIC's training program is twofold. It includes

CS, but also a second training program that could address these disparities in access for recent minoritized graduates and expand its recruitment efforts to reach a larger pool of diverse students.

Inclusion Scholars (IS) is a potential diversity pipeline program initiative aimed at recruiting undergraduate students from underserved and underrepresented populations into the behavioral health field. Different from CS, the targeted students would be recent college graduates that would be recruited and invited to participate in a summer institute that would prepare them for graduate school (GRE preparation, writing workshop, graduate application assistance, etc.). Through their participation in the summer institute, they would also be introduced to career options in the behavioral health field through learning modules and guest lectures. Students who subsequently apply and are admitted to programs in the Department of Child and Family Studies (CFS) in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences (CBCS), where FCIC is housed, would receive a partial scholarship to support their enrollment and become long-term trainees of FCIC. Eventually, students from previous cohorts would be the ones teaching future summer institutes through stipends. The ultimate goal would be to have these students from underrepresented minorities return to their communities to provide behavioral health services and develop community programs.

Funding

Funding for CS is shared between the FCIC, for staff and administrative costs, and VR, which provides the salary paid to the participants through the employment agency. Unfortunately, as discussed in the limitations section in chapter one, not having additional sources of funding limits FCIC's autonomy in recruiting from a wider pool of qualified

participants. One of the goals for the next fiscal year is to find and apply to external funding that will help grow, support, and sustain the diversity pipeline program.

Evin B. Hartsell Endowed Memorial Scholarship. In 2021, the FCIC and the training program were able to partner with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation to offer trainees a scholarship to help pay for tuition at USF. The Evin B. Hartsell Endowed Memorial Scholarship is open to full or part-time students at the sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate academic levels. While this is only a small step in identifying funding and sponsorship opportunities for trainees focusing their studies and training on the disability field, and effort to continue to secure funding is necessary to grow the diversity pipeline program and support minoritized students.

Dissemination

CS is different from a transition pathways program in that its main emphasis is the recruitment of diverse and disabled students into the post-secondary field rather than to the workforce, though that is an important aspiration, and it is promoted through the OJT experience. While the purpose of this evaluation is not for the results to be generalizable, CS can serve as a framework for similar university centers on disabilities across the nation to recruit for diversity. In fact, recruitment for diversity has been flagged as one of the main priorities for the AUCD network. Several of the agencies with which AUCD is associated, such as the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal Child and Health Bureau, the Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics Network (DBPNet), Autism CARES, and the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) are actively encouraging network members, through education, grants, partnerships, and other collaborative initiatives to develop research, evaluation, and guidance to advance evidence-based practices for the recruitment of diverse and emerging disability professionals.

To support the mission of the network, it is especially important that we disseminate how others can implement similar diversity pipeline initiatives at a performance level (Fixsen et al., 2005). As such, scaling up CS and sharing the framework through our network is an activity of value and a central focus. So far, the framework has been shared through a couple of webinars offered through the Interdisciplinary Technical Assistance Center on Autism and Developmental Disabilities at AUCD, through two conference posters at the annual 2019 and 2020 AUCD National Conferences, one poster session at the Association of American Colleges & Universities Virtual Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Student Success, and through a conference presentation session that will be offered by the training director at the AUCD 2022 Annual Conference in Washington, DC. After this dissertation in practice is submitted, the training director hopes to use the results and findings to produce a scholarly article for publication and further diffusion of the framework beyond the AUCD network.

Closing Reflection

The Interdisciplinary Training Program at FCIC provides its community and academic trainees with education, support, and mentorship from faculty and staff who are nationally recognized in the field of developmental disabilities. Training includes "an integrated education approach that relies upon the interdependent contributions of a collaborating team of people that include people with disabilities and their families, health and allied health professionals, community providers, educators, and researchers representing a variety of disciplines" (FCIC, n.d.a, para. 1). The aim is to train pre-service professionals to become disability leaders who can advocate for changes in practice and policies that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities and other underrepresented minorities.

FCIC has been a pioneer in the way that it offers interdisciplinary training within its network, offering flexible and online programs that are sustainable and collaborative (Rudolph & Garcia, 2018). In 2019, a change in leadership shifted the program's recruitment focus to accessibility and addressing disparities in higher education to help close the cycle of socio-economic disadvantages plaguing minoritized communities. To achieve this goal, attention was given to developing innovative recruitment and training initiatives that would be more inclusive of non-traditional students. The initiatives would be housed under the Diversity Pipeline Program.

