

THE LIFE IMPACT PROGRAM

SUPPORTING STUDENT PARENTS STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Overview of the Life Impact Program:
 - History
 - Vision and Program Theory
 - Program Components and Targeted Outcomes
 - Who are Life Impact Scholars?
- Evaluation Findings:
 - Retention, Graduation, Grade Point Averages
 - Barriers, Supports, and What College Means to Students
- Discussion/Questions & Answers

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

HISTORY

- Established in 2005 as a 6-year pilot program
 - Funded entirely by the Jane Bradley Pettit Foundation
- Additional funds were provided by other donors to extend the program
 - Great Lakes Higher Ed. Guaranty Corporation, Brewers Community Foundation, UW System, one Anonymous Donor
- The first cohort was just 12 scholars, incremental increase until 60 scholars
- Typical cohort size is now 40 scholars



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

VISION AND PROGRAM THEORY

The Life Impact Program goals are threefold:

1. **To help break the cycle of poverty** among low-income students with children, by providing access to, ensuring retention at, and graduation from UWM.
2. **To remove financial barriers** and reduce education debt load for graduating low-income students with children, thus empowering them to achieve economic independence for themselves and their families; and
3. **To help foster both dialogue and action** among institutional and public policy leaders to improve the overall academic, economic and social success of low-income students with children.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

VISION AND PROGRAM THEORY

The Life Impact Program Mission is:

*To provide UWM students with children holistic academic support,
meant to empower parents and improve their families overall
economic and social success.*



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Eligibility Criteria
 - Parent with a dependent child or children
 - Accepted for admission for the following term
 - Demonstrated financial need (FAFSA Completion, Pell Eligible)



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Preferences
 - Single parents
 - HS or College GPA of 2.5 or better
 - First bachelor's degree
 - Full-time Student
 - Two semesters remaining before graduation



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Application, personal statement and letter of recommendation
- Staff Review of Applications
 - Fit Factor – Assesses best fit
 - Meets Basic Eligibility
 - Can illustrate well how poverty has impacted them from childhood on
 - Articulates an understanding of and need for program support
 - Demonstrates academic potential
 - Received help from support staff/programs in the past
 - Able to engage in the program activities (not all on-line, not working FT, etc.)
- Selection Committee

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION PROCESS

The perfect Life Impact Scholar is not the perfect student. They demonstrate academic potential, regardless of past academic failures. They demonstrate a need for, not just the scholarship, but for the support. They express a willingness to accept and embrace staff involvement.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS (2010-2017)

- 83% female
- 87% single
- 34% African American; 34% Caucasian; 23% Latinx; 6% Asian; 4% Native American
- 72% had one child; 22% 2 children; 7% 3-5 children
- Ages range from 18-53, median age at entry of 26
- 96% have \$0 Expected Family Contribution
- 65% first generation
- Most (63%) were sophomores or juniors when they entered the program



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BARRIERS FACED

- Domestic violence/Obtaining restraining orders
- Involvement in the court system
- Experiencing or witnessing neighborhood violence
- Caring for other family members
- Mental health and/or physical health issues
- Children with special needs
- Lack of employment history, transportation, appropriate housing
- Dependency on state aid

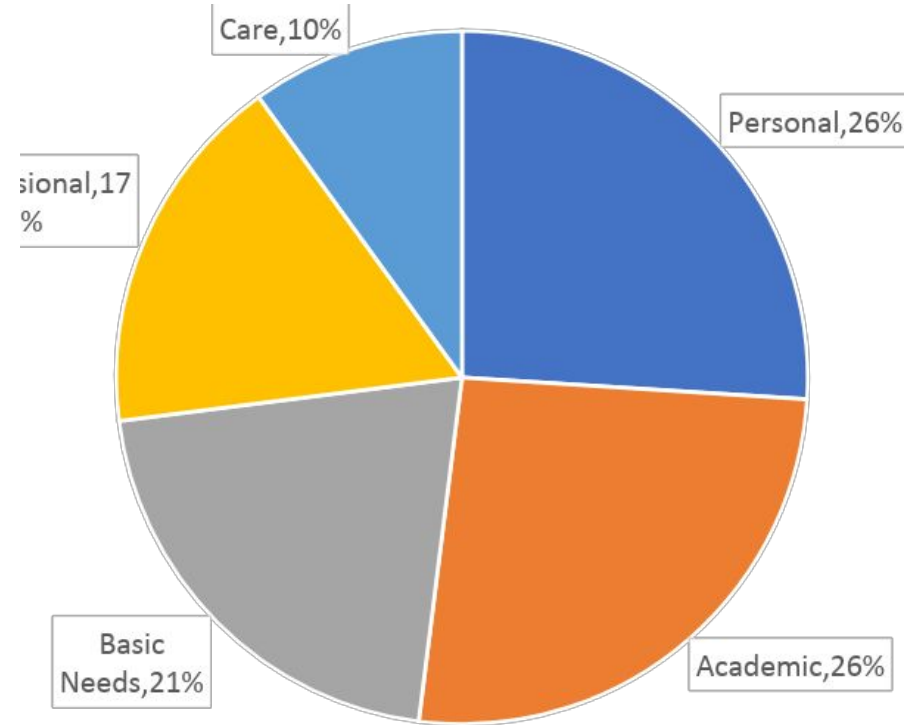
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BARRIERS FACED

