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FTE<sup>2</sup>: An Exploration of Full-time Employed, Full-time Enrolled Undergraduate Student  
Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Support Systems on Their Ability to Persist

A Dissertation  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Higher Education  
The University of Mississippi

By

Victoria L. McCord

May 2023



## ABSTRACT

Full-time enrolled students participating in full-time employment is a growing trend on college campuses. This dissertation serves to explore the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled graduate students' perceptions on the impact of their support systems on their ability to persist. The proposed study utilizes Laura Perna's Conceptual Model for College Access and Choice (2006), along with Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's Integrated Model for Student Retention (1993) to the following research questions: (1) What factors, support systems or resources do students utilize? (2) What formal or informal support systems and/or resources aid in student persistence, if any? This dissertation addresses Servant Leadership as a model for future leadership practices and connects the current problem of practice, study, and conceptual frameworks to the Servant Leadership style.

*Keywords:* full-time enrolled, full-time employed, undergraduate, support systems, persistence

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my supportive husband and kids. I could not do this without them. I dedicate this work to full-time employed, full-time working students who find ways to persist in their college journey and who can benefit from the proposed future study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee who has helped me through this process.

I would like to acknowledge my co-workers and friends that have been supportive on my dissertation journey.

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MANUSCRIPT I: AN INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE  
REVIEW OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYED, FULL-TIME ENROLLED  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

## INTRODUCTION

According to The National Center for Statistics, 40% of full-time undergraduate students participate in employment, as of 2020 (Summer, et al., 2023). Wan, et al. (2022) plus numerous other studies (Choi, 2018; Dundes & Marx, 2006, as cited in Broton, Goldrick-Rab, & Benson, 2016; Nonis & Hudson, 2006; Pusser, 2010, as cited in Perna, 2010) attribute college student employment to the rising cost of higher education. The average cost of attending a 4-year institution is more than double in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in comparison to previous years (Hanson, 2023). In fact, the average costs students pay has risen 59% since 2000. According to the Education Data Initiative webpage, the average in-state student spends \$25,707 for an undergraduate degree (Hanson, 2023), which equals roughly \$6,426.75 per year. The cost of attendance for out-of-state students is almost double.

### Financial Barriers

Financial barriers prohibit academic success and continue to rise, with the average cost of college rising 7.1% per year (Hanson, 2023). The wages of families prove stagnant in comparison. A 2023 article by Imed Bouchrika indicates that college tuition has increased 8 times faster than wages, “threatening the affordability and access to higher education”. In fact, tuition costs account for 31% of the average family income in Mississippi and other southern states (SREB, 2021).

The rise in tuition increases the amount of debt students accrue over their college experience. On average, college students borrow over \$30,000 to complete their bachelor’s degree (Hanson, 2023). Initially, families depended on grants, like the Pell Grant, to offset college cost. In the 1970s, the Pell Grant covered 75% of college cost; today, Pell Grants covers 27.5% of the cost of attendance at public 4-year institutions (Hanson, 2022). With rising costs

and loss of federal funding, students utilize student loans and work more hours to make the dream of academic success a reality. The total number of people with student loan debt stands at 45.3 million. Hanson (2023) reports that 20 years after entering college, half of borrowers will still owe \$20,000.

### Other Reasons Students Work

The cost of tuition along with rising student debt creates barriers for student success. Many students choose to work while attending college to offset the cost of college along with the amount of building college debt. However, the rising cost of college and student debt is not the only reason why students choose to work.

In addition to offsetting college debt, some students work to gain labor market experience, explore career options, meet cultural obligations, maintain a worker's identity, and earn money to pay for basic needs. (Broton, Goldrick-Rab, Benson, 2016; Perna, 2010; Holmes, 2008). Participating in employment during college provides real world experience, transferable skills, financial independence, and instill work ethic (Vecera-King & Torres, 2019). Transferable skills and real-world experience assist students when applying for future jobs (Vecera-King & Torres, 2019). Unfortunately, traditional students are more likely to take advantage of gaining labor market experience and exploring career options than their peers (Perna, 2010).

### Employed Students

Students who come from interdependent families or collectivist cultures have a sense of obligation to support their families (Covarrubias, Valle, Laiduc & Azmitia, 2019; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). The older population of working students (average of 36 years and older primarily consider themselves “employees who study” and enroll in college to develop work skills (85%), for personal enrichment (89%), to complete a degree (80%) or obtain additional

education required by their job (36%) (Berker, Horne & Carroll, 2003). In a global economy, employees who lack credentials struggle to maintain job stability, face job changes and dislocation, and fight to advance (Kasworm, 2008). In line with the need to afford college, some students work to afford the cost of living (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Students manage to secure enough money to pay tuition through student loans and grants; however, the cost of housing, bills, gas, and food remain unaccounted for. These expenses, whether disregarded or unobserved, render employment a necessity rather than a want. The phenomenon of students working to support themselves extends beyond the United States. Robotham (2009) cites 42 percent of students in the UK work an average of 14 hours per week to support themselves. Holmes (2008) finds that an increasing number of students in Northern Ireland work to supplement their income to pay for basic cost.

### Backgrounds of Working Students

Much of the literature on working students analyzes the effects of working while in college. Analyzing the characteristics of who works is not as prevalent; however, it is not completely ignored. Non-traditional students, those who delay enrollment, are financially independent, married, have kids, etc., are a growing student population on college campuses (Chen 2017) and tend to work (Lynch, Gottfried, Green & Thomas, as cited in Perna, 2010; Perna, 2010, Gonzalez-Rivera, 2016). Students with low socioeconomic backgrounds comprise a large portion of working students (Avdic & Gartell, 2014; Choi, 2018; Martinez, et al, 2012; Yanbarisova, 2015). Other cited characteristics of students who work are first generation (Martinez, et al., 2012), student with poor prior academic achievements (Choi, 2018), minority backgrounds and parental education achievement (Broton, Goldrick-Rab & Benson, 2016).

Darolia (2013) observes positive personal characteristics, like motivation and work ethic, as a potential factor to working while in college.

The reality is employed students have unique situations; the reasons why they work vary, and background characteristics vary. Institutions offer solutions, such as on-campus employment, suggest limited working hours, and provide informational courses on time management. While great options for some students, these solutions do not work for all students.

### Purpose of the Study

Many students cannot afford the pay of on-campus jobs or to cut their working hours, which is why students seek off-campus jobs (Polanco, 2022). Students' tight schedules and commitments prohibit them from taking advantage of additional classes or resources available on campus. These solutions rely heavily on institutional perceptions and rarely consider student perceptions. Therefore, this research aims to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students who work and enroll in higher education full time regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi.

## POSITIONALITY

### Full-time Employment Experience

As an undergraduate student, I possessed many “non-traditional” characteristics. I was a first-generation college student who transferred from a two-year college to a four-year university. During my undergraduate experience, I felt that college was hard, and at times impossible; however, I just thought that was how it was supposed to be. I lacked support and place. The memory that stands out about my undergraduate experience is walking through campus holding back tears feeling lost and alone.



I worked 40 hours a week and attended classes at night for my first two years of college. I stayed up late at night to complete homework and study. When I transferred to the University of Mississippi, my responsibilities increased with a husband and child. The required classes for my degree were not offered online or at night; therefore, I made the decision to cut back on working hours to complete my degree. The financial decision to cut working hours was stressful, but, in hindsight, worth it. With limited time to work, I attended classes as necessary and immediately left campus and went straight to work to accrue as many hours as possible. Once I got off work, I went home and attended to other responsibilities, pushing homework, and studying later into the night. I struggled, doubted my abilities, and often believed that quitting would be so much easier. Nevertheless, I persisted.

### Professional Experience

After I graduated from college, I began working at the University of Mississippi as a secretary, where I decided to further my education and shifted into higher education. I moved into an executive assistant. Missing student interaction and possessing a desire to support students' academic journey, I sought out other opportunities. In 2018, I became an academic advisor. In this position, I realized the social support systems and institutional resources I lacked as an undergraduate. My family supported my decision to attend college; however, I was a first-generation student and my family lacked knowledge and capital to help me through college. I realized through advising many services existed across campus to aid in my success: career center, counseling services, tutoring, workshops for time management, note taking, etc. I realized internships and faculty relationships were vital for success. I failed to realize there were organizations and other campus involvement activities for students "like me". I was lost. I realized that having at least some of these supports in place may have eased the stress of my

undergraduate experience and could have potentially changed the trajectory of my career. As a working professional, I asked, “against all the odds, what helped me persist?” Further, I wondered what allows students to persist when there are competing responsibilities.

### Support Systems

With the lived experience of being a working student with multiple responsibilities, I believed that the demands of working and being a student, along with other responsibilities are taxing. I believed the responsibilities and requirements of full-time employed, full-time enrolled students were overwhelming, which forced students to focus on surviving (working) instead of persisting. I assumed that having support in place to support students with multiple responsibilities increased the chance of completing each semester and ultimately a degree. However, I questioned students’ knowledge of support systems on campus. As a non-traditional student, I did not feel part of the college campus. I attended college to better myself and was unaware of the services available to me. The events and services that I did know about felt like they were intended for traditional students, not students with full-time jobs and families. Events that I found interesting always took place when I was in class. If the events were after class, it meant I had to decide whether to attend the event, work or spend time with my family. I already felt that I was giving so much to college life; I believe I could not take away more time to attend events. I perceived that most full-time working students undertake this amount of work out of necessity and felt similar ways. I questioned how full-time working students can be supported without adding more stress to their lives outside of the classroom.

Throughout my research, I have begun to question the need for additional support for full-time students. Research indicates that students undertake working for many reasons besides necessity. Some students, especially older students, work as a part of their identity (Kasworm,

2010). Some students feel working provides insight to the job market and their selected career, as well as real world experience (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007). This research makes me question if there is a need for specific support to help full-time working students persist. If this is the case, again, I ask why some full-time working students persist while others do not?

## CONTEXTUALIZATION

The growing trend of engaging in employment while enrolled in higher education has increased research of undergraduate students who are employed. The National Center for Statistics indicated 40% of full-time undergraduate students participate in employment (Summer, et al., 2023). Available literature regarding employed college students studied undergraduates who work 20 hours or less. Regardless, prior research on undergraduate students who work has provided valuable insight into why students choose to work, the impact of working and support systems.

