

The Exhibited Use of Trauma-Informed Principles in Academic Success Programs: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

University leaders spend significant resources developing retention strategies, including promoting personal connections, engagement, and a sense of belonging for students and have recently infused trauma-informed care as a retention strategy. Although colleges are increasingly recognizing the impact of trauma on student success, trauma-exposed students often face higher barriers in accessing and utilizing available resources and developing social connections, which can lead to decreased retention. In this scoping review, we explored how academic success programs exhibit the use of SAMHSA's (2014) trauma-informed principles on their program websites. We found elements of trauma-informed principles exhibited across academic success program websites although no academic success programs explicitly referenced using trauma-informed principles or practices. Our results serve as a foundation for further research on how trauma-informed practices impact college students' sense of belonging and how they overcome academic setbacks.

Keywords: trauma-informed, academic success programs, websites, colleges, sense of belonging, scoping review

Over the last 20 years, systems of care, including social work, health care, and counseling, implemented trauma-informed practices to serve patron needs better by recognizing how trauma exposure can create barriers to seeking resources (Chizimba, 2021; Pletcher et al., 2019; Robertson et al., 2021). Examples of trauma include family violence, poverty, food or housing insecurity, divorce, natural disasters, loss of a loved one, and systemic racial injustice (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014). The experience of trauma is unique to each individual due to numerous personal and social factors. Some people who experience trauma also experience ongoing impacts on how they navigate future stressful situations (Perfect et al., 2016). Institutional leaders recognize the lasting impact of trauma on students and how it affects the way students navigate future

A holistic practice considers students' relationships, academics, and ability to self-regulate in a safe environment.

stressful situations, and it may be best practice to utilize trauma-informed practices when working with students (Perfect et al., 2016). SAMHSA developed a trauma-informed framework to help organizations build practices of care that enable individuals to navigate systems while minimizing the risk of re-traumatization. The SAMHSA's trauma-informed framework is rooted in six key principles: (a) safety; (b) trustworthiness and transparency; (c) peer support; (d) collaboration and mutuality; (e) empowerment, voice, and choice; and (f) cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMHSA, 2014).

Leaders within higher education initially focused on implementing trauma-informed practices in classroom pedagogy (Carello & Butler, 2015; Wells, 2023). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and a national increase in systemic violence against marginalized populations, higher education institutions noticed a rise in acute trauma response from students and adopted trauma-informed practices in

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policies and programs throughout the college experience (Carello & Thompson, 2021; Domenitz, 2019; Henshaw, 2022; Schroeder et al., 2023). Trauma-informed practices in higher education have a critical impact on student success and retention (Arttime et al., 2021; Chozinski & Gonzalez, 2022; Schroeder et al., 2023), as does a student's sense of belonging (Bowman, Miller, et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2007; Masika & Jones, 2016). Hunter (2022) asserted the need to apply trauma-informed practices in a holistic way to address the plethora of ways that people respond to their trauma. A holistic practice considers students' relationships, academics, and ability to self-regulate in a safe environment. "All students need to feel safe academically, socially, emotionally, and physically to thrive" (Hunter, 2022, p. 33).

Students entering college with a history of trauma or experiencing trauma while in college is not a new phenomenon. Read et al. (2011) found that 66% of incoming first-year students indicated experiencing a traumatic life event, with 25% reporting experiencing three or more traumatic events prior to college (p. 150). The impact of early childhood trauma on students' level of resilience, along with their ability to learn, build meaningful connections with others, and succeed in college, is well established in the research (Criss et al., 2002; Hartley, 2011; Porche et al., 2011). Shalka (2019) found that students who experienced a traumatic event in college infused that trauma into their identity development and sense of self, often seeking support through campus resources.

Students experiencing trauma or reacting to a past trauma may not use available resources or may not know where to turn as they experience secondary issues related to their trauma, including mental health setbacks, problems focusing, and missing class. Additionally, students may need to pause their academics to work through their trauma (Chozinski & Gonzalez, 2022). Arttime et al. (2019) found that college students exposed to trauma have more academic issues, social adjustment issues, and mental health issues than non-trauma-exposed students and are less likely to use the services provided. Arttime et al. (2019) also suggested that campus resource and service staff seek to identify gaps and barriers to resource utilization, especially for trauma-exposed students who may otherwise avoid services.

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Sense of belonging is the degree to which students feel connected to their college or university and the people within (Jorgenson et al., 2018). Students identified academic and social engagement, physical surroundings, and healthy peer relationships significantly impacting their sense of belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Booker et al., 2022; Freeman et al., 2007; Masika & Jones, 2016). The timing of the development of a sense of belonging is also critical to long-term student success. Cole et al. (2020) found that the first semester of college is a critical time for students to develop a sense of belonging in their examination of the college transition experience. They determined that staff care, academic guidance, peer social interactions, and peer academic interactions

positively impacted students' sense of belonging and mattering (Cole et al., 2020). Bowman, Jarrett, et al. (2019) discovered that students who indicated social connectedness and on-campus friendships were the most well-adjusted students with the strongest sense of well-being and belonging. Their findings revealed benefits from non-academic engagement, including co-curricular involvement. Shalka and Mourad (2024) studied the connection between trauma experiences and sense of belonging among college students. They found sense of belonging to be positively impacted when institutions create environments that proactively support students through trauma by creating safe spaces, providing training for staff on responding to trauma, and generally responding with compassion and care. Many colleges and universities strive to develop learning environments that promote ho-

listic wellness, personal connection, engagement, and a sense of belonging for their diverse student population. These retention strategies are as crucial to student success as tangible skills-based interventions.

In this scoping review, we explored the question: How do academic success programs exhibit the use of SAMHSA's (2014) trauma-informed principles on their program website? We focused on website layout, language, and resources because websites are the primary source of information that is most easily accessible to students, helping them navigate viable solutions to their setbacks and barriers. For this review, we defined academic success programs as departments that offer multiple academic support services, including but not limited

to tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing assistance, academic advising, and academic skill development. Our results will serve as a foundation for further research on how trauma-informed practices impact college students' sense of belonging and how they overcome academic setbacks.

Methodology

Scoping reviews are used to map and explore relevant literature, studies, or information related to a broad or general topic to help frame future research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). We mapped and analyzed seven public institutions' academic success program websites' language, layout, and resources by exploring the exhibited use of SAMHSA's (2014) trauma-informed principles within academic success programs.