- Grief, Trauma
- Divorce, new marriages, new babies
- Immigration Cases, legal issues
- Child Custody Battles
- Bankruptcy, high credit card debt, lack of FA, budgeting
- Aging out of the foster care system
- Having their first apartment
- Not knowing how to communicate with professors
- Not knowing resources

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BARRIERS DISCUSSED



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Renewable Scholarship
 - \$3,000/semester at FT
 - Prorated for HT and LT
- Emergency Funds (EFR)
 - Must complete a budget first and complete an application
 - If declined, alternate resources are provided

LIFE IMPACT IS MORE THAN JUST A FINANCIAL SUPPORT



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Life Coach Team (will discuss later)
- Probation Support
 - If below a 2.5 or NOT moving toward graduation
 - Additional program requirements
 - Can eventually be dismissed
- Post-Graduation Support
 - Up to 6-months
 - Allows them to receive EFR
 - Helps keep our scholars engaged in the program during their final semester



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Student Parent Workshops
- Family Events for Scholars
- Campus Wide Student Parent Events



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Space!!!!
 - Quiet lounge and study area
 - Computers, office supplies
 - Free coffee
 - Free printing
 - Refrigerator
 - Microwave
 - Resources
 - Peer Support/Community



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

LIFE COACH ROLE

- Focuses on the whole student and their many roles
- Identifies barriers and provides personal support
- Supports students through resources and referrals on- and off-campus
- Provides follow-up to ensure student's needs are met
- Advocates for student rights and serves as a liaison
- Are experts on our campus regarding the student parent population; needs, resources, policies, etc.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COACHING APPROACH & PHILOSOPHY

- Asset-based, wholistic approach
- Staff as facilitators, not authorities
- Students are part of the team and are equally engaged in the process
- Program requirements are designed to engage scholars even further
 - Workshops
 - Builds community; networking and peer support
 - 1x/semester
 - 1:1 or group meetings
 - Focus on assessment (barrier screening tool), resources and building rapport
 - Career, personal goals and academics

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COACHING APPROACH & PHILOSOPHY

- Barrier Screening Tool
 - Done 2x/semester (30-90 minute appointment)
 - Includes pre-meeting steps for staff
 - Assess for common student parent barriers:
 - Academic, Child's Needs, Career Planning and Current Employment, Basic Needs, Overall Well-Being
 - Follow-up email is sent summarizing needs, resources
 - Time consuming, but valuable!

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

STUDENT PARENT STRENGTHS-HIGHER ED SUCCESS

- Survive w/ Limited Resources
- Self-advocate
- Ask for Help Confidently
- Be Responsible
- Manage Time & Money
- Work as a Team or Alone
- Problem Solve
- Have Personal Goals & Source of Motivation (kids)
- Living Skills
- Avoiding Risky Behavior
- Multi-Tasking
- Resiliency
- Maturity



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

UWM STUDENT PARENT STATISTICS (Fall 2017)

- Total # of UWM Student Parents: 1,399
 - 475 Grad
 - 924 UG
- FT UG ZERO EFC: 418
 - Average GPA: 2.496

Life Impact
Scholars
average
GPA=3.1



Any
Program
Related
Questions
?



Otherwise we're moving on.....

EVALUATION DESIGN

Barbara Goldberg & Associates designed an evaluation of the longer-term results of the Life Impact Program's work, including:

- Develop a logic model of the program's structure and theory of change
- **Quantitative:** Assess the extent to which participating in the program is associated with improved retention, grade and graduation outcomes.
- **Qualitative:** Explore the voices of student parents including the barriers and benefits of college, and the supports that are most helpful in their eyes.