### Value of Support Systems

Existing literature supports full-time employed, full-time enrolled students need for support in higher education. Fifty percent of independent students rely on full-time employment to support themselves (Baum, 2010, p.6). Students also utilize financial aid, including work study programs, to supplement college expenses (Baum, 2010). However, as Baum (2010) highlights over the years the amount of funds available has become stagnant, while the prices in tuition have risen (p.10) and limits future eligibility for financial aid (p.19). Employed undergraduate students need institutional support. The restrictive policies, practices, delivery systems, and support services cater to the traditional student population (p.37). Social support positively affects personal and social development (p.58). Gagnon & Packard (2011) found employed students find high levels of support in family and friends. Students with less support

are more likely to use services provided by the institution. The workplace can be a valuable source of support for students who juggle work, school, and possibly other responsibilities. Research by Gabriel, et. al (2019) concludes that a sense of identity within the workplace can increase work and school engagement (p.18). Additionally, managers who are empathetic and flexible can lessen stress when school demands are high (Gabriel, et. al, 2019). Lee (2020) publication of *Social Support and self-esteem on the association between stressful life events and mental health outcomes among college students* finds that informal social support is linked to psychological well-being. Students with lower levels of social support are more likely to experience depressive symptoms (p.14). Results show that social support, even perceived social support, are less likely to experience stress and mental health issues. Lee (2020) offers that social support on-campus does not have a significant impact on student well-being; however, studies by Hirsch et al (2019), Kitzrow (2003) and Pilar, et al., 2019) disagree (Lee, 2020, p.15). The conflicting results enhance the need to analyze the type of support full-time employed and full-time enrolled students need to succeed.

### Why do Student Work?

Prior research clearly states that full-time employed, full-time enrolled seek employment for various reasons. The main assumption is that financial reasons are why students choose to work. While not untrue, there are several reasons why students choose employment while enrolled in college. Many students work to gain labor market experience, explore career options, meet cultural obligations, maintain a worker's identity, and earn money to pay for basic needs (Broton, Goldrick-Rab, & Benson, 2016; Perna, 2010). Some students find a need to work due to the lack of parental support. Students lacking financial support from parents (whether from willingness or ability to pay) are more likely to engage in full-time work. Jennifer Morton's

*Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility* illustrates the effects of parents' unwillingness to help with college costs. The lack of parental financial support results in one student working 50 to 60 hours a week to pay for college. The need to work a high number of hours per week affects student's ability to focus on academic work, resulting in failed courses (p.122). A study by Chen (2017) provides adult learners, whose identity revolves around roles and responsibilities outside of higher education, return to higher education to gain new or advanced skills for their career, because they retire, or are looking for a career change. While there are many reasons that students decide to work, we cannot ignore the fact students work for financial reasons. The rising cost of college impacts a student's decision to work. Low-income students are more likely to work than higher income peers; however, working while enrolled in college is becoming the norm. (Carnevale & Smith 2018).

### Challenges and benefits of working

Previous research highlights the challenges and benefits of working while in college. One of the main challenges facing full-time employed, full-time enrolled students is the difficulty in balancing their work and academic responsibilities. Working students are more likely to experience academic difficulties, such as lower grades and higher rates of course withdrawals, than their non-working peers (Draeger & del Prado Hill, 2018). These time constraints can affect student's mood and affect create mental stress (Perna, 2010; Wan, et al, 2022). Peltz, et al. (2021) highlights the negative impact of employment on students' sleep patterns and mental health (p. 1). Summer, et al. (2023) reports working students feel like their schedule was too rigid. The rigidity in their schedule leaves little time to deal with emergencies (Summer, et al., 2023, p.12). Working students have limited time for personal relationships, social events, or any other opportunities to propel their success (Summer, et al., 2023, p.16), as well as challenges to

time management, integration into campus life, and loss of potential earned wages (Perna, 2010). Perna (2010) and Carnevale & Smith (2018) find that students who work more than 15 hours per week at off-campus locations are less likely to graduate in four years. The intensity of work students performs, in addition the number of hours worked, contribute to work-life conflict (Chambel, Carvalho, Cesario, and Lopes, 2017).

Despite these challenges, some full-time employed, full-time enrolled students benefit from working. Summer, et al (2023) reports that students find work personally fulfilling (p.17). A 2023 article by Summer, Trujillo, & Rodriguez indicates that working helped students maintain a schedule, gain work experience, and prepare for the real world. Students gain skills in budgeting, time-management, and soft skills (Triventi, 2014). Employment while enrolled in college can promote social, economic, and cultural capital (Maunah, 2020). A study by Martin and Pascarella (2014) finds that working students who effectively manage their time and prioritize academic responsibilities are more likely to persist to graduation than those who struggle with time management.

Gabriel, et al (2019) reports that ability to recover, in other words relax and detach, from work decreases somatic complaints, exhaustion, and work school conflict (p. 18). With multiple responsibilities, it can be assumed that full-time employed, full-time enrolled students lack or perceive they lack leisure time, even though research shows the ability to maintain leisure time between work and school can increase engagement in both areas (Gabriel, et al, 2019). Kabat-Zinn (1994) suggests that mindfulness – “the awareness that results from paying attention in a particular way” – can mediate the perceived time constraints of balancing work and education (as cited in Wan, et al, 2022, p.3)

## Persistence Challenges

It is well established that competing responsibilities cause stress in students and effects students' ability to persist. Chen, Ziskin, and Torres' (2019) examination of dropout risks for nontraditional, financially independent part-time students at a four- year commuter institution show most dropouts occurred in the first year of college, but the rate of dropout for nontraditional students remain high beyond the first year (Chen, Ziskin, & Torres, 2019, p.53). Male students and low-income students face a higher risk of dropping out. Nontraditional students are more likely to drop out if they were financially independent. Financially independent, non-traditional students work to support their families and have expenses but qualify for less financial aid (Chen, Ziskin, & Torres, 2019, p.54). Forty percent of nontraditional students do not receive any financial aid. As many as sixty-eight percent of low-income families do not receive need-based financial aid (Chen, Ziskin, & Torres, 2019, p.54). The lack of financial assistance can be to the lack of cultural and social knowledge to understand the financial aid process. Interestingly, the lack of full-time faculty is cited as a potential dropout risk. High-quality, full-time faculty aid nontraditional students in persisting, as faculty is a large source of interaction for these students (Chen, Ziskin, & Torres, 2019, p. 55). A sense of belonging is an essential component of student persistence for all college students. Hallett, et al, as cited in Bentrim, et al., 2022, addresses sense of belonging for students with multiple identities. While employed undergraduate students are not specifically named, the research focuses on students who typically work (i.e., low-income, minority, and first-generation students). Hallett et al.'s research establishes that validating experiences, understanding leadership and staff, tailored support and campus connection positively relates to students' ability to persist in higher education (Bentrim, et al., p.62).

The reasons employed students do not persist are as complicated as why students choose to work. Nontraditional students make up a large percentage of employed students. In 2019, Holly Ellis (2019) examined non-traditional students' persistence in course completion. The findings suggest that non-traditional students are more likely to persist than traditional students are. Characteristics such as focus on application of course concepts and academic growth along with motivation and intellectual curiosity propel nontraditional students forward to course completion. The issue is that nontraditional students are not persisting to degree completion. Nontraditional students have "unique needs and characteristics" (Ellis, 2019, p.25) that higher education does not cater to. Ellis (2019) concludes early implementation of support aids in course completion, as well as degree completion (Ellis, 2019, p.30). This research backs the idea that employed students (which includes nontraditional students) require support systems to achieve academic success.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

