

2022
COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING[®]
CONFERENCE

*Influences on Student
Responsiveness in an
Early Alert Program*

Eric Tammes, EdD
College of Lake County

Presentation Overview

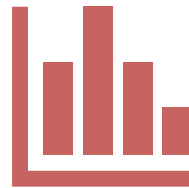
- Introduction to Early Alert Programs
- Purpose of Study & Research Questions
- Early Alert Literature Review
- Theoretical Framework
- Research Design
- Participant Summary
- Findings
- Limitations & Implications
- Professional Reflections
- Questions & Feedback

Introduction to Early Alert Programs

Links student performance needs/concerns with an intentional outreach and intervention process that is focused on improving outcomes and reducing institutional departure



Used by 4 of 5 community colleges



Multiple measurements of impact



Gap of knowledge about student experience

Purpose of Study & Research Questions

Study sought to gain insights into students' experiences with an early alert program and how students chose to respond after receiving an early alert. Specifically, this study examined students' response decisions at the College of Lake County (CLC) after they were alerted.

What influences student responses and decision-making following an early alert notification at CLC?

- How does a student's self-efficacy shape student decision-making after an early alert notification?
- What decisions and actions do an early alert notification prompt students to take?
- How do institutional interventions influence student decisions and actions following an early alert notification?

Early Alert Literature Review

Community College Retention & Persistence

- Program/services do not automatically yield higher persistence
- Access does not yield higher persistence

Structure, Development & Processes

- Differences in early alert systems, scale, case management, and communication

Effectiveness, Impact & Student Outcomes

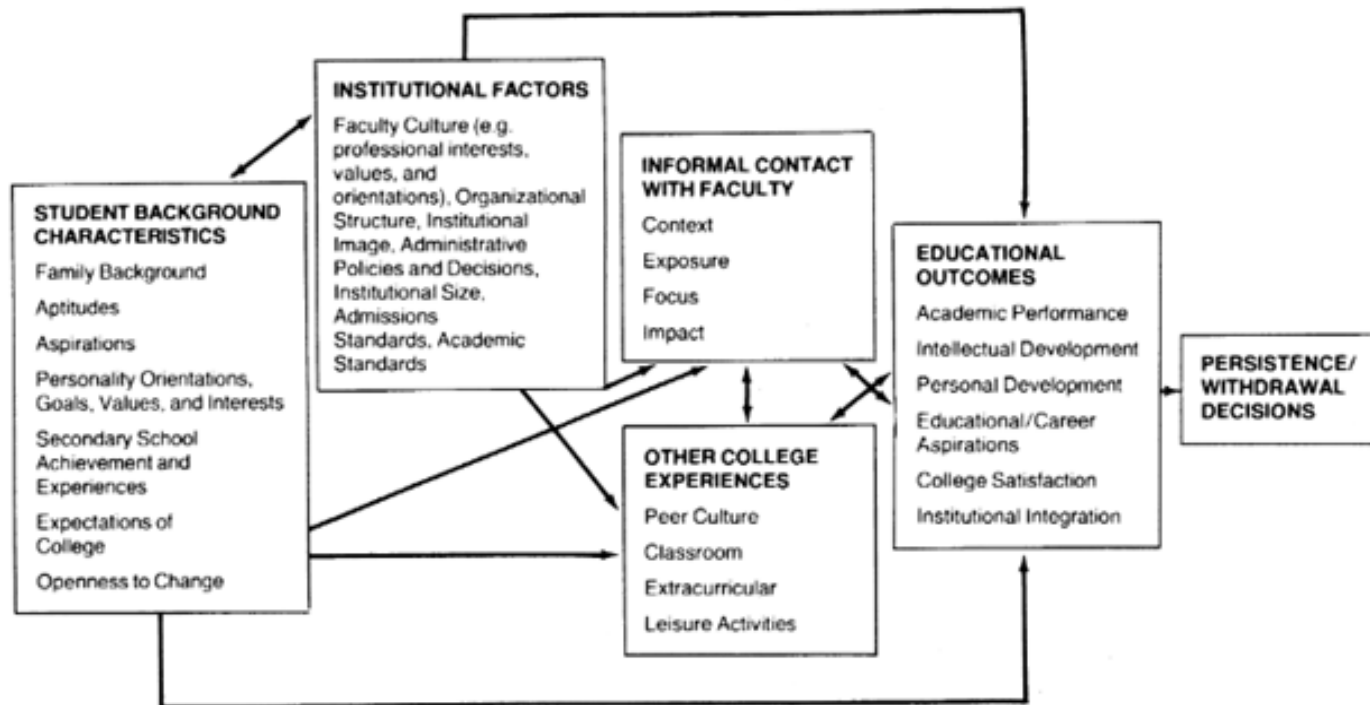
- Varied outcomes: communication, populations, course completion
- Benefit of faculty referral plus case manager outreach

Student Decision-Making, Self-Efficacy & Response

- Gap of measurable action and response research
- Uncertainty of student impact and decision-making