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EVALUATION FINDINGS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Scholarships

- A total of **\$2,229,921** in performance-based scholarships awarded to 195 Scholars over 12 years (2005-2017)
- Awarded by semester, dependent on academic and enrollment requirements
- Renewable over multiple years
 - 20% received scholarships for a single year; 37% for 2 years; 24% for 3 years; 12% for 4 years
- Median total scholarship per student was \$10,000, average \$11,435

EVALUATION FINDINGS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Emergency Funds

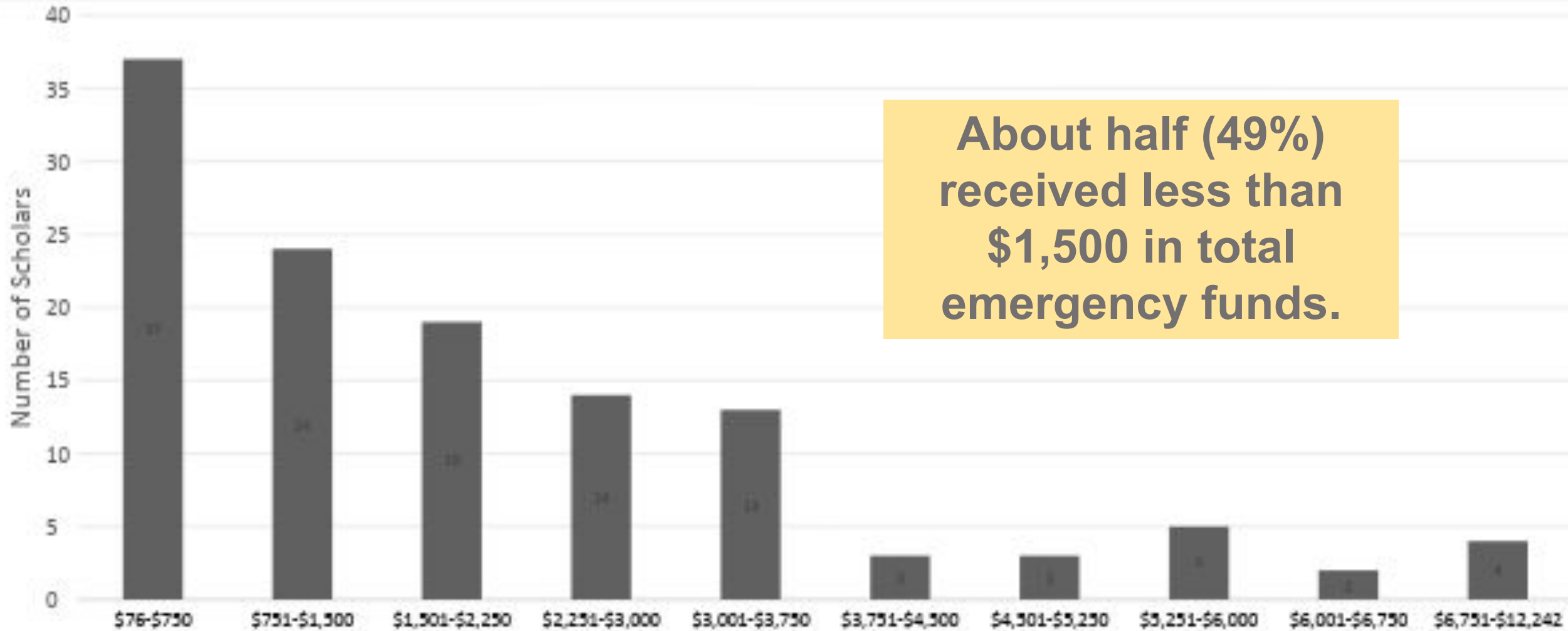
- Emergency funds provide direct assistance and stability to help students weather unanticipated costs.
- Most Life Impact Scholars (64%) received emergency funds at least once.
 - Of those who used funds, 31% did so only once, 26% 2-3 times; 23% 4-6 times; 21% 7+ times

EVALUATION FINDINGS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: Emergency Funds

- Funds covered: housing, transportation, professional development, and utilities.
 - Housing (40% of requests)
 - emergency home repairs, moving expenses, rent payments, and fees related to foreclosures
 - Transportation (mainly automobile-related) (17% of requests)
 - Transportation costs were mainly car repairs but also car payments, car insurance, and gasoline.
 - Professional development (12% of requests)
 - Utilities (11% of requests)
 - Other funds covered:
 - childcare costs, medical costs, legal costs, college-related costs, groceries, telephone/internet costs.