We utilized Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five stages of a scoping review. The stages progress as follows: (a) identifying the initial research questions, (b) reviewing relevant information to answer the research questions, (c) analyzing pertinent information and developing inclusion and exclusion criteria, (d) charting the data, and (e) collating and summarizing the data and reporting the results. Through this process, we developed inclusion and exclusion criteria that centered the research, identified secondary research questions, and outlined the search strategy and selection process.

Identifying the Initial Research Questions

The primary question of this scoping review is: How do academic success programs exhibit the use of SAMHSA's trauma-informed principles on their program website? Secondary questions that provided the framework for inclusion criteria were:

- Do the programs provide diversity of services to students?
- Can all students utilize the services provided?
- Do the programs have a published mission statement or goals?
- What is the reporting line for the academic success programs?

Identifying Study

In most scoping reviews, identifying the study includes determining which research literature to review. Recently, scoping review methodology has been used to evaluate other content, including websites (Bennett et al., 2025; Ghazi et al., 2024). We chose to research the websites of academic success programs instead of relying on literature related to the research question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This step often entails conducting the review in phases. We initially chose

public flagship institutions because they share a common foundation of teaching, research, and public service (Douglass, 2016). After identifying 50 public flagship institutions in the United States, we reviewed each institution's website, searching for "academic success" to identify academic success programs. Deviations of the review components during this stage of study development call for documentation in the selection and findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Study Selection – Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Finding information that does not directly pertain to the research question during the first stage of a scoping review is common (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Inclusion and exclusion criteria are developed to limit the scope of the research. Because scoping reviews are broad by design, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are less restrictive and are often adjusted throughout the study and documented as the review is underway. We reviewed 20 academic success programs at public flagship institutions based on our initial inclusion criteria. We paused our review to revise the inclusion criteria because the differences between programs were too vast to provide an adequate comparison. Initially, inclusion criteria were framed by geography (50 flagship institutions) and philosophical commonality (teaching, research, and public service), which demonstrated considerable variety among the programs, making them challenging to examine further. We revised our inclusion criteria to include ten recognized peer institutions, keeping the standard inclusion criteria framework geographically narrow and convenient. The peer institutions were determined by using the universities identified as peers on our institution's official website. The Appendix contains a complete list of peer institutions. Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper for confidentiality. After we searched each institution's home page for "academic success" to find their academic success program, we reviewed the program website for the remainder of the inclusion criteria.

Programmatically, we reviewed academic success programs that offer more than one type of academic support to students, including but not limited to tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing services, advising services, and remedial or exploratory courses. Our initial criteria included both undergraduate and graduate student services. However, we observed that graduate-level academic support was predominantly situated within individual academic colleges. Therefore, we refined this criterion to programs primarily serving undergraduate students. We incorporated two

inclusion criteria: centrally located programs and programs with clearly articulated mission statements or goals. We chose centrally located programs because they provide streamlined communication efforts, reduce duplication of services, and more efficiently use resources and staff (Kot, 2014). These criteria remained consistent throughout the research process. Table 1 delineates the inclusion criteria and justification for the adjustments.

Table 1
Inclusion Criteria and Adjustments

Original Inclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria Adjustment	Justification of change
Flagship institutions	Recognized peer institutions	Narrowed the scope to focus the research
Programs offering more than one type of academic support	No change	No change
Programs serving both undergraduate and graduate students	Academic success programs serving undergraduate students	Distinctive needs of undergraduate and graduate students
Independently operated, funded, and centrally housed programs	No change	No change
Programs with easily identifiable mission statements or goals	No change	No change

After reviewing all ten peer institutions, three were excluded from further analysis because they did not meet all the criteria. Specifically, two institutions did not have centrally located academic success programs, and one did not have a published mission, vision, or goal statement on their website. To minimize potential bias, we relied on our institution’s official peer designation process (Johnson et al., 2020). Additionally, we ensured consistency by using a systematic approach to identify and evaluate academic success programs across the programs to avoid subjective selection methods. This process helped maintain objectivity and strengthen the reliability of our findings (Galdas, 2017). Figure 1 provides a detailed overview of our audit trail (Denzin et al., 2024), including the review process and modification phases.

Data Charting

The purpose of charting data is to document how the reviewed data was synthesized based on the research framework (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). In this review, CF conducted all

aspects of the research independently, and LH confirmed the results. This approach allowed us to minimize the potential bias associated with individual investigators (Galdas, 2017). Using deductive content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and SAMHSA’s (2014) trauma-informed principles as the research framework, we iteratively developed categories to support the demonstrated use of the principles. This method of analysis is consistent with the process of a scoping review. While scoping reviews allow for adjustments to the framework throughout the data collection and charting, framework adjustments were not necessary. Our review of the academic success program websites using the SAMHSA’s six trauma-informed approach principles led us to develop categories that we mapped to the principles using website language, layout, and resources.

Our twelve categories that exhibited SAMHSA’s trauma-informed principles included the following:

- individual needs
- diverse representation/use of equity language
- student staffing levels
- student staffing experience
- student-centered language
- skills programming
- staffing information
- web design
- diversity/inclusion statement
- mission/goal statement
- diversity of services, and
- organizational structure.

We mapped four categories to multiple principles: web design, staff information, diverse representation/use of equity language, and diversity or inclusion statements. We mapped three inclusion criteria to the principles: mission/goal statement, diversity of services, and organizational structure. Throughout the investigation, we documented the data related to each category and created a chart displaying the data associated with the categories (Figure 2). The data chart depicts the peer institutions in colors (Red U, Blue U, etc.). SAMHSA’s six trauma-informed approach principles are colored gray throughout the tables and figures. The three inclusion criteria categories are color-coded orange. The four categories connected to multiple principles are color-coded dark yellow, while those exclusive to one principle are color-coded light yellow. Figure 3 displays the concept map framework showing connections between the principles, categories, and inclusion criteria. Tables 2 through 7 chart and display the findings for each principle.