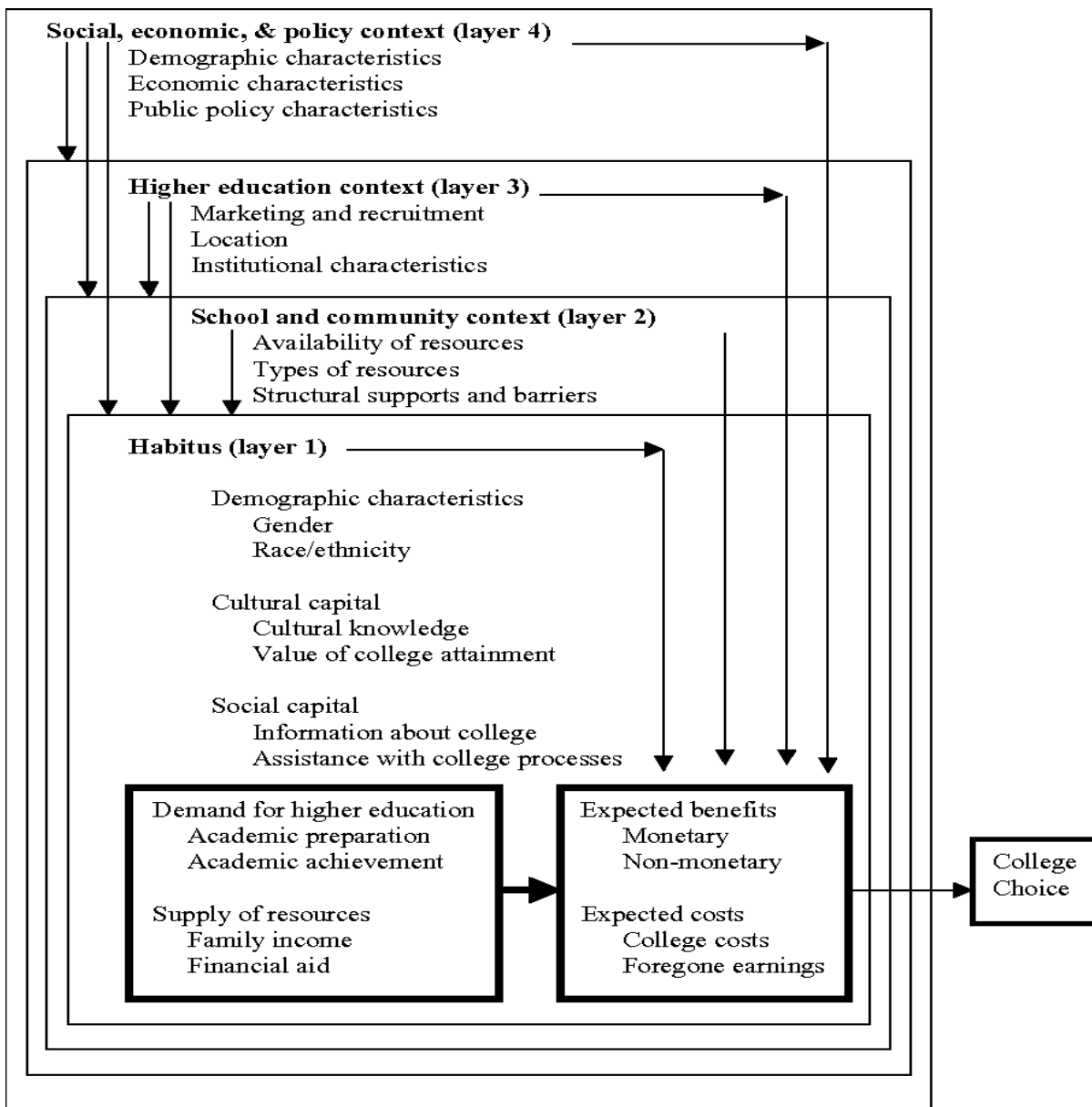
### Laura Perna's Conceptual Model

Laura Perna (2006) proposes a new conceptual model combining economic and sociological approaches in decision making related to college-related decisions, specifically college choice. Economic approaches contribute to human capital while sociological approaches contribute to cultural and social capital. The combination of these two approaches allows researchers to consider differences among groups of students that attend college (i.e., racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, working students, etc.). Perna's new approach acknowledges the need to recognize culture and circumstance to close gaps effectively. The conceptual model outlines four contextual layers to examine multiple aspects of students' decision-making process. The four contextual layers are: 1) the individual's habitus, 2) school and community context 3)



the higher education context, and 4) the broader social, economic, and policy context (Perna, 2006, p. 116). For this concept, habitus reflects an individual's demographic characteristics, particularly gender, race/ethnicity, social economic status, and cultural and social capital (Perna, 2006, p.117). Although Perna's (2006) study concentrates on a student's college choice and enrollment, this conceptual model is helpful in examining student's decisions to persist. Employed undergraduate students often hold multiple identities and responsibilities that influence their decision to persist in college. The habitus of students (cultural and social capital, as well as demographic characteristics) play a role in a student's decision to persist. The level of academic preparation, achievement, financial context and expected benefits and cost weigh heavily on a student's decision to continue into each semester. These aspects compose the first layer. The second layer, school and community context, impact student persistence. As introduced by Tinto (1993) and furthered by Kuh, Kinzie, Bridges and Hayek (2006), college persistence is heavily determined by academic and social interactions with the institutions and educationally effective practices, respectively (as cited in Perna, 2006). The resources provided by institutions (or lack thereof) can affect the ability to persist. The higher education context (layer 3) impacts working student persistence, as working students need flexibility in scheduling and proximity to their place of employment. Layer 4 recognizes social forces (demographic changes), economic conditions (unemployment) and public policies (establishment of need-based grant programs (Perna, 2006, p.119) influence choice. Social, economic, and policy contexts affect working students' persistence. Collectively, these four layers allow full examination of working students' situation and decision to persist. Perna's proposed conceptual model provides a "comprehensive understanding" of students' opportunity to persist (Perna, 2006, p. 119).

Figure 1. Laura Perna's proposed conceptual model of student college choice.

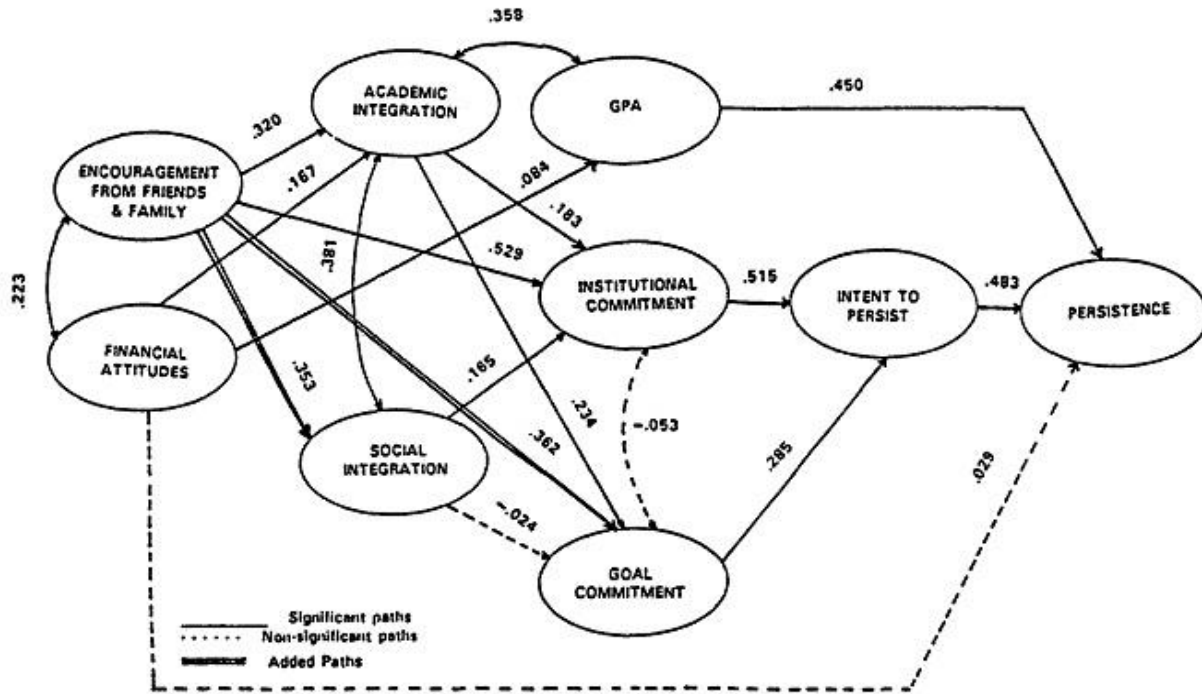


*Note.* This figure illustrates the contextual layers and factors that influence students' college choice. From "Studying College Access and Choice" by Laura Perna, 2006, *Higher education* (pp. 99-157). [https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3_3). Copyright 2006 by Springer Netherlands.

### Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda's Integrated Model

Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) propose integrating two theories of persistence – Tinto's Student Integration Model and Bean's Student Attrition Model –for a more holistic view of student persistence. Tinto's theory holds that “matching between the student's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics shape two underlying commitments: (1) “commitment to and educational goal” and (2) “commitment to remain with the institution” (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993, p.124). Bean's model “supports the role of organization variables, personal variables, and environmental variables in shaping both attitudes and intents as well as the role of intent to persist...”, as well as external factors. (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993, p. 125). In merging the models, Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda analyzes environmental and endogenous variables. Environmental variables include familial relationships, friendships, and financial attitudes. Endogenous variables include academic performance, academic satisfaction, social integration, and institutional commitment. The results support direct and indirect effects of all variables.

Figure 2. Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda's Integrated Model of Student Retention.



Note. This illustration demonstrates the direct and indirect effects of variables in the model to understand the persistence process. The solid lines indicate significant pathways. The dotted lines represent non-significant pathways. Double lines signify add paths. From “College Persistence: Structural Equations Modeling Test of an Integrate Model of Student Retention by A. Cabrera, A. Nora, and M. Castenada, 2003, *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus)*, 64(2), 123. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960026>. Copyright 1993 by Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

## Combining Two Models for Understanding

Laura Perna's conceptual model relates to decision making, as well as Cabrera, Nora, Castaneda's Persistence Theory, and examines many variables within a student's life that impact the decision to persist in college. These two models acknowledge that students are complex individuals with unique factors to aid in persisting. Using these two models, I hope to gain a collective and holistic understanding of why full-time working, full-time attending students persist in college. Understanding these variables assists in implementing support systems in college settings that full-time working students' value. The model suggests that student's decision to drop out of college is beyond the institutions control. Regardless, if the data implies that additional supports are not worth implementing, understanding our students' and their complex backgrounds helps institutions better serve a growing population on college campuses.

## CARNEGIE PROJECT ON THE EDUCATION DOCTORATE

The University of Mississippi's Doctor of Education Program (Ed.D) perpetuates principles and values associated with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). CPED is a unique network that serves to "prepare educators to become Scholarly Practitioners who can apply appropriate and specific practices, generate knowledge and steward the profession" (*Home*, 2022). The vision of CPED is a "future where equity-minded educational professionals lead lasting and positive change for the learning and benefit of everyone (*Home*, 2022). The CPED framework questions equity, ethics, and social justice to develop solutions to complex problems and make a difference in the lives of others (*The Framework*, 2022).

The problem of practice addressing full-time employed, full-time enrolled undergraduate students regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist highlights the values and framework of CPED principles. Institutions of higher education actively seek out students

from diverse backgrounds (I.e., low socioeconomic status, minority, older students, etc.); however, little consideration is given to how students will pay for tuition, housing, food and other fees. Many students are not equipped with financial information required to make informed decisions; they are not aware of total costs, scholarships, financial aid, or loans. Students do not know that they will need a loan, much less, if they (or a family member) will qualify. Within the first semester, many students discover the financial burden of attending college and seek employment, incur student debt, or leave college. While employment provides financial benefits to students, time spent working instead of participating in college life, academics, or studying interferes with their ability to persist.

Many students that colleges hope to recruit attend underfunded and under resourced high schools. Tutoring and developmental classes are often required. Without the knowledge of support (or knowledge of asking for help), students who work so hard for an equal chance can often feel misplaced or incapable.

Although institutions recruit students from diverse backgrounds with good intentions, it is the responsibility of colleges not only to provide the opportunity to attend college, but to provide the resources and knowledge required for their success. Students should have a solid financial plan in place before attending college. Responsibility lies with institutions recruiting students to provide financial planning for students before they accrue debt by accepting admissions. It is the responsibility of colleges to ensure that students are ready for college before attending.