CS was the first diversity pipeline initiative to come out of the Diversity Pipeline Program. CS, as explained throughout this text, is based on thoroughly and effectively training a diverse body of community members, more specifically youth with disabilities, to develop the tools necessary to pursue postsecondary education and/or gainful employment. The guiding principle is that educating a more significant number of underrepresented students can help promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice not only in higher education but for underserved communities and the behavioral health workforce in general.

The expansion of recruitment efforts with a focus on diversity is very important to FCIC's vision of supporting "all individuals with developmental disabilities to have the freedom, responsibility, authority, and support to live self-determined lives" (FCIC, n.d.b, para. 1). At a local level, Community Scholars will help increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of students in FCIC's training program, helping enrich their training experiences and exposing them to disability issues early in their careers — which has been shown to improve their eventual support of advocacy and policy efforts in the developmental disabilities field (Weber et al., 2020). Additionally, in developing recruitment efforts mindful of the unique circumstances that

minoritized students go through to pursue post-secondary education, diversity recruitment would contribute to developing more accessible and accountable training programs in the field of behavioral health and developmental disabilities (Smith, 2015). Finally, training more students that are members of underrepresented and underserved communities can increase their professional representation in the behavioral health field, helping address the disparities in access to services and supports by people with disabilities at the intersection of racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities (Crimmins et al., 2019).

Early behavioral health interventions can help close equity gaps, reduce health and educational disparities, and decrease inequalities in socioeconomic status for minoritized groups. Preparing and securing a diverse base of pre-service trainees, including those with disabilities, to be inclusive of people with disabilities and other under-represented minorities in their future practices is critical to addressing the needs of these minoritized groups. Finding ways to encourage and support young people with disabilities and pre-service trainees to pursue post-secondary education and increase their capacity for becoming leaders in the disability field will continue to be our guiding chalice.

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APPENDIX A:

PRE-OJT SURVEY

OJT Pre-experience Survey

Q25 The following survey is an evaluation of your administrative and self-advocacy skills BEFORE starting your OJT experience with FCIC. Please be as honest as possible. Your answers will not affect your participation in the program.

Q3 Please select the semester in which you participated in OJT.

- ☐ Spring 2020 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2020 (May to July)
- ☐ Fall 2020 (August to December)
- ☐ Spring 2021 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2021 (May to July)
- ☐ Fall 2021 (August to December)
- ☐ Spring 2022 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2022 (May to July)

Please rate your confidence in your ability to execute the following administrative tasks:

Figure A1. Pre-OJT Survey Administrative Skills Likert Scale

	Not confident	A little confident	Confident	Very Confident
Answering phone calls and participating in virtual meetings.	○	○	○	○
Composing professional emails.	○	○	○	○
Recording, retrieving and updating data.	○	○	○	○
Maintaining and sorting files, materials, and resources.	○	○	○	○
Disseminating products and recruitment material on social media or similar platforms.	○	○	○	○
Basic knowledge of word processing software (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs).	○	○	○	○
Basic knowledge of spreadsheet software (such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets).	○	○	○	○
Perform or attend other administrative support tasks/events such as marketing events, webinars, or conferences.	○	○	○	○

Figure A2. Pre-OJT Survey Self-Advocacy Skills Likert Scale

Q12 Please rate your confidence in your ability to execute the following self-advocacy tasks:

	Not Confident	A little confident	Confident	Very Confident
Speaking up for yourself.	○	○	○	○
Listening and learning.	○	○	○	○
Making your own decisions about your life.	○	○	○	○
Learning how to get information about services and supports available to you.	○	○	○	○
Knowing your rights and responsibilities.	○	○	○	○
Reaching out to others.	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 1

Q20 How do you feel about this OJT experience?

- ○ Excited
- ○ Nervous
- ○ Other

Q26 Is there something specific that you want to learn or do during the OJT?

_____

Q28 What do you hope to achieve after this OJT experience (your goals)?

_____

Q27 Is there anything else you want to share with us?

_____

End of Block: Block 1

APPENDIX B:

POST-OJT SURVEY

OJT Post-experience Survey

Q25 The following survey is an evaluation of your administrative and self-advocacy skills AFTER starting your OJT experience with FCIC. Please be as honest as possible. Your answers will not affect your participation in the program.