Figure 1
Study Selection Review Process and Yield

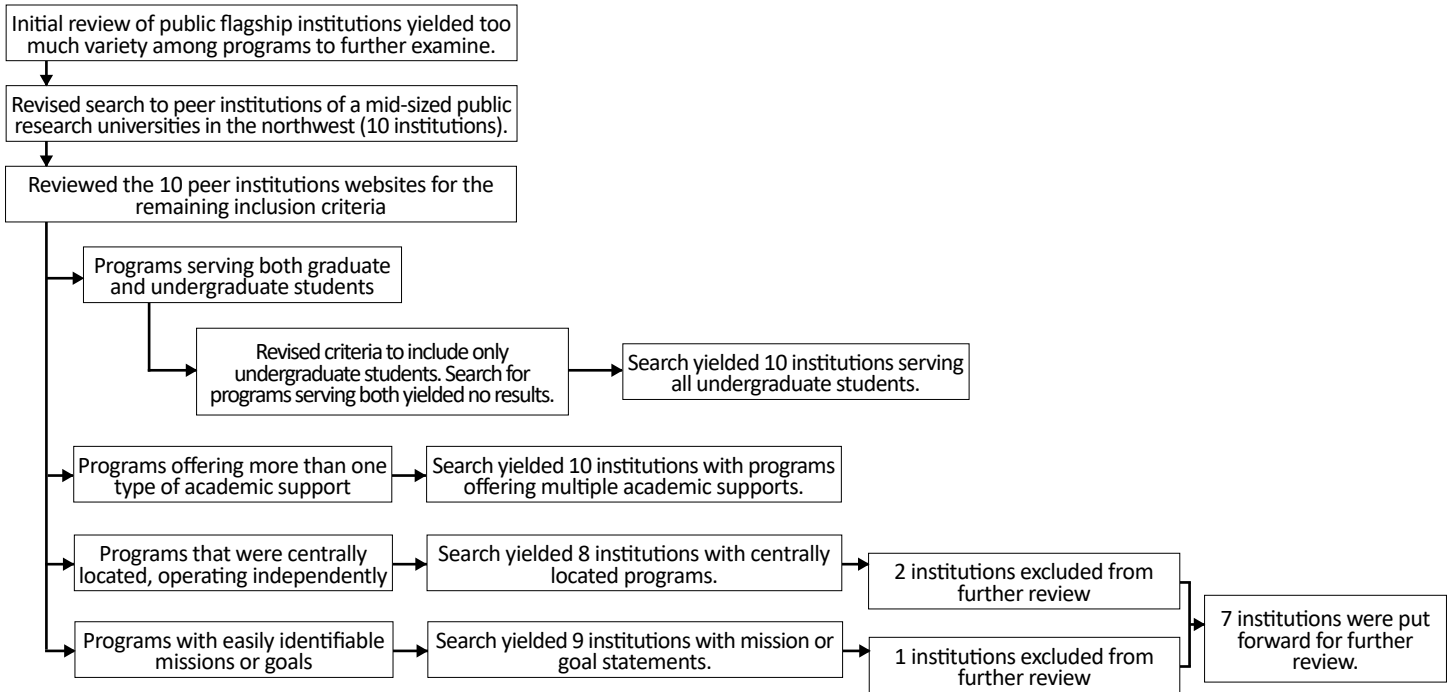
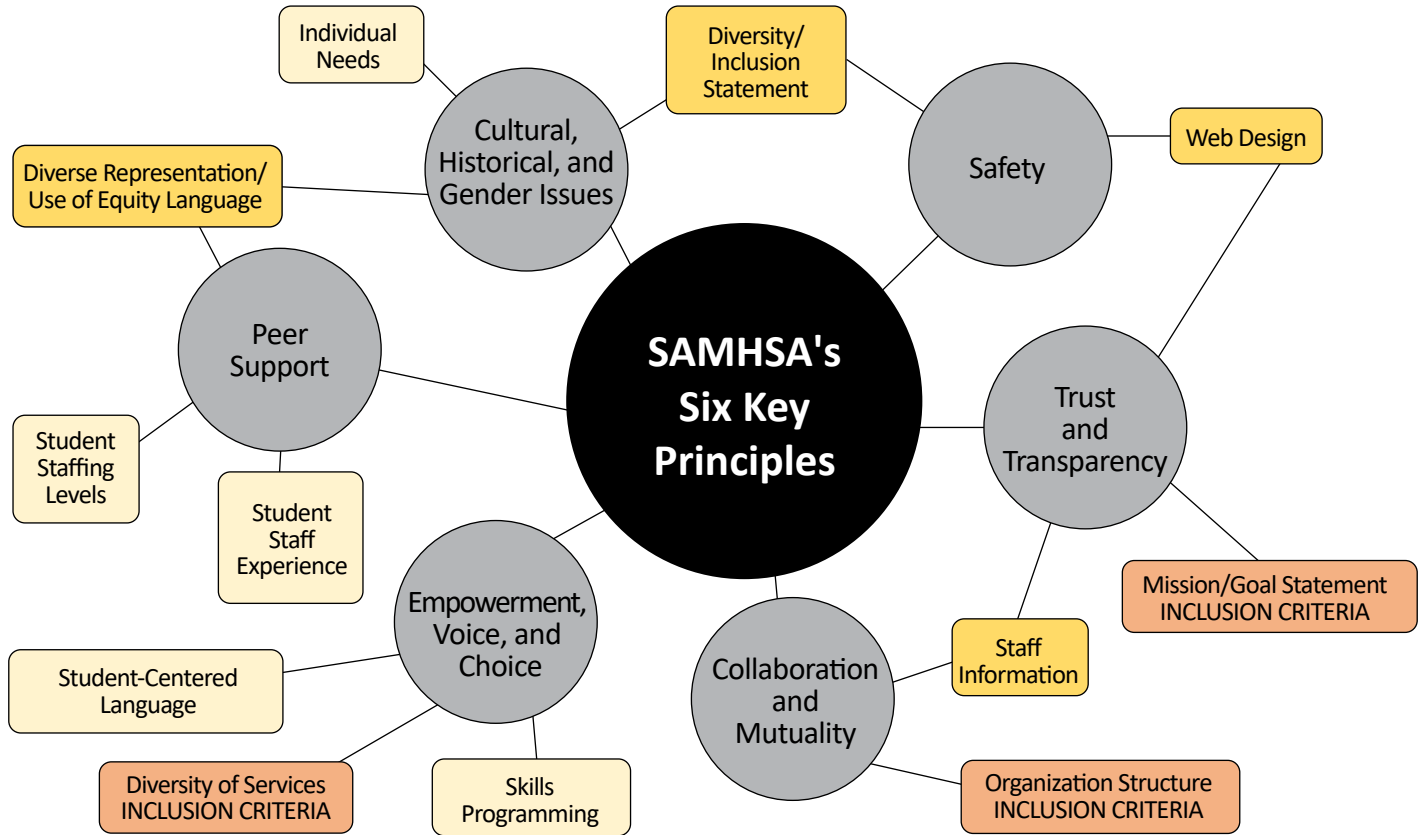