Colleges and universities serve a broad range of students. Regardless of the backgrounds and characteristics that identify groups of students, those who choose to enroll in higher education have a common goal – to obtain a degree. The reasons behind pursuing the degree may be different, but the goal is the same. Therefore, all students should have access to campus

support, including the library, tutoring, academic services, career services etc. However, the offices on college campuses operate with the traditional student in mind. Extended hours and virtual services are rarely, if ever, an option for students. In addition, working students are rarely able to get involved on campus because events occur during class or working times. Working students miss work hours due to the lack of night, online, or weekend course offerings.

Institutions actively seek to diversify student populations. Nontraditional students, encompassing low socio-economic backgrounds and adult learners, tend to work to persist in college. With this knowledge, institutions have an ethic and social responsibility to support and provide opportunities for persistence.

## METHODOLOGY

I am studying the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled undergraduate student perceptions regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi. The study follows a qualitative method to gather information and understand the needs of students working full-time.

### Choosing Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods seek to interpret and share others' perspectives, as well as your own, on some aspect of the social condition, contributing to the multiplicity of voices and visions ... (Glesne, 2016). Students who engage in education and employment full-time differ in all aspects from traditional students, as well as each other. Employing qualitative methods allows me to gain an understanding of the unique dynamic of full-time employed, full-time attending students. Student perspectives provide valuable information to ensure full-time employed, full-time enrolled students have the appropriate support to persist in college.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors, support systems or resources do students utilize?
2. What formal or informal support systems and/or resources aid in student persistence, if any?

### Research Participants

Information on student employment outside of the university is not readily available. In addition, employed students are not a highly visible population. It is hard to determine without personal relationships which students work full-time. Campus connections (I.e., academic advisors, success coaches) serve as a valuable resource to identify full-time employed, full-time enrolled students. After participants are identified, the next step is to send email communication to students inviting them to participate in the study. The goal is to gain more participants through students who participate in the study. There is a great likelihood that participants have friends, co-workers, and/or acquaintances that are also full-time employees and full-time students.

### Sampling Methods

To gather information, the study utilizes snowball-sampling methods to gather student perspectives related to the impact of support systems on their ability persist at the University of Mississippi. Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher accesses future participants through contact information provided by current participants (Noy, 2008). Snowball sampling offers many advantages that benefit the current research. This method is used to obtain information from hidden populations. The prevalence of employed students on college campus is growing. Research highlights students who work full-time and enroll in college part-time or vice versa. This study seeks out a unique population of students who enroll in undergraduate studies and employment full-time. Institutions rarely track students' employment status, which makes identifying participants more difficult. Snowball sampling delivers a unique type of information



(Noy, 2008) valuable to a unique set of students (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Snowball sampling is advantageous in providing fast results in small sample sizes, requires fewer resources, and provides accurate accounts (Bhardwaj, 2019). However, it is important to note that snowball sampling has disadvantages. The method is reliant on referrals, which creates the chance of sampling bias and margin of error (Bhardwaj, 2019). Snowballing sampling requires good relationships with participants and mutual interactions to explore social networks (Noy, 2008). For this study, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages when utilizing snowball sampling.

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## MANUSCRIPT 2: EVALUATION PLAN

## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the perceptions of full-time working, full-time attending students regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist in higher education. The study utilizes qualitative methods to understand individual needs, backgrounds, and experiences related to being a full-time working, full time attending student. The data collected aims to answer: what factors, support systems or resources do students utilize and what formal or informal support systems and/or resources aid in student persistence, if any?

## SUMMARY OF THE GUIDING PROBLEM & QUESTIONS AND STATEMENT OF POP AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As noted earlier, students are complex individuals with unique circumstances that affect their decision to persist in college. Traditional institutional values, policies, and procedures do not serve diverse populations, particularly working students. Professors' office hours, departmental hours, advising meetings, campus events, and other support available to students usually are at inopportune times for working students. In addition, full-time working students utilize their free time to study and complete assignments. Nevertheless, students who work and attend college full-time do persist.

To increase persistence among working student populations, barriers that prohibit success need to be evaluated. The best way to understand and address barriers facing full-time employed, full-time enrolled students is to ask students what support from family, friends, and institutions, along with other implemented support systems contribute to their success. The use of qualitative methods highlights student voices and allows administrators insight into full-time working, full-time attending students' needs for success.

## OBJECTIVE

My objective is to understand the perceptions of undergraduate students who are employed while enrolled in higher education full-time regarding the impact of support systems (on and off campus) on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi. The study utilizes Perna's conceptual model (2006) and Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda's Integrated Model of Student Retention (1993) to examine student perceptions regarding the impact of support systems on student success (persistence in higher education). Both models are integrated concepts that aim to reduce gaps. Perna, Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda collectively understand that students are unique, and many factors affect success and persistence. Full-time working students have complex and intertwining backgrounds commanding multiple perspectives to understand their support systems and the impact on their persistence in college.

Perna's (2006) conceptual model draws from multiple theoretical views: education, psychology, sociology, economics, and multiple contextual layers: internal, family, school, social, economic and policy to create a holistic understanding of student success. Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda (1993) combine two pre-existing theories: Bean's Student Attrition Model and Tinto's Integration Model. The combination of these theories yields a "more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay among individual, environmental, and institutional factors" that contribute to student persistence (Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda, 1993, p.135). Multiple viewpoints with intertwining layers allow me to affectively examine where student support is derived from and how different types of support allows students to persist in college. With data collected from students', I aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors, support systems or resources do students utilize, if any?
2. What formal or informal support systems and/or resources aid in student persistence, if any?

This research utilizes qualitative research methods to investigate full-time working, full-time attending student perceptions regarding their support systems on the ability to persist.

## METHODOLOGY

### Logic of Inquiry

Qualitative research aims to reconstruct people's everyday experience, both the inner and outer aspects of it, with the meanings of those social actors attached to their situations and pursuits (Morawska, 2018). Freebody (2003) states that qualitative research approaches are sometimes offered as a means of recognizing or 'capturing' the unpredictabilities, idiosyncrasies and quiriness built into the experiential 'life-world' of human beings (p.45). Previous research has shown that full-time employed, full-time enrolled students have a variety of experiences, backgrounds and obligations that create a unique experience for students (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002; Ellis, 2019; Chen, Ziskin, & Torres, 2020; Maunah, 2020; etc.). The unique circumstances of each student necessitate support systems tailored to full-time employed, full-time enrolled students.

To provide the appropriate support for full-time working, full-time attend students' success, we should first fully understand all factors that contribute to or prohibit their success. As Freebody (2003) states "while some differences can be made visible through forms of quantification ... the differences, as they are experienced are fundamentally differences of quality" (p.21). To understand these differences, we rely on "situation-specific differences in individual perceptions" (Hurst, Baranik & Daniel, 2013) and "interpret and share others' perspectives on some aspect of the social condition contributing to the multiplicity of voices and visions" (Glensne, 2016) provided by qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods along

with previous other cited theories yield context and meaning of experiences (Kidd, 2002; Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999; Van Maanen, 1979, as cited in Hurst, Baranik & Daniel, 2013).

Quantitative research methods provide testing of hypotheses to secure knowledge while qualitative research supplies hypotheses for testing (Freebody, 2003, p. 43). Research on full-time working, full-time attending college students, while growing, is limited. To solidify knowledge, we try to understand this population of students and generate hypotheses based on information provided directly from full-time employed, full-time enrolled students.

Qualitative methods “discover reality through participants’ views, their own background and experiences” (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Exploring student perceptions regarding the impact of support illustrates how institutions can better assist full-time employed, full-time enrolled students in their educational journey. These perceptions are valuable to colleges because the student populations on campus are becoming more and more diverse, as well as student backgrounds. For colleges to be successful, our students must be successful as well. Institutions honorably implement student groups and programs to support specific groups on-campus. The programs are not always as successful as colleges wish for them to be. Qualitative methods produce evidence of what full-time employed, full-time enrolled college students “need and want” (Freebody, 2003, p. 28). Qualitative processes are “tied to a unique context reflected in perception, events and actions of participants”, requiring open-ended qualitative questions (Durkin, 2021, p. 69).

### Research Setting and Participants

Each college campus will have its own unique population of students. As with students, what works for one campus may not be beneficial for another campus and its student population. For this reason, I will focus on one four-year institution and its satellite campuses. Satellite

campuses will be included as most non-traditional students will attend satellite campuses and the inclusion of these campuses will provide the most qualifying participants.

If the study is successful in providing usable and reliable results for full-time employed, full-time enrolled students, then the study could be expanded to other four-year universities to assist students in persisting in college regardless of the amount of time spent working. I will use student voices to obtain data regarding student support as perceived by students. I believe this is the most valuable way to understand the support students need to persist in college while working full-time.

### Expected Participant Characteristics

Background characteristics will vary depending on the student but will not be weighed in participant selection. I am expecting to have many participants with low socioeconomic, minority, and non-traditional backgrounds (Carnevale & Georgetown University, 2018; St. Amour, 2019). Certain questions from the interview will explore background characteristics since background characteristics are contributing factors in Perna's conceptual theory. Intentional and considerate questions will be developed to increase the likelihood that participants will speak openly about their support systems including the influences of background factors that contribute to the likelihood of participating in full-time employment while enrolled full-time.

I will utilize the perceptions of undergraduate students because full-time employment is usually not expected. Graduate students typically will work full-time jobs while attending college (DeRuy & National Journal, 2015). My goal is to have a relatively balanced participant pool in socioeconomic status, age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

## Participant Identification

To select participants, I will employ a purposeful sampling approach with the aim of securing interviewees that are currently enrolled as full-time undergraduate students (12 hours) and employed full-time (at least 30 hours). The number of working hours will be set to be as close to full-time employment (40 hours) as possible to gain an accurate representation of students who dedicate a significant amount of time to work. Previous studies have shown that students who work less than 20 hours benefit from working (Choi, 2018; Darolia, 2014; Holmes, 2008; Hood, et al. as cited in Lundberg, 2004; Pascarella, et. al., as cited in Lundberg, 2004; Pike, et. al., 2008, as cited in Martinez, et. al., 2012). Therefore, I hope to capture the perception of participants working enough hours to affect their ability to persist in college.

