



CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
College-Workforce Transitions

Mun Yuk Chin
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
CCWT Early Career Scholar

Redefining Student Success:

When College Students Choose to Leave

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Discussion	4
Recommendations for Policy.....	10
Recommendations for Practice	10
Recommendations for Research.....	11
Conclusion	12
References	13

Abstract

Traditional measures of college student success that are dominated by a focus on student retention and graduation rates (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). College transition programs, given their function of promoting equitable access to college among underrepresented students, are particularly impacted by these pressures to promote student retention and graduation. As a result, the needs of students who are thinking about leaving college are overlooked. In this brief, we overview the types and contributions of college student transition programs in four-year institutions in the context of traditional (e.g., Tinto's social integration model) and more contemporary theoretical perspectives on student retention (e.g., Yosso's community cultural wealth model). We further discuss the need to expand the definition of student success to prioritize other personal and sociocultural domains of students' growth. We conclude with recommendations for institutions, practitioners, and scholars to more augment their support for students who are contemplating leaving college.

Keywords: college student success, college transition programs, leaving college, retention, holistic student support

Discussion

Redefining Student Success: When College Students Choose to Leave

The financial value of higher education in the United States has been increasingly contested given college affordability concerns for students, and broader economic uncertainties, such as inflation (Levine, 2023; U.S. Federal Reserve, 2023). While research has demonstrated the benefits of a college degree, the public's perception of its overall value has been waning (Schleifer et al., 2022). With respect to the benefits of college, national survey data from the U.S. Census between 1975 and 2015 showed that respondents with college degrees reported higher salaries, better health behaviors (e.g., exercise), and more civic engagement (e.g., volunteering) than those without (Ma et al., 2016).

These findings were similarly reflected in people's perceptions of a college education as being desirable. According to a 2017 survey of 1,600 adults in the U.S., 75% of respondents agreed that "it is easier to be successful with a college degree than without" (Fishman et al., 2017, p. 7). Most perceived community colleges (82%) and public four-year institutions (61%) to be worth their costs. However, in a recent 2022 survey of about 1,700 U.S. adults, only 49% of respondents perceive the college education to have a net financial benefit (Schleifer et al., 2022).

This sentiment is also reflected in a larger survey of 11,000 adults by the U.S. Federal Reserve (2023), where only slightly more than half of respondents who went to college reported that the lifetime financial benefits of their higher education exceeded its financial costs. Furthermore, about a quarter to a third of respondents agreed that the current state of higher education is meeting students' needs well (Fishman et al., 2017; Schleifer et al., 2022).

Indeed, young adults in the U.S. are experiencing alarming rates of mental health difficulties as a product of longstanding environmental factors (e.g., poverty), which have been further exacerbated by Covid-19 (U.S. Surgeon General, 2021). Lipson et al. (2022) found substantial increases in rates of depression (134.6%), anxiety (109.5%), and suicidal ideation (45.5%) among 350,000 racially diverse college students between 2013 and 2021. While some of these rates have been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, their rise has long been documented prior to the pandemic (Oswalt et al., 2020). Given these concerns, the pressures associated with initial college persistence may not be aligned with students' realities and goals. Traditional measures of college success that are dominated by a focus on student retention and graduation rates may render students who are thinking about leave college invisible (e.g., Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). As such, the needs of these students may be neglected. In this brief, we overview the types and contributions of college student transition programs towards student success in four-year institutions, in the context of dominant and critical theoretical frameworks on student retention and success. We further discuss the potential for institutions to structurally augment their support for students who are contemplating leaving college. Recommendations for policy, practice, and research are discussed.

In 2022, half of surveyed adults reported that the lifetime financial benefits of their higher education exceeded its financial costs.