Q3 Please select the semester in which you participated in OJT.

- ☐ Spring 2020 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2020 (May to July)
- ☐ Fall 2020 (August to December)
- ☐ Spring 2021 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2021 (May to July)
- ☐ Fall 2021 (August to December)
- ☐ Spring 2022 (January to April)
- ☐ Summer 2022 (May to July)

Figure B1. Post-OJT Survey Administrative Skills Likert Scale

Please rate your confidence in your ability to execute the following administrative tasks:

	Not confident	A little confident	Confident	Very Confident
Answering phone calls and participating in virtual meetings.	○	○	○	○
Composing professional emails.	○	○	○	○
Recording, retrieving and updating data.	○	○	○	○
Maintaining and sorting files, materials, and resources.	○	○	○	○
Disseminating products and recruitment material on social media or similar platforms.	○	○	○	○
Basic knowledge of word processing software (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs).	○	○	○	○
Basic knowledge of spreadsheet software (such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets).	○	○	○	○
Perform or attend other administrative support tasks/events such as marketing events, webinars, or conferences.	○	○	○	○

Figure B2. Post-OJT Survey Self-Advocacy Skills Likert Scale

Q12 Please rate your confidence in your ability to execute the following self-advocacy tasks:

	Not Confident	A little confident	Confident	Very Confident
Speaking up for yourself.	○	○	○	○
Listening and learning.	○	○	○	○
Making your own decisions about your life.	○	○	○	○
Learning how to get information about services and supports available to you.	○	○	○	○
Knowing your rights and responsibilities.	○	○	○	○
Reaching out to others.	○	○	○	○

Q29 As a result of this experience, do you feel more capable in pursuing or holding an administrative job?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Q32 As a result of this experience, do you feel more knowledgeable about disability policy?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Q30 Are you interested in pursuing post-secondary education as a result of this OJT experience?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Q31 Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your OJT experience with FCIC?

_____

APPENDIX C:

FIELD NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Example of Weekly Activity Notes:

Recruitment: They are interested XXXX but are willing to work on other research projects.

Week #

- ☑ On-boarding Call
- ☑ Request Guest Account with USF
- ☑ Complete HIPPA Training & Quiz
- ☑ Set-up Teams
- ☑ Complete AUCD Intro Modules
- ☑ Complete FCIC Intro Core Module
- ☑ Mentors/Project Meeting
- ☑ Pre-OJT Survey
- ☑ Complete Trainee Enrollment Form

Discussed:

- What do you want your schedule to be? 3, 4, or 5 days a week?
- How familiar are you with Outlook, Word & Excel? Do you need refresher training?
- What areas would you like to focus on the most?
- I am personally interested in including you in the XXXXX project and building a social media marketing campaign for XXXXX.

Week # (short week, Participant out because of illness)

- Participant sick most of the week.
- They expressed feeling overwhelmed by working on developing a social media marketing campaign. We agreed on adjusting tasks to match their level of comfort and interests.
- We agreed that they would continue to work on the Inclusion FL website, but add on work on k12 policy, disability policy, and self-advocacy policy.

Week #

☑ Meeting of "Mentor 2"

☑ Notes, tasks, review, questions, concerns.

☑ Project meeting

☑ Notes, tasks, review, questions, concerns

Week #

☑ Participant not interested in working with "Mentor 3" or "Mentor 1" on health topics.

☑ We talked about Participant, in lieu of doing the XXXX Training, doing XXXX.

Week # (short week, Holiday)

☑ Short week. I was out.

☑ Participant met with "Mentor 2" and "Mentor 3" to work on XXXXX.

☑ They also put together the draft for topics and themes for the XXXXXX.

Week #

☑ Start Youthhood training

Week #

- Discussed the themes and topics for briefs. Ok to launch.

- Needs to finalize picture search for website.
- Continue developing social media posts/resources.

Week #

- First draft of Briefs
    - Sent Participant FL employment stats.
    - Participant did an excellent job with their first draft. I sent very few edits.
- First College Advising Session
    - Partial, we discussed programs, format, and time frame to applying.
    - We talked about how to use current learning and experience in alternative jobs.
- Social Media posts (Twitter/Facebook)
- Recommended Participant applied to the administrator job available at FCIC.