Full-time attendance is based on the national standard enforced by most four-year universities. Most studies utilize students that work full-time and study part-time or vice versa; setting this criterion for participant selection potentially limits the number of participants in the study for various reasons: 1) students who are taking on this workload may not have the time to participate in the study 2) there may not be a large representation of students fitting the criterion to participate 3) student work status is not tracked by the University of Mississippi creating an invisible population.

Since the employment status of students is not readily available, the lack of information can limit access to full-time enrolled, full-time employed students. For these reasons, I will employ snowball-sampling methods. Glesne (2016) confirms snowball sampling is “useful for getting started when you have *no other way* to find the participants you want” (p.51). While snowball sampling will have its drawbacks, the method will provide many benefits, such as building relationships with students, developing accurate accounts, and requiring minimal resources (Bhardwaj, 2019).

I will use campus connections to academic advisors and success coaches to obtain student interest. I plan to connect with students through previously formed relationships to gain participants. Academic advisors and success coaches maintain close relationships with students and often are aware that their student is working full-time. I will gauge student interest through conversations with their advisor or success coach.

The advisor or success coach will be provided with detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, the value of the study, the amount of time a participant is expected to contribute and how the study will be conducted. If the student expresses interest in the study, I will contact the student by their preferred method (obtained by the advisor or success coach). Participants will receive communication via email with consent forms and scheduling options provided by a Calendly link to my personal availability. The student will be offered the opportunity to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding the study.

The students will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$50 Visa gift card. The purpose of providing a Visa gift card is so that the recipient can use the money for the expenses they need. In addition to the gift card, student participation will be valuable to future students in the same position to persist in college with the appropriate support in place to do so.

### Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected through one-on-one interview sessions. The experiences and perceptions of participants will be unique and tailored to their situation. The varying perspectives and backgrounds can be better understood with individual meetings. In addition, group settings could inhibit the flow of the conversation, especially if the participants' experiences vary enough to cause a sense of isolation. Private, individual meetings will be utilized to ensure that all participants feel heard and do not feel judged when sharing their perspective.



All the questions will pertain to decision-making, persistence, support, and resources (both on- and off-campus). The questions will follow a semi-structured format to guide the interview but allow for open conversation between the interviewer and interviewee. Using this guide, I will try to understand students' perceptions regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi.

To accomplish this, I will ask students about their decision to attend college and if employment was a priority before they began college or after. From there, I will ask students questions about their experiences as a full-time employed, full-time enrolled student to understand more about the challenges and benefits of working full-time. Lastly, I will finish the interview with questions regarding their support systems. For example, I will ask students how they seek support when the workload seems challenging. I will also inquire about their knowledge of on-campus resources and if they have utilized these services. The participant will be prompted with examples of resources on campus such as financial aid, career counseling, Counseling (general), academic advising, campus events, etc. for a clear understanding of what is meant by resources on-campus.

Interviews will last for appropriately 45 minutes. The time limit for interviews will be set due to the commitment requirements and time restraints of participants. The interviews will also be offered via zoom meetings to remain cognizant of participant time. Zoom meetings will allow participants to meet from convenient locations to accommodate their work and school schedule. The digital meetings will be recorded and backed up on a secure platform, such as Box. Participants will also be allowed to meet in person, if preferred. In-person meetings will take place in a neutral, but private location, such as a conference room. In-person interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder and backed up to a secure location, such as Box.

## PROTOCOLS

Informed consent will ensure that participants are treated with dignity and respect and ensure they understand their rights as a participant (*Informed Consent, n.d.*). Students will receive information regarding the purpose of the study before the first interview is scheduled. After reviewing the information, students will provide consent to participate in a one-on-one interview through the consent form sent via email. At the beginning of the interview, I will review the purpose and expectations of the study and obtain written consent from the participant.

I will inform students of their right to terminate the interview at any time. It is the students' personal choice whether to participate in the study and no outside leadership will be included. The questions pertaining to the study could be personal to the students' experience and will not have any impact on their studies or workplace. The aim of the study will not present any harm to the institution or participants but will provide better access and support to full-time employed, full-time enrolled students.

### Ensuring Access

As a current employee of the University of Mississippi, I will have access to the research site. Campus connections will provide access to potential participants for the study. Interactions with participants will occur outside of work, study, and school. Interviews will be conducted via zoom to ensure access to participate in the study. If participants choose, an in-person interview will be arranged in a neutral, private environment. I will have access to a conference room through my employer, if the space feels neutral enough for the participant. If not, there will be other dedicated meeting spaces across campus that can be utilized.

## Ethical Issues

Before the study is conducted, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be required. The IRB will consist of faculty members, researchers and community members who ensure human subjects are “treated ethically and their rights and welfare are adequately protected” (University of Mississippi, n.d.). An application will be filed with the IRB describing the purpose, methods, and ethics of the study. Any feedback from the IRB will be implemented ensuring the study follows ethical standards. The IRB will require the researcher to complete ethical training to ensure the best quality of ethics, which is already complete.

The aim of the research questions is to understand the situation of students who are working and attending college full-time. With perspective, institutions can serve this population of students better by providing supports that they need, not necessarily ones that we believe they need. However, in conducting this study, it is important to consider the feelings that may emerge with prying into a students’ personal life. While the study does not cover sensitive topics in general, some students may be sensitive about their personal situation. Some students may lack support systems that others have; this can bring a sense of sadness and loneliness that one generally would not expect. The study will be conducted in such a way that students feel respected and heard regardless of background characteristics. Careful consideration of how questions are worded can help to avoid students feeling “othered” by the research questions.

As the researcher, I will ensure every student who participates understands the purpose of the study is to provide better support for full-time working, full-time enrolled students, regardless of background. With this understanding, they will be asked to sign a consent form confirming they are freely participating in the study. The researcher will also inform the students that they are free to terminate participation at any point. The researcher will not use any information that the student does not consent to. Therefore, if a student terminates their

participation in the study and does not want the research to use information previously obtained, I will, as the researcher, respect their wishes. Students will also be informed that there will be no repercussions to terminating their participation in the study.

To ensure confidentiality of participants' identity, I will code the students with alias names so that their name does not appear in any documentation of the interview. The interviews will be stored in a secure location that can only be accessed using my personal login information. The recorded interviews will be the only link to the participants' identity.

At the conclusion of the study, participants will be emailed a transcript of the interview. The purpose of allowing students to review the transcript will be to ensure an accurate representation of their perceptions of the impact of support systems on their ability to persist, to ensure they want to publish information previously shared, and to assure students their identity is protected.

### Interview Process

The interview will proceed with a semi-structured set of interview questions (see Figure 1 and 2) with the aim of understanding the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled students. The research questions have been developed to be intentional, respectful, and analyze multiple layers or context that affect students' decisions to persist in college. One theme that will be evaluated is students' decision to enroll in the University of Mississippi, as the price of four-year institutions far outweighs the cost of two-year institutions. The average cost to attend an in-state, public four-year institution is \$9,349 per semester; the average cost to attend an in-state, public two-year institution is \$3,400 (Hanson, 2022; Hanson, 2021). For out-of-state students, the cost for four-year institutions triples and the cost for two-year institutions more than doubles. Since several participants are expected to be from low socio-economic backgrounds, it is

important to understand their decision-making process related to enrolling at a public 4-year institution.

In addition, the research questions seek to understand students' motivation for working. Previous research shows that although most students work for survival, this is not the case for all students. Some students work to gain experience to enter the workforce; others work as a part of their identity and attend college for advancement opportunities (Goldrick-Rab, et. al., 2009; Perna, 2010). Students who work for other reasons than survival usually work part-time. However, I understand that students who work and attend college full-time may have reasons other than survival to do so.

One of the main goals of the study is to understand the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled students; to explore their perceptions, research questions explore what it is like to be a full-time enrolled, full-time employed student to explore the challenges, barriers, and accomplishments of students with multiple roles. Additionally, research questions ask about students' support systems and if students seek support when facing challenges. Previous research indicates that students with conflicting roles do not always receive support within the campus community; instead, they find support outside of campus in friends, family, co-workers, and faculty (Choi, 2018; Crompton & Tan, 2002; D'Amico Guthrie, & Fruiht, 2020; Darolia, 2014; Riggert, Boyle, & Petrosko, 2006). Sometimes, students find support in their communities, church, and counseling (Koivisto, 2019; Sedlacek, 2017).

It is important to know if students are aware of services that are offered on-campus; from personal experience, I understand that there may be services already offered that students are unaware of. The purpose of this question is to understand if appropriate services are offered. If the services are readily available on campus, the problem doesn't lie within availability of

service but in advertising or awareness. Students from certain populations can feel a disconnect with campus; with this, they may think that services on campus are not intended for them. The lack of support may not be the lack of availability, but the perception that the service is not for them. If this is the case, then institutions must implement changes to combat this issue.

Additionally, services may be offered on campus, but the time constraints that full-time employed, full-time enrolled students face may mean the services are not convenient for their schedule. This could include administrative office hours, professors' office hours and campus events. Alternatives for full-time employed, full-time enrolled students should be available.

With a diversifying campus, institutions cannot afford to cater to traditional students alone. While traditional students seem to be much of the college population, previous studies show that traditional students are dwindling on-campus while non-traditional student populations are growing. Interview questions are also set up to determine if students were aware that they would need to work full-time when they decided to attend college or if this was a decision made once they arrived at college. Many students underestimate the cost of attendance. Some students assume that financial aid and scholarships will cover the cost of attendance. Once students get to college, they realize that college was more expensive than they assumed, or they will not receive as much funds as they initially thought. It is important to understand if the lack of financial information has cornered them into working full-time jobs to maintain enrollment or if working full-time was a conscious decision before enrollment.

### [Piloting Research Question](#)

To conduct a successful study, research questions were provided to a population of students and reviewed by another practitioner scholar. The purpose of sampling the research

questions was to ensure their relevancy to the study and students' ability to understand the purpose of the questions. This process provided valuable information for consideration.

My co-worker, and fellow practitioner scholar felt there were too many questions for the study and suggested eliminating redundant questions. He highlighted essential questions that he felt would provide the most insight to my problem of practice, such as (1) what is your motivation for attending college, (2) have any of your immediate family members attended/completed college (3) how does working full-time affect your ability to study?