Theoretical Frameworks on College Student Transition and Retention

A brief overview of theoretical frameworks around academic success and student retention is helpful to situate current practices and approaches to student support by college transition programs. Earlier frameworks such as Tinto's seminal model of social integration (1987, 1993) proposed that students are more likely to persist and graduate if they are better integrated into their institutions as this increases their commitment to their schools. Critiques of this model have raised concerns about its promotion of assimilation to hegemonic norms in higher education and its erasure of students' strengths and autonomy in service of college persistence (Attinasi, 1989; Tierney, 1992, 2000). More contemporary frameworks have emphasized the importance of changing institutional structures to promote socioemotional and cultural wellness among diverse students. Examples of these frameworks include: the ecological validation model for diverse students (Rendon, 1994); the community cultural wealth model for students of color (Yosso, 2005); and the psychosociocultural framework for Latina/os in higher education (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). While each framework varies in their constructs of interest and how these are operationalized, these models jointly argue that for historically underrepresented students to persist in college, their social, cultural, and psychological needs must first be addressed. These frameworks further demonstrate the intervention pathways that can facilitate persistence among college students who are minoritized¹. College transition programs play a critical role in this regard.

College Transition Programs in Four-Year Institutions

Nationally, only about 64% of first-time students graduate with degrees within six years from their four-year institutions upon initial enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). College transition programs were established to strategically improve students' experiences and outcomes in colleges, particularly for underrepresented and minoritized students (Hallett et al., 2020). The increased pressures and efforts to promote more equitable college access, particularly among four-year institutions, have spurred the growth of these programs (Van Haren & Friedman, 2018). While these programs are heavily oriented towards promoting student retention and graduation, their structures and approaches to student support can vary greatly. To better describe and organize the types of available programs for research and programmatic comparisons, Hallett et al. (2020) proposed a typology of college transition programs using three dimensions: a) targeted student needs; b) focus of program; and c) time and duration of program. The first dimension clarifies the types of students needs that are addressed by the program (e.g., addressing first-year transition into college, supporting change of majors, and/or mitigating students' loss of academic standing) while the second defines how comprehensively (or specifically) the program addresses their targeted student needs. Finally, the third dimension clarifies when and for how long does the program interface with students to meet these needs².

Nationally, about 64% of first-time students graduate with degrees within 6 years from their 4-year institutions upon initial enrollment.

¹ For more comprehensive reviews of theoretical frameworks surrounding college transition and retention, see Ramirez et al. (2023) and Braxton (2019).

² For a more detailed review of this typology, see Hallett et. (2020).

Despite higher education's heavy investments in retaining students, research explicitly focused on the experiences of students who have left college is limited.

While programs vary within and between institutions, many offer the following components to support students' transitions and retention on campuses. These components include: a) academic support (e.g., tutoring, specific coursework), b) mentoring and coaching (e.g., advising), and c) sociocultural engagement (e.g., strong peer and staff/faculty networks) (Hallett et al., 2020). To illustrate this, here are brief descriptions of several college transition programs available at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2023), a public land grant four-year institution³:

- **TRIO:** A federally funded program that provides structured mentoring via advising and personalized coursework intended to support first-generation college students, students with documented disabilities, and low-income students.
- **Center for Academic Success and Transition:** An office that provides on-demand academic advising and coaching programs to all students, and offers tailored support for students based on affinity groups (e.g., transfer students, first-generation college students)
- **Student Success Program via Office of Academic Success and Intercultural Services:** A one-year long program that builds students' academic skills, and personal and cultural growth. This program offers coaching, tutoring, first-year seminars, and study abroad opportunities. While the program is geared towards historically underrepresented students, all students are eligible to apply.
- **Nebraska College Preparatory Academy:** A comprehensive access and transition program that supports academically promising first-generation, low-income students throughout high school and college. During college, the program offers full financial assistance, and a wide array of structured opportunities to support students' academic and socioemotional learning.
- **Thompson Scholars Learning Community:** A comprehensive transition program that focuses on students' sense of belonging and community engagement while promoting academic success. Program interventions are rooted to explore and validate students' cultural identities as described in Rendon's (1994) ecological validation model for student retention. Structure support include financial assistance, advising, peer mentorship, shared coursework and housing community.

Research on Students who Leave College

Despite higher education's heavy investments in retaining students, research explicitly focused on the experiences of students who have left college is limited. Within four-year college settings, qualitative studies have examined the institutional, situational, and personal factors contributing

³ See references for links to these program websites.

to departure among specific student populations, such as older students with depression (Thompson-Ebanks, 2017) and trans-identified college students (Goldberg et al., 2019). Both studies highlighted the following barriers to students' continued attendance: unwelcoming institutional climates (e.g., lack of disability knowledge and consideration of specific student needs, lack of clear procedures for name changes); challenges with health needs (e.g., depression or hormone transitions); and financial concerns. The transactional nature of the relationship between the institution and students was further reflected by the lack of communication after students' departure (Thompson-Ebanks, 2017).