Week #

- Social Media posts (Twitter/Facebook)
- Participant provided second draft of briefs.
- Participant missed the XXXX meeting due to a medical appointment. We missed they as a lot of the meeting topics (pictures and content development) was directly related to their work. I took notes and will share with they when he returns.
    - More pictures are needed. Social Media Coordinator reached out to Participant to ask them to collect more options.
    - Contact Dr. XXXX to have Participant help they with a special XXXX project due by the end of XXXX
- Participant applied to FCIC Administrator position. I referred to hiring manager with recommendation letter.

- I sent participant resources to prepare for potential interview.

Week #

- DR. XXXX making edits XXXX piece.
- Adding some data/info to brief.
- Meet next Tuesday to finalize presentation for meeting with XXXX team.
- Meeting on the XXXX for Marketing training.
- Finalized draft #XX of the briefs, and we went over edits (grammar, plagiarism, structure, and APA format). Participant will be updating references in APA.

Week #

- XXX doc 1 - almost done
- XXX doc 2 - in progress
- XXX doc 3 (hold-off)
- XXX doc 3 - split into 2, handouts for before the meeting and for after-meeting (parents and students)
- XXX doc 4 handout
- Tweets/Facebook- highlights the project
- Attend training event:

  AUCD Event
  XX/XX/XXXX
  4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. ET
  Location: Zoom Webinar
  Link:

Week #

- Worked on developing both of the XXXX briefs, additional data and made corrections (2nd draft)

- Gathered photos from Getty for XXXX website
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week#

- Worked on finalizing both of the XXXX briefs (3rd draft)
- Gathered more photos from Getty for XXXX website
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Began working with Dr. XXXX on developing content for XXXX website , creating materials that will be turned into handouts. Subjects included: XXXX.
- Reviewed XXXX and XXXX materials
- Edited/added to the third draft of the briefs
- Gathered some additional images from Getty for XXXX website
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Continued to work with Dr. XXXX on developing content for XXXX website, created content that dealt with the subject of XXX, XXXX
- Including some additional data/info to the policy briefs (reference page)
- Gathered some additional images from Getty for XXXX website
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Worked with Dr. XXXX to revise the content for the XXXX website, this time to the XXXX document in particular.
- Include some minor pieces of data/info to the policy briefs

- Gathered the remaining images from Getty for XXXX website and sent them to Social Media Coordinator
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Began working with Dr. XXXX to develop some additional pieces of content for XXXX website. Working on creating content that dealt with the following: XXXX
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Worked on collecting grant application info
- Added additional data/info and made several corrections to the XXXX documents (the before and during pieces) (Dr. XXXX)
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Created additional content/made minor corrections to the XXXX documents (the before and during pieces) (Dr. XXXX)
- Worked on collecting additional grant application info for the spreadsheet
- Scanned the XXXX site for broken links/typos etc.
- Worked on creating social media posts

Week #

- Added additional data/info and made several corrections to the XXXX documents (the before and during pieces) (Dr. XXXX)
- Worked on adding comments/ recommendations for the look of the final version of the briefs (the design phase for the final version of the briefs)

- Scanned the XXXX site a second time for broken links/typos etc.
- Worked on creating social media posts

Examples of Additional Notes:

- Date: Participant is developing good skills to communicate needs. They were very shy at the beginning but feeling more comfortable and confident about requesting accommodations.
- Date: University has not been effective in opening a guest account for Participant. This is a problem and it happened with participant #XX as well. This reduces my ability to get participants access to work folders, programs, and software, limiting tasks that I can assign them.
- Date: The only area I haven't been able to deliver is in getting them dedicated data entry work. Asked colleagues if they had data entry jobs since Participant has asked about this multiple times, but no work is available at the moment. They asked me for it again about a week ago, but I don't have any data that needs sorting at the moment, and I haven't been able to place them with one of our other projects. Other than, it is all good. They seem to be very independent, which makes me nervous a bit. I want to be available to them as much as they need.
- Date: They have been doing really well. They are working with my IT/Marketing/Design group on our XXXX website, they are also helping with our social media, and creating policy briefs for my office directly. They say that is keeping them busy enough. I've told them to feel comfortable in telling me if that is too much or too little work. It is a bit difficult to assess remotely on my end.
- Date: Participant getting a job at XXXX is another way a person with a disability immediately enters the field of behavioral health to support, through research and

dissemination work, the development of better systems, services, and supports for people with disabilities.