Figure 2
Data Chart Indicating Presence of Category Findings

Principle	Safety		Trustworthiness and Transparency			Peer Support			Collaboration and Mutuality		Empowerment, Voice and Choice			Culture, Historical, and Gender Issues		
	Diversity/Inclusion Statement	Web Design	Mission/Goals	Staff Info	Web Design	Diverse Representation/Language	Student Staffing Levels	Student-Staff Experience	Staff Info	Organizational Structure	Student-Centered Language	Diversity of Services	Skills Programming	Individual Needs	Diverse Representation/Language	Diversity/Inclusion Statement
Institution																
Red U	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blue U		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Green U		x	x		x					x	x	x		x		
Pink U	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Orange U	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Chocolate U		x	x		x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	
Purple U		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

Figure 3
 Concept Map of SAMHSA’s Trauma Principles, Categories, and Inclusion Criteria



Findings

This scoping review explored how academic success programs exhibit the use of SAMHSA’s trauma-informed framework on their program websites, yielding results from seven institutions that met all inclusion criteria. The findings summarize data found on each institution’s website for academic success programs exhibiting a connection to the categories identified for all six trauma principles. Foundation principles organize the findings, each with a working definition related to academic success programs and based on the SAMHSA (2014) definitions, followed by categories within each principle. Correlating expanded sections of the concept map (Tables 2–7) detail the resulting data for each category visually.

Safety

Safety refers to providing an environment where students feel physically and psychologically safe within the physical space and through offerings of the academic success programs. The exhibited use of the safety principle was expressed in published diversity or inclusion statements and accessible website design.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Language

Only three of seven websites exhibited use of diversity and inclusion statements; therefore, we broadened our review to include language that strives to include all student experiences. One institution provided

a link to the institutional equity page. Two posed more robust diversity and inclusive language, using the words “inclusive,” “safe,” “empower,” “inspire,” and “student centered.” Another incorporated valuing diversity and being student-centered into its mission, goals, and values statement. When conveyed, programs’ mission, goals, and values were easily located on the webpage. The language was grounded in student-centered values, such as diversity, collaboration, integrity, and excellence. Welcome statements mentioned tailored support. Diversity and inclusion language was also mapped to the cultural, historical, and gender issues trauma principle.

Website Design

Website designs linked more robustly to *safety*. All institutions exhibited accessible web design, allowing students to explore independently and easily identify available services, accessibility accommodations, and staff information to communicate their needs effectively. We agreed that safety was related to removing perceived barriers to accessing services and was demonstrated by videos with closed captioning, hyperlinked email addresses for staff, QR codes for scheduling, and the ability for students to meet remotely or in person. Some institutions also offered interactive campus maps with the service locations circled and photos of the physical space detailing locations of gender-inclusive bathrooms. Website design is also linked to SAMHSA’s trustworthiness and transparency principle.

Table 2
Safety Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Diversity/Inclusion Statement (This also applies to cultural, historical, and gender issues.)	Web Design (This also applies to trustworthiness and transparency.)
Institution		
Red U	The landing page mentions an inclusive, safe, student-centered place to learn and grow. There are tailored support services that empower, inspire, connect, and positively impact academic success.	The landing page video has automatic closed captioning and addresses the ability to come in person or virtually. Email hyperlinks are next to staff photos, there are easily identified locations and hours, and tutoring can be scheduled through a QR code.
Blue U	None	The accessibility link serves the whole institutional website. Videos use closed captioning. There is an institutional accessibility statement. Staff pages have hyperlinked emails and phone numbers.
Green U	None	The website includes an accessibility link for the institution, and the <i>Accessibility</i> page links to all accessibility supports. The <i>Disability Services</i> page has easy links to each service, and the staff pages have email hyperlinks and phone numbers.
Pink U	Nothing is on the academic program’s site. Links are provided to the institutional <i>Equity</i> page, and there is a diversity inclusion statement for the whole institution.	The main page provides links to each service. Hyperlinks are provided throughout the pages. The <i>Contact Us</i> page has email hyperlinks.
Orange U	Mission, goals, and values are easily located. Values are student-centered and include diversity, collaboration, integrity, and excellence.	The landing page video has optional closed captioning. Easy navigation to each service is provided. Staff pages have hyperlinked email and phone numbers.
Chocolate U	None	A document converter is on the website footer for converting to Braille, MP3, and e-books. The website is difficult to navigate; some resources are only available when clicking from the main page, and many resources are buried.
Purple U	None	An accessibility link serves the whole institution, including digital access, event access, attitudinal barriers, and a statement on implicit bias. The website footer contains a virtual tour map with service locations circled. The <i>Staff</i> page has hyperlinked emails and phone numbers. There is a statement about spaces being newly renovated.

Trustworthiness and Transparency

Trustworthiness and transparency are demonstrated by displaying information openly and building programs that maintain trust between the staff who run the program and the students who utilize the program. We mapped three categories to trustworthiness and transparency: web design, mission/goal statements, and staff information.

Mission and Goal Statements

Mission and goals were one inclusion criterion of this study—each academic success program published either a mission (three institutions) or goal statement (four institutions). The language used focused on either the program or the students. Program-oriented goal language included collaboration, impact retention, prioritizing access, being a strategic partner, revolutionizing academic supports, and

being a safe, inclusive space to learn. Student-oriented goal language included becoming independent learners, increasing confidence, experiencing holistic success, transitioning smoothly into college, remaining enrolled, graduating promptly, and empowering students to succeed.

Staff Information

Five of the seven institutions offered general staffing information on their website. Three institutions provided significant staffing information, including names, titles, photos, hyperlinked emails, phone numbers, and campus addresses. Two institutions supplied less information, including only a list of staff members’ names and contact information and one contact for all services. Staff information was also mapped to the collaboration and mutuality principle.