For students attending community colleges, financial barriers such as tuition and fees, high living expenses, and financial aid ineligibility are contributors to early exits for most among a sample of about 27,000 former students across five community colleges in Florida (Ortagus et al., 2021). Older students who were women noted inaccessibility of reliable childcare as a primary reason for leaving college early and that Black and Hispanic students were more likely than White students to identify missed payments (and their penalties of academic holds) as factors contributing to their departure.

Women who were older students noted inaccessibility of reliable childcare as a primary reason for leaving college early.

These findings demonstrate the interplay between institutional/systemic barriers, and situational and personal circumstances that can affect students' capacity to attend college continuously. While it is important for institutions to continue making college more equitably sustainable for students, it is also important to consider the immediate needs of students who may choose or need to leave college.

The Benefits of Some College

A singular focus on college completion may lead institutions to overlook the varied experiences and benefits gained by those who have pursued some college. Previous research on the economic payoffs of varied levels of college experience (between no college, some college, and a college degree) have yielded mixed findings, such that a college degree confers benefits to students differentially based on student and institutional characteristics (e.g., Jacobson et al., 2005; Holzer & Baum, 2017).

More recent research has demonstrated the economic benefits of having an "incomplete college degree," which challenges the notion that students are only successfully gaining these benefits following graduation (Giani et al., 2020; Kim & Tamborini, 2019). Using labor market data for a cohort of more than 200,000 high school graduates in Texas in 2000, Giani et al. (2020) compared the employment rates and earnings between non-college goers and college goers. They found that both two- and four-year college attendees experienced significantly higher employment rates and higher earnings despite not completing their degree or credential, compared to their peers who did not pursue college. These benefits were even greater for historically underrepresented groups of students including women, students of color, and low-income students. In another study, Kim and Tamborini (2019) used a nationally representative data to compare the annual and cumulative earnings of non-college goers and college goers, who graduated high school between 1972 and 1995. Overall, the authors found higher levels of

annual and cumulative (20-year) earnings, and growth rates for college goers compared their peers. They also found that the highest cumulative earnings were conferred to students who with sub-baccalaureate education (including vocational degrees and certificates) in health, technical and craft skills.

These findings challenge the notion of college success as solely predicated upon graduation, and that college incompleteness is neither a waste of time nor resources for students and their institutions⁴. Because students who have left college are typically deemed “unsuccessful” based on traditional metrics of college and student success, these students’ experiences and needs are often overlooked. This exclusion further reinforces the status quo.

Redefining College Student Success

Despite increased attention towards facilitating students’ development more holistically, measures of institutional and student success continue to be centered around student retention and college completion. Major efforts to quantify student success at national levels rely on these benchmarks (e.g., Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System, National Student Clearinghouse), which are subsequently used for decisions on institutional funding (e.g., state funding models that prioritize and incentivize institutions based on these traditional outcomes), accreditation, and ranking (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). Given the significant impact of these decisions on the status and resources afforded to institutions, these traditional metrics are used to shape institutional priorities and practices, including how college transition programs are evaluated and consequently, resourced. Our limited definition of student success via retention and graduation rates has unintended consequences for students, college transition programs, and institutions.

A limited definition of student success diminishes the true range of benefits that students enjoy from their college experiences despite incompleteness.

First, a limited definition of student success diminishes the true range of benefits that students enjoy from their college experiences despite incompleteness. As detailed above, these benefits include financial gains (e.g., Giani et al., 2020) and development of transferable skills for their work and careers (e.g., Bahr et al., 2023). Furthermore, this narrow definition minimizes the substantive efforts and investments by educational institution and funders to foster students’ overall development including their personal wellness and community engagement (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). College transition

programs, given their roles on campuses, face particularly high pressures to maintain strong student retention and graduation rates. Second, the emphasis on college graduation may dismiss the realities of students’ lives and their various responsibilities where college continuation may neither be desired nor immediately sustainable (Thomson-Ebanks, 2017). Thus, the needs of students who may be contemplating leaving college may be overlooked. Finally, this definition reinforces the negative stereotype of the “college dropout,” where students who leave prior to graduation are deemed “failures” and are typically not considered as alumni of their institutions.