Theoretical Framework

Pascarella's (1980) Student-Faculty Informal Contact Model



- Emphasizes importance of faculty contact
- Suggests interconnection and reciprocal impact among dimensions
- Focused on persistence/withdrawal decisions
- Sensitized study to focus on students' background, experiences within institution, and faculty relationships
- Model did not address informal contact with staff/case manager

Research Design

- **Qualitative case study design:** College of Lake County (CLC)
- **Participants:** college-level students receiving at least one early alert within prior four terms
- **Selection:** maximum variation sample, email invitation, \$25 gift card incentive
- **Data collection:** 30-45 minute interviews, semi-structured questions, recorded and transcribed
- **Two-step coding process:** open coding and axial coding
- **Trustworthiness:** two-step member checking, memoing strategy, rich/thick descriptions, positionality statement

Participant Summary

17
participants
interviewed

47% Latinx/Hispanic
29% White/Caucasian
18% Black/African American
6% Multiracial

52% Female
41% Male
6% Non-binary/third gender

65% 18-24 years old
35% 25 or older

88% responded to early alert
12% did not recall alert or withdrew immediately before alert

Key Findings

Research question:

What influences student responses and decision-making following an early alert notification at CLC?

Four key themes emerged:

1. Self-efficacy
2. Relationships
3. Clear and caring messages
4. Personal conversations

Students' Self-efficacy Influences Response Decisions

"I can do this, I can do this"

- **Participants able to maintain a positive attitude and believe in ability to succeed in college were more likely to seek help**
 - Christian: "It was, how do you say that word, it convicted me. It made me realize what am I doing paying for all these classes and I'm not even showing up to class."
 - Renee: "I didn't use to ask for help because I felt like I should get it. There's no reason why I shouldn't get it, my brain is functioning. And so I had to understand that everyone needs help. I'm not the only person that doesn't understand stuff."
- **Participants expressing a negative or deficit attitude toward ability to succeed resisted seeking assistance or opted to withdraw**
 - Julie: "I'm just not that person. I don't know how to write research papers...I dropped one of the two classes."
- **Case managers might influence self-efficacy**
 - Miggy: "I had trouble because math isn't my strong suit" but case manager's outreach and encouragement "made it somewhat easier that I have that person emailing me."

Relationships and Care Influence Students' Response Decisions

“No one knows me better”

- **Faculty expressions of concern and compassion pave the way for responsiveness**
 - Lorrie: “She was very understanding, and she gave me a lot of good advice...She really motivated me and made me feel welcomed all the time so she did have a really big impact on me.”
- **Proactive and engaged faculty help participants seek assistance for academic and personal needs**
 - Julie: “He picked up on all this, and sent me all this information to talk to somebody...He goes, nobody should be going through this much stress. Yeah, he just, he saw that it was a matter of why I was a mess.”
- **Case managers share equally impactful role in early alert process**
 - Erik: “No one knows me better than she does. What I mean is no one knows the problems that I’ve faced so far, the trouble I had starting out...Now, me and her go through that together.”
 - Fernanda: “I can honestly say at this point that he’s like my second dad...I feel like he’s more like an educational father.”

Clear, Caring, and Actionable Messages Foster Positive Responses

“That’s a game changer”

- **Positive, personalized, and encouraging messages created favorable imprint**
 - Beatrice: “Just to know that through the email they’re actually thinking about me and worrying about me that kind of mattered most to me...the emotions attached to the email like actually make it seem more sincere and genuine like hey I do care about you instead of like, hey, you’re ruining my statistical average or something like that.”
- **Participants appreciate specific action steps and recommended resources**
 - John: “That was something that I never really thought in my mind that existed in college, and that was pretty awesome. And you know, they even they have math tutoring for courses and everything is there to help you succeed. And that’s game changer, you know.”
- **Case managers’ persistence and ongoing follow-up may create positive impact**
 - Charles: “The person kept messaging me not at regular intervals, but just sort of like a check in every now and then. I didn't think it was super helpful at first...but after only a little bit more, where my grades started to tank, I was conversing with them just a little bit more. Eventually I had worked myself up to talking to the professor and emailing them to figure out what to do.”

Desire for Personal Conversations

“The best thing is always an in-person interaction”