Table 3
Trustworthiness and Transparency Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Mission/Goals (inclusion criteria)	Staff Info (also applies to collaboration and mutuality)	Web Design (also applies to safety)
Institution			
Red U	Goals mention an inclusive, safe, student-centered place to learn and grow, empower, inspire, connect, and positively impact academic success. The testing office has a specific mission, including having a caring, compassionate, and concerned setting.	The <i>Meet Our Team</i> page includes admin, academic success coaches, peer programs, academic skills development, learning support, and testing services. All staff have pictures, phone, email, campus address, and which campus they serve.	The landing page video has automatic closed captioning and addresses the ability to come in person or virtually. Email hyperlinks are next to staff photos, there are easily identified locations and hours, and tutoring can be scheduled through a QR code.
Blue U	Mission: Empower students to become independent learners through engaging support programs. Vision: To revolutionize the academic support experience.	The <i>Staff</i> page has photos, titles, emails, and phone numbers but no campus address. The page includes focus areas and who to contact for each area and has a student-staff contact page.	The accessibility link serves the whole institutional website. Videos use closed captioning. There is an institutional accessibility statement. Staff pages have hyperlinked emails and phone numbers.
Green U	There are none for the overall program, but individual services have goals, including assisting and empowering students to develop and implement individualized plans for academic success and personal and career development and efficiently transition into their chosen degree-granting program.	None	The website includes an accessibility link for the institution, and the <i>Accessibility</i> page links to all accessibility supports. The <i>Disability Services</i> page has easy links to each service, and the staff pages have email hyperlinks and phone numbers.
Pink U	The overall program does not have service-specific goals, including engaging students through intentional experiences and services and prioritizing holistic success through the first year and beyond. Mentoring students as they adjust to the academic rigors of college. Increase confidence and ability to manage academic workload by developing college-level study skills. Identify short- and long-term goals and make meaningful connections.	The <i>Contact Us</i> page has one person named with an email, phone, picture, and title. Two services have general emails.	The main page provides links to each service. Hyperlinks are provided throughout the pages. The <i>Contact Us</i> page has email hyperlinks.
Orange U	The mission, goals, and values are all easily located. The values include being student-centered, diverse, collaborative, integrity, and excellent. The mission positively impacts student success, retention, and graduation by prioritizing access, promoting engaged learning, and providing innovative approaches to foster academic and personal development.	The <i>Contact Us</i> page includes directors, program directors, coordinators, advisers, staff, graduate assistants, and Emeriti faculty, pictures, titles, campus locations, phone numbers, and emails. The <i>Advisors</i> page also includes a group photo.	The landing page video has optional closed captioning. Easy navigation to each service is provided. Staff pages have hyperlinked email and phone numbers.
Chocolate U	No program mission or vision. Service mission/goals include students being academically prepared to achieve career success in a global society and being a strategic partner with community and employer constituents to enhance the experience.	None	A document converter is on the website footer for converting to Braille, MP3, and e-books. The website is difficult to navigate; some resources are only available when clicking from the main page, and many resources are buried.
Purple U	Goals are on the main page. Three student goals: 1. transition smoothly to college. 2. remain enrolled and progress in a program of study. 3. graduate in a timely manner. "We do this by supporting students directly and by collaborating with academic departments and university offices to provide programs and services that support students' academic growth and personal development."	There is no staff page specifically. Academic advisors are listed in a table with their names, office locations, phone numbers, and emails. No other staff were identified.	An accessibility link serves the whole institution, including digital access, event access, attitudinal barriers, and a statement on implicit bias. The website footer contains a virtual tour map with service locations circled. The <i>Staff</i> page has hyperlinked emails and phone numbers. There is a statement about spaces being newly renovated.

Collaboration and Mutuality

Collaboration and mutuality demonstrate leveling power differences within the hierarchy of the organization and recognize that everyone has an equal role in student services. Two categories mapped to collaboration and mutuality: staff information and organizational structure. We determined that the publication of staff information revealed definition of roles and how staff support students directly. Staff information was also an example of trustworthiness and transparency (see above). Organizational structure, an inclusion criterion, demonstrated an institutional commitment to equal access to academic success programs for all students.

Organizational Structure

As an inclusion criterion for the study, the academic success programs must be centrally provided services and not housed under individual academic colleges or programs. We classified organizational structures into three groupings: Academic Affairs units (four institutions), Student Affairs/Campus Life units (two institutions), and Student Advancement units (one institution).

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Empowerment, voice, and choice are defined as

understanding the importance of student self-advocacy and providing staff to serve as facilitators rather than controlling students’ choices. Three categories mapped to empowerment, voice, and choice: diversity of services, skills-based programming, and student-centered language.

Diversity of Services

All programs demonstrated the inclusion criteria and diversity of services. Offering a diversity of services allows students the opportunity to self-advocate while engaging in a variety of services. Diversity services were organized into three categories: individual services, group services, and location-based services. One-on-one services included individual tutoring, academic coaching, academic success planning, class registration, writing assistance, career exploration, disability services, and peer mentoring. Group services included supplemental instruction (additional instruction for specific courses), group tutoring sessions, career workshops, learning support workshops, TRIO programs (a federal grant-supported program to assist under-represented, low-income, and first-generation students), and Asian-American support programs. Location-based services included quiet study rooms and meditation rooms.

Table 4
Collaboration and Mutuality Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Staff Info (also applies to trustworthiness and transparency)	Organizational Structure (inclusion criteria)
Institution		
Red U	The <i>Meet Our Team</i> page includes admin, academic success coaches, peer programs, academic skills development, learning support, and testing services. All staff have pictures, phone, email, campus address, and which campus they serve.	Academic Affairs
Blue U	The <i>Staff</i> page has photos, titles, emails, and phone numbers but no campus address. The page includes focus areas and who to contact for each area and has a student-staff contact page.	University College/Center for Undergraduate Excellence
Green U	None	Vice-President for Student Advancement
Pink U	The <i>Contact Us</i> page has one person named with an email, phone, picture, and title. Two services have general emails.	Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Orange U	The <i>Contact Us</i> page includes directors, program directors, coordinators, advisers, staff, graduate assistants, and Emeriti faculty, pictures, titles, campus locations, phone numbers, and emails. The <i>Advisors</i> page also includes a group photo.	Academic Affairs
Chocolate U	None	Vice Provost for Academic Support Services
Purple U	There is no staff page specifically. Academic advisors are listed in a table with their names, office locations, phone numbers, and emails. No other staff were identified.	Vice Provost for Student Success and Campus Life