⁴ For a review of the economic signaling function of a college degree and why educational policies and interventions are skewed towards promoting graduation, see Giani et al. (2020).

A more expansive definition for college student success is needed, specifically in support of students who desire educational and career paths that divert from college. Drawing from our existing literature on college students' transition and persistence (e.g., Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Yosso, 2005; Rendon, 1994), we reiterate the importance operationalizing student success to encompass students' growth more holistically (e.g., health and wellness, cultural and community engagement) beyond college completion.

Augmenting College Transition and Support Practices

For many students, questions and doubts about their college path can activate feelings of embarrassment, shame, and worries about “failing” should they consider leaving college. These can be amplified for college students who are closely connected with college transition programs, given their perceived expectations to graduate after receiving programmatic support (M. Padilla, personal communication, September 28, 2023). Thus, the explicit validation of students' doubts regarding their college paths and/or desires to leave because of different factors, can both minimize the stigma of these intentions and improve support for students' overall growth. Furthermore, this approach can assuage students' concerns of disappointing their advisors/mentors in college transition programs and foster more transparent communication of needs. Below we highlight recommendations for institutional policies and practices, and future directions for research.

A more expansive definition for college student success is needed in support of students who desire educational & career paths that divert from college. It's important to operationalize students' growth more holistically beyond college completion.

Recommendations for Policy

With respect to institutional policy, we encourage campuses and their programs that target student access and retention to align their anchors of student success with broader goals for the students beyond graduation. While campuses often advertise their promotion of holistic student growth, it is imperative that they assess these aspects more comprehensively instead of relying on retention/graduation metrics to demonstrate their strengths as institutions. Similarly, we advocate for funders (e.g., states, donors) to adopt more expansive evaluation approaches for colleges. As proposed by the Holistic Metrics of Student Success project (which is targeted towards community colleges), a first step could be to build more systematic and comprehensive data collection approaches to better measure the whole student when capturing student success (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020). In particular, the project has identified financial and food security, mental and physical health, and community engagement to be important domains for assessment in addition to retention/graduation metrics. College transition programs also can utilize similar approaches; for example, the Thompson Scholars Learning Communities at the University of Nebraska included psychosocial outcomes such as sense of belonging, mattering (i.e., valued and cared for as a person), and academic and social self-efficacy in addition to retention rates in program evaluations (Kezar et al. 2023).

Recommendations for Practice

With respect to practice, we first propose that students who have left prior to graduation be included as alumni of their institutions. By maintaining relationships with alumni, regardless of their graduation status, institutions are better able to track former students' experiences and life trajectories of students (Thomson-Ebanks, 2017). This approach can also offer institutions insights that can improve practices that can boost students' return to their campuses (e.g., lowering barriers to students' withdrawal and return depending on circumstances) and evidence for long-term impact(s) of college experiences for all students. Simultaneously, students can experience continued community and support as alumni. For example, the "Student Centric Continuum" at Arizona State University's Teacher College includes an alumni component where alumni are actively integrated and connected with the program (e.g., opportunities to mentor current students, information about professional learning, leadership positions) to support efforts to "recruit, retain, and return." (Fong et al., 2015). The extension of alumni networks to students with shorter tenures at their institutions can further expand opportunities for mutual learning and engagement between former and current institutions, as well as their institutions. By understanding the range of reasons prompting students to leave college, institutions can both redress systemic barriers that limit their continued participation and explore gaps in their educational offerings.