The research questions were provided to one section of EDHE 303, which is comprised of transfer students who did not perform well in their first semester. A total of 16 students answered a list of questions related to their understanding of questions, clarity of questions, and their comfort level in answering the questions. All the students indicated they would feel comfortable answering the question and could provide answers to the questions. Students felt the questions were adequate to understand their support systems and the effect on their ability to persist. Students provided additional questions they thought were important to the study. The questions were clear and easy to understand; however, most students mentioned there were a lot of questions. Students stated that they understood why there were a lot of questions and felt fine with answering them since the questions are concise. A few students echoed my co-worker in that some of the questions are redundant.

Piloting the questions provided some unexpected insight. One student indicated that they were not aware of any resources provided on campus. Another student insightfully stated that students can be persistent on their own, which is one theme I assumed could emerge from the study. Lastly, ten of the sixteen students expressed interest in participating in the study.

The questions provided in Table 1 and Table 2 have been edited to eliminate redundancy and adhere to the 45-minute interview process. I feel that it is important to stay within the timeframe of the interview than to ask too many questions. I feel that if the questions are precise enough, valuable data will emerge. I feel that a pilot interview would serve to ensure 45 minutes is enough time for the interview or if more time should be added.

Table 1. Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda’s Integrated Model of Student Retention.

<b>LAYER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>
<b><i>ENCOURAGEMENT FROM FAMILY &amp; FRIENDS</i></b>	What was your family’s reaction to you attending the University of Mississippi? What was your friend’s reaction to you attending the University of Mississippi? How many of your friends attend UM? Did you have any friends at UM before you enrolled? If, yes did this affect your decision to attend?
<b><i>ACADEMIC INTEGRATION/GPA</i></b>	If you attended college before working, how did you perform academically before working? What adjustments did you have to maintain your class & work schedule? How have you performed academically while maintaining a full-time job? Tell me about your academic experience at UM.
<b><i>INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT</i></b>	Why did you choose to attend UM? Describe how you feel about your decision to attend UM.
<b><i>INTENT TO PERSIST</i></b>	What does it mean to you to be able to continue through college without taking a break?
<b><i>SOCIAL INTEGRATION</i></b>	Describe the social connections that you have developed on campus. How do you seek support from these relationships? (if yes) How does the lack of social connections on campus affect your persistence in college, if any? (if no) Describe the personal relationships that you have developed on campus How do you seek support from these relationships? (if yes)



<b>GOAL COMMITMENT</b>	How does the lack of personal relationships on campus affect your persistence in college, if any? (if no)
	Why did you decide to pursue a college degree?
	Why is it important to persist to college completion?

*Note.* Research questions were adapted from the layers of Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda’s Model of Persistence Theory to capture relevant information related to full-time employed, full-time enrolled students’ ability to persist.

Table 2. Laura Perna’s Conceptual Model of Student Success.

<b>LAYER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW QUESTION</b>
<b>INTERNAL CONTEXT</b>	What is your motivation for attending college?
	What are your academic goals?
	What are your fears, if any, related to achieving your academic goals?
	As a full-time working student, what resources, not currently provided on campus, would benefit you?
<b>FAMILY CONTEXT</b>	As a full-time working student, describe your ability to pay attention and participate in class.
	Why did you choose to attend UM?
	Did your family have any influence on your decision to attend UM?
	Describe your family dynamics.
	Have any of your immediate family members attended/completed college?
	Did your family member(s) work full-time while attending college?
	Describe your relationship with your community
	How does this relationship influence your persistence in college?
	Describe your racial/ethnic background.
	Roughly, what percentage of out-of-pocket cost are you responsible for?
How does this influence your performance in college?	
<b>SCHOOL CONTEXT</b>	Describe your high school experience.
	How did your high school prepare you for college?
	What extracurricular activities do you participate in at UM?
	How does working full-time affect your ability to participate in activities outside of academics?

***SOCIAL,  
ECONOMIC, &  
POLICY  
CONTEXT***

- How do you study for test and quizzes?
- How does working full-time affect your ability to study?
- How do you feel you would benefit from study groups, test prep sessions, etc.?
- How does working full-time affect your ability to attend these sessions?
- Would you attend these sessions if you did not work full-time?
- What has your stress level looked like since beginning college?
- How has working full-time affected your stress level?
- Describe the decision-making process you used to choose UM.
- What resources have you used on campus to help you persist in classes/college?
- How do you feel that you fit in at UM?
- Describe how important it is to you to complete college.
- Describe the impact of college costs on your decision to work full-time.
- How do you feel that the availability of financial aid has contributed to your ability to attend college?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What opportunities do you hope your college education provides?
- What part does educational debt play in your decision to work full-time?

*Note.* Research questions were developed from Laura Perna’s proposed conceptual model of Student Success to understand the contributing factors within each layer to full-time employed, full-time enrolled student success.

## COLLECTION METHODS

Data will be collected through interviews and recorded with the permission of the participant. The purpose of recording the interviews will be for the researcher to review the interviews later for clarification and coding purposes; however, recording will provide more attention to the participant than taking detailed notes. I will keep a field journal to note descriptions, ideas, personal reactions and developing themes (Glesne, 2016; Maharaj, 2016). After each interview, I will schedule time for reflection and analytic noting to expand my field

notes (Glesne, 2016; Maharaj, 2016). Interviews will be transcribed within 1 to 5 days after the initial interview.

### First Cycle Coding

Initial coding methods break down qualitative data into discrete parts for close examination and comparison for similarities and differences. Research on working students provides conflicting evidence of benefits and challenges. My goal is to find out what students need for support, even if students do not find support on college campuses. Additionally, individuals are unique beings, including how they seek support and what support is needed to persist in college while working full-time. Therefore, I feel that initial coding methods will provide insight into differences in how students seek support, as well as what kind of support they need.

Initial coding methods are also preferable because NVivo coding can be utilized. I find NVivo coding valuable because this method honors the voice of participants and illuminates marginalized voices (Saldana, 2016, p. 106). I expect that many participants will be from low socioeconomic, minority, and nontraditional backgrounds and deserve the opportunity to voice their opinions and perceptions regarding the value of support. Since the study's purpose is to understand the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled students support systems in persistence, I believe highlighting and honoring the input of students is imperative.

Additionally, full-time employed, full-time enrolled students are not officially tracked. Therefore, administrators and instructors lack knowledge of students' work schedule unless disclosed by the students themselves. Students feel that officials do not care about their situation and do not think to disclose this information. Additionally, students from minority and low-socioeconomic backgrounds fail to recognize their situation is unique and think that this is just

the way it is. Other students from these same backgrounds have trouble asking for help because the social and cultural capital they have tells them to “just take care of business”. As Saldana (2016) states “coding with their actual words enhances and deepens an adult’s understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (p. 106). I feel a large part of understanding the perceptions of full-time working, full-time attending students and their support systems lies in understanding their culture and worldview.

Initial coding also employs the use of process coding. Process coding analyzes human action and “implies actions are intertwined with things that emerge (need to work, need for support, etc.), change (full-time working status, job change, etc.) or become strategically implemented (time-management, support systems, etc.) (Saldana, 2016, p.111). For this population of participants, situations change, enhancing the need for more or additional support. Events occur which affect their decision or ability to persist in college, and support systems implemented over time affect the trajectory of their persistence.

The use of initial coding along with the two other coding processes allows me to re-read, re-code, and re-analyze data multiple times. Continual interaction with data results in the development of connections and insights. The process serves to deepen my understanding of full-time working, full-time employed students aiding in analyzing and synthesizing the data for more reliable results.

### Transitional Coding

Data will be run through a second cycle of coding to reorganize and recode data. Reorganizing and re-coding the data will help revise codes “to more accurate words and phrases” or merge similar codes to eliminate duplicity (Saldana, 2016, p. 234). However, it will be important to organize and assemble the codes before moving into the second cycle of coding.

Code charting will be utilized to organize the various codes produced in cycle one coding. Code charting will be utilized because of the detail included. This method includes the participants' information, summary of observations from the study and primary codes that emerged from the data (Saldana, 2016, p.229). Organizing data in such a way will allow me to easily reference data and understand the primary contribution from each participant. The chart will also allow me to compare participants that exhibit certain codes. Code mapping will organize the codes and more importantly group codes into emerging themes using four processes: simple list, initial categorization of codes, re-categorizing with subcategories and conceptualization (Saldana, 2016, p.218-222).

### Second Cycle Coding

“Focused coding follows NVivo, Process, and/or Initial Coding” (Saldana, 2016, p. 240). Since the first cycle of coding uses NVivo and Process coding in combination with Initial coding methods, focused coding appears to be the best method for second cycle coding. The purpose of Focused Coding is to organize data into categories based on previous codes developed in the first and transitional cycle of coding (Saldana, 2016, p. 240). Data with similar codes grouped together helps to develop overarching categories. With these categories in place, I can then begin to connect and understand the perceptions of full-time working undergraduate students regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist.

Focused coding allows one to compare data across participants and understand the similarities and potential differences in student perceptions. Full-time working, full-time attending undergraduate students have unique circumstances; however, I expect they will have many similarities regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist.

After Focused Codes are developed, I will employ one more step in the second cycle – Theoretical Coding. Saldana (2016) recommends Theoretical Coding as a method to further analyze Focused Codes (p.251). Theoretical Coding “condenses all other codes into a few words that identifies the major theme in the study” (Saldana, 2016, p. 250). The major theme identifies the major issues or concerns of students. Understanding what students are concerned about or have issues with equips institutions with the knowledge to help full-time working, full-time attending students persist through college.

### Analytical Memos

Analytical memos are valuable in analyzing qualitative data (Tobacco Control Evaluation Center, n.d.). The purpose of analytical memos provides the opportunity to write down thoughts, ideas or questions while evaluating data (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). Analytical memos serve to analyze the “coding processes and code choices, how the process of inquiry is taking shape, and the emergent patterns of the research” (Saldana, 2016, p.4). Lempert (2007) states analytical memos are conversations the research has with him/herself about the research data (p. 247, as cited in O’Reilly, 2023). The process allows me to write down any questions, ideas, or future investigations (O’Reilly, 2023). The use of analytical memos challenges me to critically think about the collected data and begin to make meaning of the data collected in relation to the proposed research questions.