Table 5
Empowerment, Voice, and Choice Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Student-Centered Language	Diversity of Services (inclusion criteria)	Skills Programming
Institution			
Red U	The landing page mentions an inclusive, safe, student-centered place to learn and grow. The peer mentor page includes the phrase, “We know adulting can be hard.” Student resources page includes “Congratulations on your commitment to academic success.”	Academic coaching, tutoring, testing, learning support, consultations, and workshops are provided.	Time management, note-taking, goal setting, overcoming setbacks, study groups, improving reading, communicating with professors, and succeeding on tests. The semester toolkit includes how to email, manage time, test/exam prep, and study resources.
Blue U	Throughout the website, language includes: “Conquer your classes,” “Click here to find personalized academic support,” “Why should I go to SI?” “If what you need doesn’t exist – just contact us or stop by.” Students can engage in a variety of ways, and website includes easy-to-find and use resources.	Supplemental instruction, tutoring, academic coaching, testing and placement, resources, and academic success planning are provided.	Learning skills, videos on time management and study skills, quick videos from successful students showing what they do to succeed, organizing online classes, taking notes, how to ask questions, using a calendar app planner, and “bite size success tips.”
Green U	“You” was used throughout the website. Also found was “develop an individual plan,” and “explore options to help you make informed decisions – saving you time and money.”	Career studies, learning assistance, and writing center services are provided.	None
Pink U	Student-centered “you” language was used throughout website, including “great way to grow your skills and confidence as a successful student,” “If you haven’t joined, reach out to get started,” services are “free to all students,” “Working with a peer tutor is a great way to connect with students, build an academic network, support learning by reviewing key concepts, increase confidence [and] reach your goals,” “identify attainable short-and long-term goals,” and “make meaningful connections.”	Tutoring (individual, drop-in, online), quiet study spaces, reflection rooms, and academic resources are provided.	Micro-lessons (all PDFs), syllabus tips and tricks, note taking, how to stand out, reading a textbook, asking questions in class, academic research and papers, registration, test prep, finance management, time management, and well-being.
Orange U	Found the phrase “You are never alone.” Overall, the website language is inconsistent and not always directed at students. Most language used is formal, such as, “The purpose of this program is to employ a collaborative effort through which faculty, advisors, and staff notify and support students who are demonstrating characteristic that hinder performance.”	Advising, academic success and recovery program, tutoring, supplemental instruction, TRIO, and summer bridge program are provided.	Goal setting, general tips to thrive, grit development, growth mindset video, group projects, how to write an email, motivation, using office hours, procrastination, reading textbooks, reading syllabus, academic success strategies, time management, personal well-being
Chocolate U	Student-centered language was found throughout the website, including “Transition to college can be overwhelming,” “We are here to help,” “Services are free,” “Students are resilient and capable,” and “Academic coaching is committed to the needs of students with limited or nonlinear pathways to degree completion.”	Academic and career engagement, Asian-American resources, coaching, tutoring, mentoring, honor society, disability services, and workshops for classrooms are provided.	Direct service for faculty to request skill development workshops and presentations for classes
Purple U	Overall, website uses “you” language, including, “You are not alone.” The <i>Withdrawal</i> page states, “It can be a challenge to juggle school, family, financial needs, work...it can feel overwhelming to balance being a student with other responsibilities.”	Registration, tutoring, math placement, early alert program, student wellness, TRIO, and exploratory studies programs are provided.	Financial health, budgeting, understanding credit score, saving money

Skills Programming

Six programs exhibited skills-based options that we organized into two groups: academic-based and life-skill programming. Academic-based programming included study skills, note-taking, overcoming academic setbacks, exam preparation, and syllabus navigation. Life-skills-based programming included goal setting, financial health, budgeting, well-being, time management, growth mindset, improving motivation, and overcoming procrastination. We also identified three delivery approaches: videos, PDFs, and live workshops. Students can access skills-based programming through videos and PDF documents anytime through the website. PDFs include, “bite size success tips,” “micro-lessons,” and a “full semester toolkit.” Live workshops were available within the academic success program and for faculty to request in classrooms.

Student-Centered Language

We distinguished two approaches as examples of student-centered language: second-person narrative structure (three institutions) and normalized language (four institutions). The second-person narrative structure centers the reader, in this case, the student, in the website content, utilizing “you” throughout the website. Some examples of normalized language that spoke directly to the student experience: “Adulthood can be hard,” “It can be challenging to juggle life commitments with being a student,” “Conquer your classes,” “You are not alone,” and “Students are resilient and capable.”

Peer Support

Peer support builds program trust through students’ recognition that peers have also experienced and overcome setbacks. The categories of student staffing, student-staff experiences, and diverse representation/use of equity are mapped to peer support. Diverse representation/use of equity language also mapped to cultural, historical, and gender issues.

Student Staffing Levels

Student staffing was exhibited by most programs; however, not all institutions provided details on their websites. Two of the seven programs did not have any information regarding peer staffing.

The remaining institutions listed a range of positions, including peer mentors, peer tutors, and academic coaches. Student staffing information was displayed in two ways: significant information, defined as more than four examples of student-staff information displayed (four institutions), and minimal information, defined as less than two examples of student staffing information displayed (one institution). Significant information included self-chosen pictures of the student-staff, a group photo of staff, names, majors, campus involvement, hobbies, and, in one case, the students’ pronouns. Minimal information was available for student-staff positions employed by their program.

Student-Staff Experience

Three institutions provided personalized student-staff narratives, including fun facts, length of time in position, and advice to first-year students. One program featured a video with student-staff explaining the benefits of using academic success programs and why student-staff chose to work in academic success programs.

Diverse Representation and Use of Equity Language

Diverse representation and use of equity language mapped to both peer support and cultural, historical, and gender issues. Where images or videos demonstrated diverse representation, we used the phrase “may be an indication” or “may show diverse representation” so as not to assume another person’s identity because the authors found it difficult to determine when images used on the website exhibited diverse representation. Of the seven programs, five exhibited diverse representation or used equity language in

three distinct approaches: population-specific programming (three institutions), equity-specific language (two institutions), and apparent diverse staff representation (one institution). Population-specific programming includes first-generation college student resources (first-generation identified staff and faculty, honor society), TRIO programming geared to first-generation, low-income college students, and an Asian American resource office. Examples of equity-specific language included a published position statement urging the end of violence and racism against Asian Americans and published values, including diversity, integrity, and dignity for others. Two institutions exhibited diverse staff representation through videos and images of professional and student-staff.

*Peer support
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Table 6
Peer Support Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Diverse Representation/Language (also applies to cultural, historical, and gender issues)	Student Staffing Levels	Student-Staff Experience
Institution			
Red U	Site includes resources for first-generation students, list of first-generation faculty and staff, and honor society for first-generation college students.	On the <i>Peer Mentors</i> and <i>Peer Tutors</i> pages, students have self-chosen pictures, names, majors hobbies, areas of the college experience they are passionate about, and their campus location.	They shared their college experience, passions, favorite part about being on staff, and something they wished they had known as a first-year student. Peer tutors also shared advice with new students and shared pronouns.
Blue U	The student-staff photos may show diverse representation. American sign language tutoring is available.	<i>Student-staff</i> page includes self-chosen pictures, names, majors, what they want to do after college, and why they are in their role.	Student-staff share when they started, why they are in their role, and fun facts about themselves. Video from peer tutor explains the benefit of using academic success program and why they became a tutor.
Green U	None	None	None
Pink U	None	None	None
Orange U	Program’s core values include being student-centered, diversity, integrity through professionalism, dignity for others, and trust building. The program encourages students and colleagues to seek opportunities for collaboration. TRIO programs include Student Support Services (SSS) and Upward Bound (for incoming college students).	Student staffing includes student tutors, supplemental instruction leaders, and peer mentors. Peer mentors have self-chosen pic, majors, levels of certification, on-campus involvements, and hobbies.	Some student leaders have campus involvements and hobbies but no student-staff experience with academic success programs. Mentors have certification levels.
Chocolate U	Services include an Asian American resource office, and the site includes a statement about ending violence and racism against Asian Americans	Website lists tutors and peer mentors.	none
Purple U	TRIO program video may show diverse student representation	<i>Peer Tutors</i> page includes a group picture, names of coordinators with the year in school, major, and email. <i>TRIO</i> page includes names and pictures of student staff.	none

Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

Cultural, historical, and gender issues are defined as overcoming stereotypes and biases to recognize individual needs. Policies and practices are rooted in cultural connection and responsiveness. The categories inclusion/diversity statements, diverse representation and equity language, and individual needs are all mapped to cultural, historical, and gender issues. The inclusion/diversity statement is mapped to *safety*, with detailed findings. Representation and equity language are mapped to peer support, including detailed findings. The findings of individual needs are summarized in this section.

Individual Needs

We reviewed programs for individual stu-

dent focus, creating opportunities for tailored support and value for unique experiences. All seven programs exhibited language that addressed students’ individual needs in one of two ways: student success-centric (four institutions) and program-centric (three institutions). Student success-centric theme language included “being passionate about walking alongside students, celebrating successes big or small,” “empowering students to become independent learners,” and “valuing student-centered work, honoring all backgrounds.” Program-centric theme language included serving students’ unique needs through individualized academic success plans, holistic programs, and having a core value of valuing individual experiences.

Table 7
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues Principle With Categories and Findings

Categories	Individual Needs	Diverse Representation/Language (also applies to peer support)	Diversity/Inclusion Statement (also applies to safety)
Institution			
Red U	The landing page mentions an inclusive, safe, student-centered place to learn and grow. The peer mentor page includes "We know adulting can be hard." Student resources page includes a semester toolkit with resources students can access anytime.	Site includes resources for first-generation students, list of first-generation faculty and staff, and honor society for first-generation college students.	The landing page mentions an inclusive, safe, student-centered place to learn and grow. There are tailored support services that empower, inspire, connect, and positively impact academic success.
Blue U	Website includes phrases: "Click here to find personalized academic support," "Why should I go to SI?" and "If what you need doesn't exist – just contact us or stop by." Students can engage in a variety of ways, including easy-to-find and use resources.	The student-staff photos may show diverse representation. American sign language tutoring is available.	None
Green U	Use of individualized language throughout the website, including "develop an individual plan," and "explore options to help you make informed decisions – saving you time and money."	None	None
Pink U	Individualized language includes "great way to grow your skills and confidence as a successful student." Services are free to all students. The <i>Peer Tutor</i> page includes "Working with a peer tutor is a great way to connect with students, build an academic network, support learning by reviewing key concepts, increase confidence, [and] reach your goals," "identify attainable short-and long-term goals, [and] make meaningful connections."	None	Nothing is on the academic program's site. Links are provided to the institutional <i>Equity</i> page, and there is a diversity inclusion statement for the whole institution.
Orange U	Individualized language includes: "You are never alone;" however, overall, the website language is formal and not student-centered or individualized.	Program's core values include being student-centered, diversity, integrity through professionalism, dignity for others, and trust building. The program encourages students and colleagues to seek opportunities for collaboration. TRIO programs include SSS and Upward Bound (for incoming college students).	Mission, goals, and values are easily located. Values are student-centered and include diversity, collaboration, integrity, and excellence.
Chocolate U	Academic coaching is committed to needs of students with limited or nonlinear pathways to degree completion.	Services include an Asian American resource office, and the site includes a statement about ending violence and racism against Asian Americans.	None
Purple U	The <i>Withdrawal</i> page includes, "It can be a challenge to juggle school, family, financial needs, work...It can feel overwhelming to balance being a student with other responsibilities."	TRIO program video may show diverse student representation.	None

One fundamental component of a scoping review findings section is including a concept map to provide a visual distribution of the data. Tables 2 through 7 show SAMHSA's six key principles, the interconnected categories, and detailed data for each category. Presenting the data narratively and visually quickly illustrates the distribution of data. The intent of a scoping review is to present the findings clearly but not to assess the quality of the evidence or weigh the data to provide the best approach to research or, in this case, the academic success program services (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Discussion

A scoping review is typically the first step in determining additional research needs. This review found elements of trauma-informed principles present in academic success programs, whether the inclusion was intentional or not. None of the academic success programs reviewed explicitly referenced using trauma-informed principles or practices on their websites. We used SAMHSA's (2014) six trauma-informed principles as map categories and exhibited data to tell the story of how academic success programs can provide a more inclusive or trauma-informed practice. Our review held added challenge because SAMHSA (2014) did not create trauma-informed principles specifically for higher education, and the intent was for the principles to be the foundation of interactive practices. Establishing a connection between the interactive principles of the academic support program website language, layout, and resources proved a novel approach with few prior research connections.

Safety

We mapped the categories of diversity/inclusion statement and web design to *safety*, believing there could be a connection between students feeling safe and utilizing academic success programs when inclusive language was present on an easily accessible website. Research suggests that a culturally responsive campus may increase a sense of belonging, especially for students from marginalized identities (Gillen-O'Neel, 2019; Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Museus et al., 2017). With only three of seven websites exhibiting diversity or inclusion language, perhaps programs should consider adding diversity or inclusion statements to cultivate the feeling of a safer

and more inclusive environment.

All seven programs exhibited the use of accessible webpage design and resource offerings that allow students to easily navigate the webpage, locate resources, and connect with staff independently. Bulk et al. (2023) explained that students who utilize accommodations feel more supported (safer) engaging with services that provide accommodations as a standard of practice without the students having to request it. Students regard access to space, programs, and resources as a first step toward developing a sense of belonging (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2022). Likewise, students may feel safer engaging with program resources when students feel a sense of belonging.

Trustworthiness and Transparency

We mapped the categories of web design, mission and goal statements, and staff information to *trustworthiness and transparency*. Displaying information and making it easily accessible may increase students' trust in the program and the staff who run the program. Little to no research is available on the relationship between students' sense of trust in a program and utilization of services. However, a connection to institutional trust may occur when examining students' sense of belonging and retention. Students engaging with academic support program websites could be linked to online learners, and research shows that fostering a sense of belonging and trust within an online environment is critical to student success (Peacock et al., 2020; Sutcliffe & Noble, 2022). Mission and goal statements were an inclusion criterion for the review and an indicator of trustworthiness and

transparency. Mission or goal statements that use student success-oriented language, including prioritizing access, valuing holistic success, empowering students to succeed, and providing a safe, inclusive learning space, may help students build a sense of belonging and trust in the program and the institution.