Second, for practitioners working directly with students, we encourage student support approaches which decenter graduation as the primary goal for all students. Practitioners may opt to integrate options that include non-college paths for students during routine advising and support, and to continue focusing on fostering students' overall growth and development regardless of their intention towards graduation. Practitioners' willingness to welcome these

discussions can foster a greater sense of trust for students, and in turn, may encourage students to share more transparently about their concerns about their college experiences. As an example, the “Back on Track” program at New York University offers students who are on academic probation nonpunitive support, including collaborative and interdepartmental interventions that boost student wellness and academic skills (Burdick et al., 2019). Adapting this approach, practitioners could further assess the factors underlying students’ lower grades and whether a desire to leave college is part of the constellation. In other situations where students are actively seeking paths outside of college, practitioners serve as a valuable in planning for this anticipated transition(s) and to offer resources that support students’ personal and/or professional development as they proceed. Practitioners may collaborate with students to determine their planned activities and associated timelines (e.g., joining workforce, seeking a different training path), and support systems. In other words, we advocate for practitioners to treat non-college options as viable (and rewarding) chapters for students’ lives and to offer both practical and socioemotional support for their pursuit of these goals.

Recommendations for Research

While there is a growing body of scholarship on the financial benefits of two- and four-year sub-baccalaureate experiences (e.g., Giani et al., 2020; Kim & Tamborini, 2019), there is limited research focused other aspects of the lives of these college attendees. More robust scholarship on the lives and trajectories of students who have left college is needed to examine how their sub-baccalaureate experiences may impact domains such as life and work satisfaction. These insights can be used to strengthen frameworks on college student success in their predictions/explanations of college’s contributions towards students’ growth, regardless of their graduation status. Additionally, research on the experiences of students who have returned to college is also needed to identify the reasons/conditions that prompted them to leave and to return subsequently. Findings from this work offer higher education institutions more information about the educational role(s) they occupy across students’ lifespans, and to improve college transition policies and practices to better meet students’ diverse realities and needs.

Conclusion

As higher education faces mounting pressures to demonstrate its value to society, its limited definition of student success via retention and graduation rates undercuts the breadth and depth of its contributions to students' growth as individuals and citizens of their communities. More importantly, the needs of students who are thinking about leaving college are neglected. College transition programs, given their function of promoting equitable access to college among underrepresented students, are particularly impacted by these pressures to promote student retention and graduation. We advocate for the need to expand the definition of student success to prioritize other personal and sociocultural domains of students' growth, and offer recommendations for institutions, practitioners, and scholars to more effectively and compassionately respond to the needs of students who may choose to leave college.

References

- Attinasi, L. C., Jr. (1989). Getting in: Mexican Americans' perceptions of university attendance and the implications for freshman year persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 60(3), 247-277.
- Bahr, P. R., Chen, Y., & Columbus, R. (2023). Community college skills builders: Prevalence, characteristics, behaviors, and outcomes of successful non-completing students across four states. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 94(1), 96–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2022.2082782>
- Blankstein, M., & Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2020, September 30). Measuring the whole student: Landscape review of traditional and holistic approaches to community college student success. <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.313888>
- Braxton, J. M. (2019). [Review of the book *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, by Vincent Tinto]. *Journal of College Student Development* 60(1), 129-134. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2019.0012>
- Burdick, J., Chiaravelotti, T., & Martin, A. (2019, June). Learning from their stories: The development of a comprehensive support program for academically at risk students. *Academic Advising Today*, 42(2). <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Learning-from-their-Stories-The-Development-of-a-Comprehensive-Support-Program-for-Academically-at-Risk-Students.aspx>
- Castellanos, J., & Gloria, A. M. (2007). Research considerations and theoretical application for best practices in higher education: Latina/os achieving success. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6(4), 378-396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192707305347>
- Fishman, R., Ekowo, M., & Ezeugo, E. (2017). *Varying Degrees: New America's Annual Survey on Higher Education*. New America.
- Fong, R., Kahl, J., Mitchell, E., Pangrazi, C., & Rosenkrantz, E. (2015, March). The student centric continuum: Recruit, retain, and return. *Academic Advising Today*, 38(1). Retrieved from <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/The-Student-Centric-Continuum-Recruit-Retain-and-Return.aspx>
- Giani, M. S., Attewell, P., & Walling, D. (2020). The value of an incomplete degree: Heterogeneity in the labor market benefits of college non-completion. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 91(4), 514-539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2019.1653122>
- Goldberg, A. E., Kivalanka, K. A., & Black, K. (2019). Trans students who leave college: An exploratory study of their experiences of gender minority stress. *Journal of College Student Development*, 60(4), 381-400. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2019.0036>
- Hallett, R. E., Kezar, A., Perez, R. J., & Kitchen, J. A. (2020). A typology of college transition and support programs: Situating a 2-year comprehensive college transition program