### Expect Data Results

Prior research indicates student support in college derives from many avenues. Roksa & Kinsley (2019) reports that although parents of low-income students cannot contribute financially, the emotional support they provide greatly impacts student success (p.431). Black students thrive best with campus connections such as campus resources, faculty relationships and

student support (Sedlacek, 2017). Latino/a students benefit from both familial support and academic support services (Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, Ruder, 2006). Non-traditional students, specifically female non-traditional students, benefit from social support from family, friends, and faculty, whether real or perceived (Quimby & O'Brien, 2006); however, most support for non-traditional students stem from relatives or community workers (Sedlacek, 2017).

I expect some of these themes to emerge throughout the interview and coding process. However, I believe that similarities among multiple populations exist, providing a comprehensive way to support full-time employed, full-time enrolled students. I expect, as previously stated, that some students persist based on their own will.

### INFORM AND REFINE

The purpose of gathering data on the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time enrolled undergraduate student perceptions regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist is to provide this population of students the adequate support needed to be successful in college. To implement institutional changes, the data should be presented to stakeholders invested in student success. I believe the appropriate place to start would be within departments dedicated to student success, such as the Center for Student Success, Career Center, Student Disability Services, Counseling Services, and academic departments. With vested interest at the departmental level, I hope that the results can be represented to upper-level administration to implement valuable change institution wide. If the data does not make it to upper administration, hopefully, departments will implement internal changes to support full-time enrolled, full-time employed students.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a qualitative research study will be conducted to explore full-time employed, full-time enrolled undergraduate student perceptions regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist. Snowball sampling will be utilized to identify participants, as the University of Mississippi does not track employment information. The study targets undergraduate students who work 30 hours a week and are enrolled in 12 credit hours for the semester. With consent, students will participate in a one-on-one interview using semi-structured interview questions developed using Perna's Conceptual Model to Student Success and Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's Integrated Persistence Theory. The interview is scheduled to take approximately 45 minutes to remain considerate of time constraints. I will employ first cycles coding, transitional coding, and second cycle coding methods to synthesize the data and identify major themes. The goal of conducting this research is to inform the broader University of Mississippi community and support our full-time employed, full-time enrolled students in persisting.

The following manuscript serves to identify a leadership statement. In the development of this statement, it is valuable to consider how this leadership style informs my research and relates to the conceptual frameworks used to understand the data provided by student perceptions. Lastly, manuscript 3 will evaluate how the DIP process has informed my leadership style and how I plan to apply this information as a future leader.



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## MANUSCRIPT 3: LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY



## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of servant leadership related to my leadership philosophy, Perna conceptual model and Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda's conceptual model, the problem of practice, study and CPED framework. In addition, this paper serves to assess the DIP process in becoming a scholar-practitioner and growing as a future leader in higher education.

## SUMMARY OF GUIDING PROBLEM AND QUESTIONS AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM OF PRACTICE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research focuses on full-time working, full-time enrolled, full-time employed students regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi. The study seeks to answer:

1. What factors, support systems, or resources do full-time employed, full-time enrolled students utilize?
2. What formal or informal support systems and/or resources aid in full-time employed, full-time enrolled student persistence, if any?

To answer these questions, the study will apply Perna's conceptual model to understand the internal, family, school, and social, economic, and policy context that influences a student's decision to persist in college. In addition, the study will analyze students' available support, resources, goal and institutional commitment, and integration into the university impacts a student's decision to persist at the University of Mississippi.

## LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

My leadership philosophy is based on the principles of servant leadership proposed by van Dierendonck (2011). Van Dierendonck's model is based on the work of Robert Greenleaf who defined servant leadership as:

“The natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant – first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test ... is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not become further deprived?” (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 3)

I believe that leadership is about serving and empowering others to reach their full potential in an environment where they feel valued and supported. Research by Lee, Lyubovnikova, Tian, and Knight (2019) found that servant leadership not only can influence well-being and development but positively impact performance-related behavior as well (p.25). As a servant leader, I believe it is my responsibility to ensure that “other people’s highest priority needs” are being served (Spears, 2021) within my team, students, institution, and the community.

Essentially, servant leadership is about humility. Greenleaf implies this concept when he proclaims that servant leadership aims to put others first. Humility allows one to acknowledge their own limitations and seek insight from others (Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017, p.8) and “respect for diverse viewpoints” enhancing our growth and development (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rowatt, 2023). I recognize that I do not have all the answers, and that the perspectives and experiences of others are invaluable. I learned this through my experience overseeing student workers. Through discussions with student workers, I learned about diversity and how students view the world of higher education. I learned that valuable input comes from all levels of higher education and should not be limited to those in leadership positions. For this, I strive to listen actively to understand multiple perspectives of those around me, so that I can make informed

decisions that benefit the goals of students, the institution and all other stakeholders involved.

The ability to actively listen and seek diverse perspectives enhances communication, trust, and empathy (Crippen, 2010). The ability to listen to others “allows us to better understand people’s needs and ideas (Ragnarsson, Kristjánsdóttir, & Gunnarsdóttir, 2018) and shows that we value them (Parris & Peachey, 2012). Cummins (2008) states that effective listening requires us to be open to new ideas and accepting others’ ideas (p. 9 – 10). Leaders who listen to the ideas of others, regardless of how outlandish they are, generate a greater level of commitment (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). As Greenleaf (2008) states “a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening first (p.8). The ability to listen contributes to emotional healing and empathy (Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006).

At the center of servant leadership is moral and ethical leadership. The presence of moral and ethical behavior positively contributes to effectiveness of the organization and well-being of employees (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen & Colwell, 2011). I believe to establish moral and ethical behavior, I must lead by example, modeling the behaviors and values I expect from others (Adams, Salina, & Eppinga, 2014; Crippen, 2010; Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011, Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010), and set clear expectations for others to follow (Ragnarsson, et al., 2018). By demonstrating integrity, honesty, and a commitment to ethical principles, I can earn the trust and respect of my team members and inspire them to do the same (Greenleaf, 1970, as cited in Adams, et al, 2014 & Crippen, 2010; Reed, et al., 2011; Russell & Stone, 2002, Sendjaya, et al., 2008). By modeling ethical behavior and holding myself and others accountable, I can foster a sense of responsibility and commitment to shared goals (Lemoine, et al, 2019; Reed, et al., 2011; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006).

Another key aspect of servant leadership is empowerment. Servant leadership is focused on the success of the mission; however, the primary focus is on the success of individuals (Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017). Empowerment directly relates to employee loyalty by establishing competency, authority, and responsibility (Fitriyana, et al, 2023). I believe that my role as a leader is to provide individuals with the tools, resources, and support they need to succeed. I can empower individuals by instilling confidence, provide decision-making opportunities and coaching, as well as professional development opportunities (Konczak, et al, 2000, as cited in van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010; Russell & Stone, 2002).

By investing in others, individuals can advance their careers and develop more servant leaders. As Rinehart (1998) stated, “servant leaders equip and develop people in ways that empower and release them” (as cited in Russell & Stone, 2002). By empowering them to make decisions and take ownership of their work, I can help to build a culture of accountability and achievement, where everyone feels invested in our shared success (Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011). In addition, I believe that everyone has unique talents and perspectives, and that by leveraging these strengths, we can achieve great things together. By accepting individuals are susceptible to flaws, I can establish a supportive environment for others to learn and grow (van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006). As a servant leader, I strive to create a collaborative work environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to our shared mission.

The idea of compassion and empathy is another essential characteristic of van Dierendonck’s model of servant leadership. Greenleaf claimed with empathy “*all* people are seen as beings to be trusted, believed in, and loved, and less as objects to be used, competed with or judged” (Cummins, 2008). I believe that leaders must be able to connect with others on a personal level, and to show understanding and support in times of need. As an empathetic leader,

I strive to understand the emotions and needs of others (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). By demonstrating compassion and empathy, I can create a safe environment where others are accepted and acknowledged without judgment (Parris & Peachey, 2012; van Dierendonck, 2011)

Finally, servant leadership is about continuous learning and growth. Frick (2004) defined a servant as: “one who consciously nurtures the mature growth of self, other peoples, institutions, and communities” (as cited in Crippen, 2010). I recognize that there is always more to learn, and that by investing in my own development, I can better serve others. I strive to be involved and vigilant to needs of other and encourage personal (Coetzer Bussin & Geldenhuys, 2017; Lemoine, et al., 2019; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Spears, 1996; van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006), spiritual (Spears, 1996; van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006), and professional growth (Coetzer Bussin & Geldenhuys, 2017; Parris & Peachey, 2012).

I aim to encourage others to be steward in their community and serve those who are in need (Adams, Salina & Eppinga, 2014), I strive to create opportunities for my team members to learn and grow, so that they can continue to develop their skills and contribute to our shared mission. The value of continuous learning and growth “acknowledges human dignity” and instills “tolerance, understanding, and compassion” into the lives of others (Adams, Salina & Eppinga, 2014).

In summary, my leadership philosophy is based on van Dierendonck's servant leadership model. By focusing on the needs of others, demonstrating moral authority, empowering my team members, and investing in continuous learning and growth, I aim to foster a supportive work environment where each person can achieve their full potential.

## PERNA'S AND CABRERA, NORA, & CASTANEDA'S CONCEPTUAL MODEL & SERVANT LEADERSHIP

### Perna's Model

Perna's conceptual framework seeks to understand the forces that shape student college choice. The framework is shaped by four contextual layers: individual habitus, school and community context, higher education context, and the broader social, economic and policy context (Perna, 2010).

Perna's conceptual framework can be connected to servant leadership in several ways. One way is by recognizing the humility in Perna's conceptual framework. Essentially, humility intends to put others first and respects diversity. Perna's conceptual framework acknowledges student's needs to make adequate decisions. The framework acknowledges diverse perspectives, using multiple theoretical views to understand the complexity of student's decision-making process. Another connection between Perna's framework and servant leadership is through the emphasis on empathy. The essence of empathy is to seek to understand other's perspective. Perna's conceptual model acknowledges the uniqueness of students' background and seeks to understand the impact on students. Finally, empowerment is a central component of Perna's conceptual model. The framework is successful the growth and development of others and recognizes students' need for resources to successful. Overall, I believe Perna's conceptual framework embodies Greenleaf's definition of servant leadership ensuring people's highest priority needs are met, people can grow and the least privileged in society are benefited.

### Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's Model

Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's framework is a model that analyzes relevant factors contributing to student persistence. The framework considers environmental and endogenous variables which impact the persistence process (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993, p.9).

Like Perna's conceptual model, there are several ways in which Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's framework can be connected to servant leadership.

One way is by prioritizing the needs and wants of students (van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006). Cabrera, Nora, and Castenda (1993) consider the "complex interplay among institutional, personal, and external factors" that impact a student's decision to persist (p.20). Another connection between the two frameworks is through the availability of resources. Servant leadership recognizes that resources (financial resources, relationships, and information) are vital to a person's growth and development. The availability of these resources are considerable factors in a student's decision to persist at an institution.

The availability of personal resources is apparent in both models as well. Van Dierendonck and Heeren (2006) define personal resources as inner strength, passion, and intuition. While these are factors in becoming a servant leader, they are also contributing factors to a student's desire to persist at a particular institution.

A basic principle of servant leadership is support. Servant leaders recognize support impacts loyalty, goal commitment and continuous growth and learning (van Dierendonck, 2011). Relatedly, Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda's conceptual model highlights the contributions of a supportive environment on student's sense of belonging (p.4), loyalty to the institution (p.7) and the ability to persist (p.5).

Lastly, the concept of empowerment can also be found in both frameworks. Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda recognize empowerment through student's decision-making processes. The premise of the model is to understand vital factors that play a role in students' decision to persist at an institution. The model also understands that students' confidence in their decision greatly impacts persistence (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993, p.11).

Overall, Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda's framework and servant leadership share several key principles, including the importance of resources, support, and empowerment. Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda's conceptual model embodies the core principles of servant leadership and models the need to understand others to ensure they can reach their full potential.

## THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE, PROPOSED STUDY AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the perceptions of undergraduate students who work and enroll in higher education full time regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist at the University of Mississippi. The goals of the study are characteristic of servant leadership. First, the study prioritizes other's highest priority needs. I believe full-time employed, full time enrolled students need support to persist in college. The complexity of their roles and responsibilities can be overwhelming. With the appropriate source of support the ability for students to persist is enhanced.

However, the goal is to understand what types of support are required and how institutions can support students. Additionally, servant leadership asks, "what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not become further deprived?". Research on full time employed, full time enrolled students show lack of financial resources and lack of parental support contribute to a student's decision to engage in full time employment while enrolled in college.

Servant leadership highlights that resources and support are vital to continuous growth and learning. I believe it is our duty as an institution to provide adequate resources and support to enhance the growth of our students. Next, the study contains elements of compassion, empathy, and humility. The goal of the study is to understand students' perception of support on their



ability to persist at the University of Mississippi. The ability to adequately understand the position of our students requires that we stand back and learn from their perspective. Students are the experts on their unique situation, needs and wants and if we want to best serve our students, we must listen to them.

Lastly, the study aims to empower students. The primary goal of this study is to ensure the success of our students by providing the tools, resources, and support vital to their persistence at the University of Mississippi.

## CARNEGIE PROJECT ON THE EDUCATION DOCTORATE AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership exemplifies the principles of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) principles. The premise of servant leadership is to create a supportive environment where others feel valued, accepted, and can reach their full potential. Servant leadership demonstrates humility by seeking diverse perspectives and listening to the voices of multiple stakeholders, which represents CPED value of diversity. Continuous growth and learning are central to both servant leadership and CPED principles. Servant leaders invest in others to ensure they can grow in all aspects of their life and become servant leaders themselves. Lastly, servant leadership embodies CPED's value of ethics and inclusive practices.

Servant leadership emphasizes values, integrity, and community service. Ethical servant leaders act with others in mind and are committed to fairness, righteousness, and justness. They demonstrate ethical principles and remain accountable in their actions and decisions.

## DISCUSSION

I believe the Dissertation in Practice (DiP) process has been essential in becoming a scholar-practitioner. Being a scholar-practitioner means possessing a sense of awareness and

curiosity of issues affecting higher education. Through existing research, we can gain insight into practical issues and use this information to improve the quality of higher education.

Theoretical and practical skills inform research questions and design studies to solve complex problems. The DIP process has instilled a commitment to continuous learning and professional development. I have learned the value of staying up to date with the latest research and best practices in higher education. I have learned the importance of contributing to the field of education through research and practice.

Overall, I have learned the importance of bridging the gap between research and practice by becoming cognizant of existing issues and using research and continuous learning to address these issues and enhance the field of higher education.

The DIP process has informed my leadership competencies. The innumerable leadership philosophies available challenged me to assess my values as a leader and how I want to engage with others. Through research, I found that I identify most with servant leadership and through my leadership philosophy hope that I have connected my values with leadership.

However, as a servant leader, I realize the need for continued growth and learning. My aim is to grow through research and professional growth opportunities. I hope to continue the research on full time employed, full time enrolled students to contribute to existing research and find valuable solutions to enhance their success. My goal for professional growth is to become more involved at the team, institutional, and community level to enhance my skills and serve as a role model to others.

Lastly, I must consider how I will use servant leadership as a future leader in higher education. Servant leadership is a philosophy that emphasizes the leader's focus on serving the needs of others. As a servant leader, I must remain cognizant of my goal to address the needs of

multiple stakeholders in higher education and advance the mission and goals of the institution.

As a future leader, there are many ways I can apply servant leadership principles. First, I feel it is important to actively listen to the concerns, ideas, and values of others to create a trusting environment and build a culture of collaboration. Next, I can practice empowering others and helping them reach their goals. My career currently allows me to empower students, but I strive to empower my co-workers and even leaders by providing support where I can. In addition, I can build relationships as a future leader to enhance community and connection. My goal is to build relationships with current team members and other stakeholders within the institution.

Lastly, I can serve as a role model by demonstrating values and behaviors expected from me as a servant leader. My overall goal as a servant leader is to inspire others to serve the greater good of our students, institution, and community. In closing, I feel that the DIP process has been an invaluable experience that has contributed to becoming a scholar-practitioner and growing as a servant leader. I feel there is ample opportunity for growth and learning to become the best servant leader I can be.

## CONCLUSION

Servant leadership is a theory built upon serving and empowering others to reach their full potential. The founding principles of servant leadership are grounded in humility, listening, morals and ethics, empowerment, investing in others, compassion and empathy, and continuous learning and growth. The practice of servant leadership provides many benefits to the leader, followers, and institution.

The conceptual models utilized in the study, Perna's and Cabrera, Nora, and Castenada's conceptual models, demonstrate many characteristics in line with servant leadership. Principles

of Servant Leadership are evident through humility, empathy, and continuous growth and development. The models value the importance of resources, support, and empowerment.

The problem of practice this research focuses on is to explore the perceptions of full-time employed, full-time-enrolled undergraduate students regarding the impact of support systems on their ability to persist. The problem of practice, as well as the proposed study, highlight many values of servant leadership. First, we must ensure that students' highest priority needs are met, analyze what students need, and ensure they have adequate resources for continuous growth and development. With understanding, we can aid students in persistence and success. The Carnegie Project for the Education Dissertation aligns with Servant Leadership in its ability to seek diverse perspectives, promote continuous growth and development, and demonstrate ethical principles.

The Dissertation in Practice (DIP) has been a valuable resource for my continuous growth and development. It has taught me the value of connecting research to practice and informed my leadership style to become the most effective Servant Leader.

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## RESUME

# VICTORIA MCCORD

Hard-working and dedicated professional with a desire to foster knowledge, skills & motivation for student success.

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### EDUCATION

University of Mississippi  
*Ed.D in Education*  
July 2019— May 2023

University of Mississippi  
*Master of Arts*  
Higher Education & Student Personnel  
June 2015– August 2017

University of Mississippi  
*Bachelor of Arts*  
Psychology  
August 2012– August 2014

### ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Technical Systems, including StarRez, SAP, myOleMiss, Blackboard & Microsoft

Design Programs, including InDesign, Photoshop & Canva

### RELATED EXPERIENCE

Teaching EDHE 105—First Year Experience & EDHE 305—Transfer Experience  
Attended NACADA Conference 2019, 2020, & 2023

Participated in NACADA Mentoring Program

Nominated NACADA Region 4 Liaison for MRRC

Member of Rising Professional Cohort

Mental Health First Aid Training

### WORK EXPERIENCE

The University of Mississippi | April 2018—Present  
*Academic Advisor | Center for Student Success & FYE*

- Advises students regarding curricular information, course scheduling, major selection, degree requirements and alternate courses of study, focusing specifically on School of Applied Science students
- Establishes contact with advisees, maintains records concerning students advising and their progress
- Assists students in scheduling class through myOleMiss and SAP
- Serves as a liaison between students, faculty and professional schools
- Maintains cross-campus relationships with advisors in the School of Applied Sciences
- Meets with students to discuss methods to increase likelihood of student success
- Approved appropriate forms for students to receive military benefits
- Refers students to available resources on campus, when necessary.
- Represents the Center for Student Success & FYE at various campus events
- Instructs EDHE 105

The University of Mississippi | June 2017—April 2018  
*Executive Assistant | Diversity & Community Engagement*

- Organized and attended meetings with the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement
- Created agendas and maintained minutes for various meetings
- Assisted with logistics of programs and events
- Organized travel for the Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Community Engagement
- Monitored budgets & generated budget reports
- Maintained and updated Vice Chancellor's calendar
- Recruited, hired, trained, and supervised student workers
- Supported efforts of Diversity & Community Engagement

The University of Mississippi | August 2014—June 2017  
*Senior Secretary | Student Housing*

- Recruited, hired, trained, and supervised front desk student workers, including maintaining student worker schedules and monitoring work logs
- Assisted students and parents with questions
- Ensured accuracy of payroll
- Maintained minutes for various meetings
- Supported supervisor by maintaining and updating excel files
- Generated Occupancy report
- Maintained security and confidentiality of student housing records
- Utilized technical systems including StarRez, SAP, Microsoft Office