TOTAL EMERGENCY FUND USE IN DOLLARS



EVALUATION FINDINGS

RETENTION IN THE PROGRAM

- Of the 107 students who entered the Life Impact Program in 2010 or later:
 - 83% (89 students) had maintained their good standing in the program, of these:
 - 24 Life Impact Scholars were still enrolled in college (as of spring 2017)
 - 65 Life Impact Scholars graduated

EVALUATION FINDINGS

GRADUATION

- Of the Life Impact Scholars who began the program between 2010 and 2017, **93% have either graduated or are still enrolled**
- 63% have graduated, 30% still enrolled, 7% discontinued enrollment
- As point of reference, UW-Milwaukee's six-year graduation rate for all new freshmen is 41%

EVALUATION FINDINGS

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- The evaluation compared the GPAs of students at their enrollment in Life Impact to their GPAs at their latest/final semester
- The analysis uses all students, including those who discontinued enrollment at UW-Milwaukee
- Prior to entering the Life Impact Program, Scholars' GPAs averaged 3.17
- At latest/final semester, GPAs averaged 3.10, not a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).
- Restricting the analysis to Scholars who stayed enrolled, initial GPA averaged 3.18 and final/latest GPA was 3.21 (difference not statistically significant at $p < .05$).



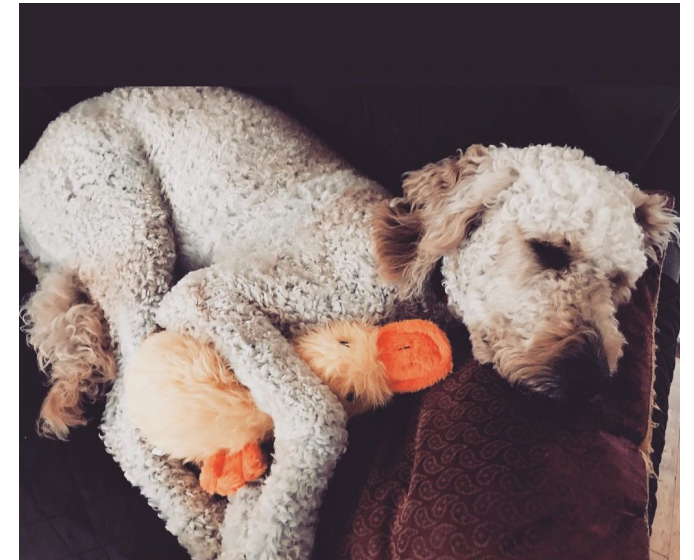
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EVALUATION FINDINGS

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- Students with GPAs below 2.0 increased
- Students with GPAs above 3.0 dropped slightly



EVALUATION FINDINGS

The question is, why didn't most scholars GPA's increase after entering the program?

EVALUATION FINDINGS

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

- A few factors seem to slightly influence academic performance:
 - Students who were 26 or older when they began the program had slightly higher grade point averages than those who were younger than 26
 - Students who were married had slightly higher grade point averages than those who were unmarried, and
 - White students had marginally higher GPAs than students of color when they began the program

EVALUATION FINDINGS

VOICES OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS

- Six interviews with Scholars conducted, selected at random, all were single mothers of color and first-generation college students
- Semi-structured interviews covered topics of academic, social, and financial support; the barriers these students faced and the supports that were most crucial to them
- The research was not identified as being sponsored by the Life Impact Program, in order to hear students' unbiased reports

EVALUATION FINDINGS

VOICES OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS: MOTIVATION

- Scholars felt motivated by their children, by a desire to break a cycle of poverty, and wanted to set an example for others in their lives
- While the outcome of improved financial security was important, other themes emerged:
 - The desire to demonstrate the importance of education
 - Setting an example of resilience and determination for children

EVALUATION FINDINGS

VOICES OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS: SUPPORT

- Asked about what sources of support were **most important**, all of the students interviewed cited the Life Impact Program
- Scholars particularly valued the emotional, informational, and financial support they received from the program
- While Scholars valued the presence of peers, they reported having little time to develop social relationships on campus

EVALUATION FINDINGS

VOICES OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS: SUPPORT

- Students reported that when they faced major challenges, the Life Impact Program was a critical source of support
- These six mothers faced injury resulting from neighborhood violence, deaths of loved ones, domestic violence, mental health problems, serving as caregivers for adult family members, and other challenges

EVALUATION FINDINGS

VOICES OF LIFE IMPACT SCHOLARS

- Students described their strong motivation, as well as the serious challenges they faced.
- Several students reported that **the Life Impact coaches were the people in their lives who most believed in their college success**, and their first line of defense when something went awry.
- Over and over, students reported valuing that the coaches were personally invested in their students' success.

DISCUSSION



Questions & Answers



THANK YOU ALL!

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