Examples of Advising session notes:

- Participant seemed to believe that they could not apply to post-secondary programs until they had sufficient professional experience related to their field of interest.
- They said they plan to apply in xxx years. We talked about how jobs, not necessarily in the field they are interested, can still provide them with applicable skills that would benefit them in both graduate applications and future career choices.
- As with everything else with Participant, the session took about 2.5 hours vs the one planned hour (everything takes them a bit longer, and that's ok). It was a productive session. I had Participant start by searching for possible careers related to xxxx. They had mentioned to me during the interview that they had discovered ways in which what they learned in OJT could be applied to xxxx jobs, i.e., xxxx they associated with becoming xxxx. They enjoyed organizing and saving older files and understood how they could enjoy similar positions related to works of xxxx. They came up with a list of about five possible careers. They showed interest in obtaining certificates from non-accredited institutes but understood that their face value was less in the job market. Because of their financial and personal situation, I recommended they start their college experience at a community college (XXXX State College) and then transfer, if they wished, to a university. Their scholarships would be sufficient to cover their tuition and additional expenses. In addition, besides their general education courses, we checked out the curriculum and there are plenty of additional electives they can take within their degree related to xxxx and xxxx, which they were excited about. Their caregiver did not react positively to the state college suggestion, upsettably arguing that

Participant was not responsible enough and that an xxxx degree would have nothing that they were interested in. I had to talk with caregiver and explain how this would be a possible and positive choice for Participant, but Participant was visibly affected by her caregiver's reaction. Lastly, we called the college, connected with an admissions advisor, and received information about admissions requirements.

- Participant planned to study for the college entrance exam, specially the math portion. They plan to study about three days a week from 12-4 with hopes of applying for xx/xxxx. They immediately faced difficulties with the math review. I found a free curriculum for them online which would allow them to adjust to their current level of understanding, which they expressed was below level. They became easily frustrated after their second study session, crying and with renewed levels of doubt about their abilities. I, again, engaged with them in a talk to reduce the anxiety and encourage them. Maybe, it would be wise to find if there are free or reduced tutoring opportunities for these trainees, but with the pandemic access can be hard.

Examples of Reflections:

- Date: Base knowledge not what was expected. Needed more support. Do we have time/should we be teaching basic skills?
- Date: After speaking with colleagues at the AUCD Leadership Academy and reflecting on strategies to train community trainees, I realized that it was probably a good idea to have an outcome of CS to be for all participants to complete a disability policy and/or self-advocacy brief/product. We implemented this idea with Participant #xx because with them having XX preparation, the Youthhood training seemed to simple and a bit irrelevant for where they were journey wise when they completed their OJT. While Participant #xx, like Participant

#xx, completed sections of the Youthood training, they would've had the capacity to complete a simple brief from their perspective and experience. The brief could have later been included in our dissemination materials and in future core modules planned by the Interdisciplinary Training program.

- Date: I was very worried when interviewing Participant for the position of trainee because they seem reserved and maybe even a little uninterested. I pushed through this initial impression and spoke to my staff assistant about it, who would be helping me train Participant. They expressed they did not feel the same and actually thought maybe Participant was simply a bit shy, not uninterested. We decided to give Participant a chance and through the weeks they warmed up and opened up to us. This reminded me that I have to be very conscious about my biases and expectations. Not everybody is like me or would act like me, but that does not mean they are any less worthy or capable to do the work if given the right supports.
- Date: Participant adapted very well to change, and we were able to notice growth in the short time we spent together. From being shy and not "on time" to great insight, contributions, and meeting all expectations.

APPENDIX D:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Training Directors provides a brief explanation of the empathy interview:

1. Why did you apply for this OJT? What did you hope to learn? Did you accomplish those learning goals?
2. How comfortable were you working remote and using video conferencing?
3. Do you feel the training was a good vehicle to gain work experience? Would you be interested in continuing in this line of work? What did you enjoy the most about it? What frustrated you?
4. What kind of supervisor brings out the best in you? Did you feel that way about your mentors? What sort of people do you work the best with?
5. What are your thoughts on the YouthHood website and its resources?
6. Did the training meet your expectations? How about the remote training?
7. How do you think you can use what you learned here and translate it to a job or college? Do you feel more prepared to enter the workforce than you did before? Why?
8. Where do you see yourself in five years? As a result of this OJT experience, do you wish to pursue post-secondary education? If yes, in what area? And when do you think, you will start submitting applications?
9. Thinking about the last few weeks of your OJT, do you have any other general thoughts about the experience?
10. Any other comments or questions?