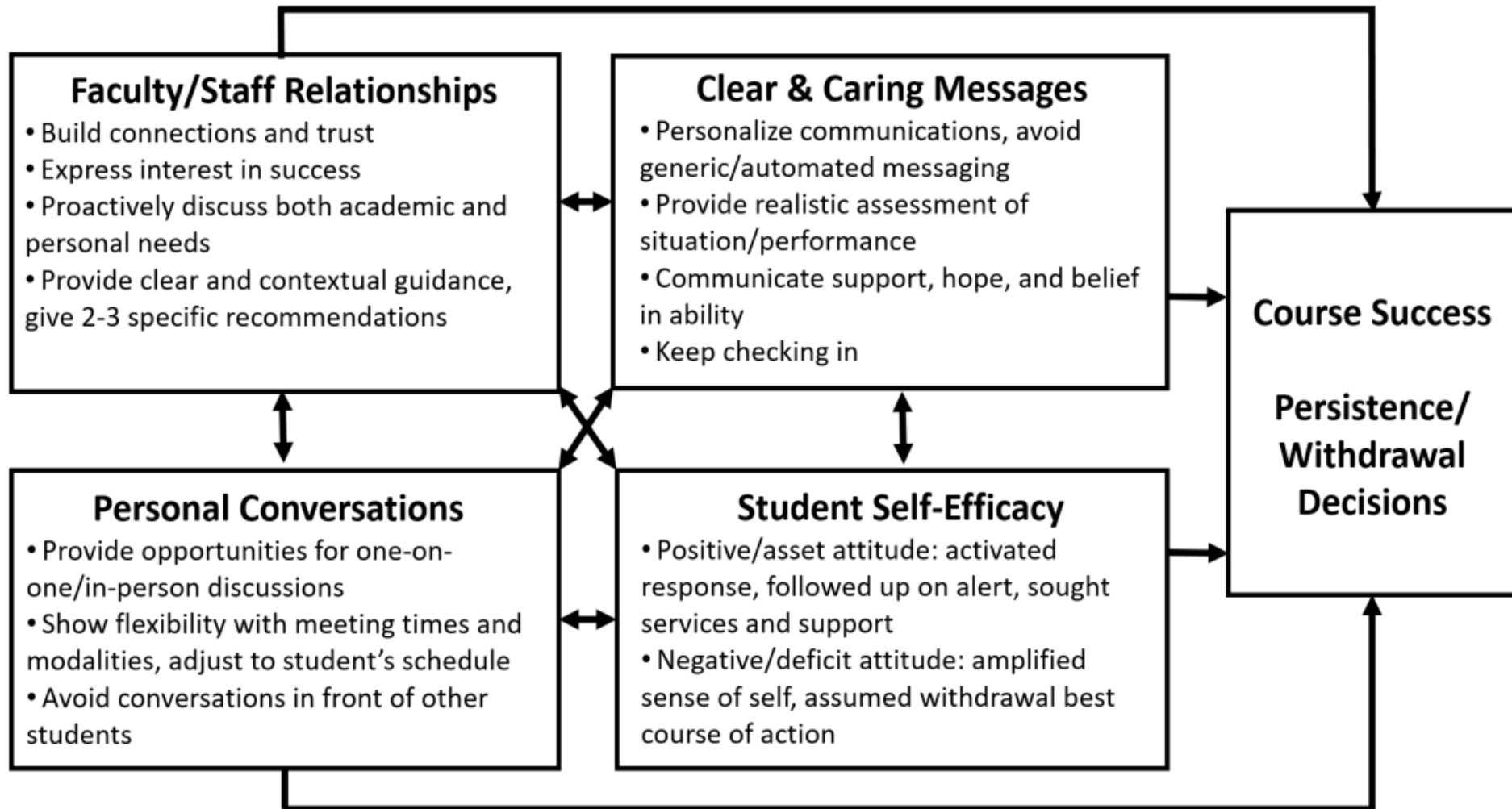
- **Participants value one-on-one conversations with faculty and case managers**
 - Julie: “I talked to the teacher. I was able to talk to him face-to-face. I was able to get a hold of them easier.”
 - Shannon: “I think the best thing is always an in-person interaction, because a lot can be lost in tone and body language when you try and do an email or even a phone call.”
- **Participants appreciate flexibility in setting up conversation based on participants’ schedules**
 - Fernanda: “She just told me that she could have a Zoom with me and anytime would work best.”
- **Benefits and limitations of using video conference technology for conversations**
 - Val: “I like that you can just like pop in during their office hours and ask them like any questions you have about any work that you’re doing in class.”
 - Jesse: “I’ve seen the professors say, you know, can you stay on the Zoom class I want to talk to you...If you’re doing a classroom that’s different, you know, they’re like ‘hey can you stay back,’ that could be good or bad, you don’t know...but then in the Zoom class is a lot more noticeable because everyone’s paying attention.”

Study Limitations

- **Single case study:** lack of generalization
- **Mainly involved responsive students:** most study participants responded to early alert compared to less than half of all MCC students who typically respond after receiving an alert
- **Exclusively focused on the student early alert experience:** lack of perspectives from faculty and case managers

Implications for Practice: New Conceptual Model for Student Early Alert Response

Tammes, 2021



Implications for Future Research

- **Follow students' early alert experiences from start to finish:** class engagement, reflective feedback, key decision points, and course outcomes
- **Focus on non-responsive students:** examine more intentionally about why students do not respond and if students take some kind of independent action
- **Explore responsiveness based on race/ethnicity and social identities:** consider the possible influence of imposter syndrome

2022
COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING[®]
CONFERENCE

Questions, Feedback & Discussion

Eric Tammes, EdD
College of Lake County