- within college access. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 64(3), 230-252.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219869410>
- Holzer, H. J., & Baum, S. (2017). *Making college work: Pathways to success for disadvantaged students*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Jacobson, L., LaLonde, R., & Sullivan, D. G. (2005). Estimating the returns to community college schooling for displaced workers. *Journal of Econometrics*, 125(1-2), 271-304.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2004.04.010>
- Kezar, A., Kitchen, J. A., Estes, H., Hallett, R., & Perez, R. (2023). Tailoring programs to best support low-income, first-generation, and racially minoritized college student success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 25(1), 126-152.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025120971580>
- Kim, C., & Tamborini, C. R. (2019). Are they still worth it? The long-run earnings benefits of an associate degree, vocational diploma or certificate, and some college. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 5(3), 64-85.
<https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2019.5.3.04>
- Levine, A. (2023, April). College prices aren't skyrocketing but they're still too high for some. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/college-prices-arent-skyrocketing-but-theyre-still-too-high-for-some/>
- Lipson, S. K., Zhou, S., Abelson, S., Heinze, J., Jirsa, M., Morigney, J., Patterson, A., Singh, M., & Eisenberg, D. (2022). Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the National Healthy Minds Study, 2013–2021. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 306, 138–147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.03.038>
- Ma, J., Pender, M., & Welch, M. (2016). The benefits of higher education for individuals and society. *Trends in Higher Education Series*. Education pays. Retrieved from <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2016-full-report.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ctr>
- Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). (2021). *Protecting youth mental health: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory*. US Department of Health and Human Services.
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>
- Ortagus, J. C., Skinner, B. T., & Tanner, M. J. (2021). Investigating why academically successful community college students leave college without a degree. *AERA Open*, 7, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211065724>
- Oswalt, S. B., Lederer, A. M., Chestnut-Steich, K., Day, C., Halbritter, A., & Ortiz, D. (2020). Trends in college students' mental health diagnoses and utilization of services, 2009–2015. *Journal of American College Health*, 68(1), 41–51.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1515748>

Ramirez, B. R., Puente, M., & Contreras, F. (2023). Navigating the university as nepantleras: The college transition experiences of Chicana/Latina undergraduate students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000463>

Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, 19, 33-51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01191156>

Schleifer, D., Friedman, W., & McNally, E. (2022). America's Hidden Common Ground on Public Higher Education: What's Wrong and How to Fix It. *Public Agenda*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED627046.pdf>

The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (2023). Federal Reserve Board's report on the economic well-being of U.S. households in 2022. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2022-report-economic-well-being-us-households-202305.pdf>

Thompson-Ebanks, V. (2017). Leaving college prematurely: The experiences of nontraditional-age college students with depression. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 18(4), 474-495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115611395>

Tierney, W. G. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 63(6), 603-618. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1982046>

Tierney, W. G. (2000). Power, identity, and the dilemma of college student departure. *Reworking the student departure puzzle*, 213-234. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv176kvf4.14>

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922461.001.0001>

Tinto, V. (1982). The limits of theory and practice in student attrition. *Journal of Higher Education*, 53(6), 687-700. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1981525>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (2023). Center for Academic Success and Transition. <https://success.unl.edu/>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (2023). Nebraska College Preparatory Academy. <https://ncpa.unl.edu/>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (2023). Student Success Program via Office of Academic Success and Intercultural Services. <https://www.unl.edu/oasis/>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (2023). TRIO Programs. <https://trio.unl.edu/>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. (2023). William H. Thompson Scholars Learning Community. <https://www.unl.edu/wht/>

Van Haren, C., & Friedman, D. B. (Eds.). (2018). *Transitions: 2018-2019*. National Resource Center for The First Year Experience & Students in Transition.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006>

This publication was researched and written by a member of CCWT's Early Career Scholars Program, which was made possible by the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

Suggested citation:

Chin, M. Y.(2023). Redefining Student Success: When College Students Choose to Leave. Early Career Scholars Program. Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions. University of Wisconsin–Madison, Division of Continuing Studies.

Keywords:

College student success, college transition programs, leaving college, retention, holistic student support.