Collaboration and Mutuality

We found *collaboration and mutuality* difficult to exhibit on a program website. Staffing information, including the staff member's position, may indicate that every staff member has an equal role in supporting student success. Incorporating goal language that contains staff commitment to working in partnership with students on their journey could also

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show leveling of the power differentials and highlight the collaborative nature of the staff/student relationship. A centrally provided academic success program with an independent funding source may provide more consistent and equitable academic success services to all students than programs operated and funded by academic colleges throughout the institution (Kot, 2014). A centralized academic success program allows staff to equitably engage students in their academic success. A centrally housed program, with an independent funding source, was also an inclusion criterion.

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Empowerment, voice, and choice, the principle with the most robust data in our study, was exhibited through diversity of services, skills-based programming, and student-centered language. Research suggests a need for students to further develop their academic and intellectual skills after entering college (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2019; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Rooij et al., 2018), including study skills and time management along with resiliency, grit, and overcoming setbacks. While first-year college students may have experienced adversity and setbacks previously in their academic pursuits, those challenges were likely met with increased support from family, peers, mentors, and teachers (Booker et al., 2022). In college, students independently navigate additional rigorous academic expectations while learning to self-advocate and establish themselves in a new environment. Programs that provide a variety of services and skills-based programming and use student-centered language may help students build academic and personal confidence and reduce barriers related to utilizing academic success programs. Using student-centered language may also see their experiences as part of the typical college experience and be more likely to utilize services.

Peer Support

Peer support was exhibited through student staffing levels, student-staff experience, and diverse representation and use of equity language. Research demonstrates that students value human connection and support when overcoming setbacks (Barros-Lane et al., 2023; Kitchen, 2023). Peacock et al. (2020) found that in the online learning environment, “when learners felt stressed, help and feedback from peers and tutors through the discussion groups proved valuable, as it helped them to construct and develop their learning” (p. 27). Students facing challenges achieve a personal sense of strength and assurance from peers who have also experienced struggles (Buckley et al., 2023). Additionally, students may feel more comfortable engaging in services when students work with peers who have overcome similar experiences (Jeng

et al., 2023). While student staffing levels were well represented on the program websites, student experience related to personal academic setbacks was lacking. The inclusion of student-staff academic setbacks could help students in need engage in services.

Research on college students from marginalized populations confirms a significant difference in their sense of belonging and difficulty in building connections during college compared to that of their peers (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Museus et al., 2017; Soria & Stebleton, 2013). Brooms (2018) found that Black male students highly valued the social and academic support received from their Black peers that fostered positive outcomes beyond their campus life. Our research indicates programs exhibiting equity language, honoring diversity, inclusion, and dignity for others. Regardless, few programs exhibited an apparent diverse representation of student-staff or professional staff, which may deter students from marginalized populations from utilizing resources.

Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

We found the most gaps in data for the principles of *safety* and *cultural, historical, and gender issues*, particularly related to diversity and inclusion statements. These data gaps are potentially troubling for trauma-exposed students from marginalized populations who are seeking assistance. Students who cannot easily identify safe and inclusive programs may not seek needed supports. Gopalan and Brady (2019) analyzed national trends in college student’s sense of belonging and found that at four-year institutions, racial and ethnic minority students and first-generation college students reported a lower sense of belonging than their peers who identified as white. They found that students with a lower sense of belonging also had lower persistence. Gillen-O’Neel (2019) examined the sense of belonging among first-generation students compared to continuing-generation students, finding first-generation and continuing-generation students to “not differ in their average levels of sense of belonging or engagement, but they do differ in their reactivity to daily changes in sense of belonging” (p. 22). Overall, students who indicated experiencing a strong sense of belonging also experienced higher self-efficacy, sought help more frequently, and experienced less procrastination. Thus, students with higher self-efficacy may also seek help more readily in a trauma-informed environment.

We found some academic success programs exhibited the use of SAMHSA’s (2014) trauma-informed framework more than others, but that does not mean that the programs are necessarily more trauma-informed in their hands-on approach or that students who engage with the programs feel more supported or have a stronger sense of belonging to

the institution. This scoping review provides a foundation to establish future research on trauma-informed programs' impact on students' sense of belonging and ability to overcome academic setbacks.

Implementing trauma-informed practices in higher education has proven beneficial to student success (Barros-Lane et al., 2021; Hunter, 2022; Imad, 2022). Keys to successfully integrating a trauma-informed practice involve extensive training for staff, organizational change, an emphasis on collaboration, and continuous evaluation of the program, which can be challenging to accomplish and maintain (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Champine et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2008; Perry & Daniels, 2016). Some critics of a trauma-informed approach say it fosters a lax environment. However, Imad (2022) suggested it is essential to continue to challenge students while also seeing the humanity and complexity of individuals and showing them that we are on their side.

Identified Limitations

In concluding this study, we identified four limitations. The first limitation is the intentionality of being trauma-informed in practice. None of the institutions researched stated the intentional use of trauma-informed theories or methods in their approach to academic success programs. Additional research would be required to ascertain the extent to which the programs intentionally implement trauma-informed practices.

Another identified limitation is the fluidity of website language. Websites are frequently updated as services, staffing, and resources change. We reviewed the websites at a specific point in time. Therefore, the website data analyzed is a snapshot and may not reflect today's services. Also related to institutional websites is the degree to which academic success program offices have control over the design and format of their websites. Academic success program staff likely manage the website content but may not control what accessibility services are available.

The final limitation is that some programs may face external pressure to intentionally exclude specific language related to diversity and equity due to the influence of state politics and the current focus on eliminating diversity and equity services provided at higher education institutions (Gretzinger & Hicks, 2024). While the goals or values of the academic success programs may include an appreciation of diversity and inclusion, programs may need help articulating that value on the website.

Research Opportunities

A scoping review aims to gather data, find gaps, and develop further research opportunities, including systematic reviews. We intend to use our results to take a deeper look at the programs studied, examining internal policies, training, program usage data, retention data, and staff interviews to determine if programs utilize trauma-informed practices intentionally and if it has an impact on student academic success and sense of belonging. There is also an opportunity for an additional qualitative research study—interviewing the students who participate in the academic success programs to understand their perceived academic resilience and sense of belonging related to their engagement in the academic success programs.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher education are recognizing that students are coming to college with traumatic experiences or encounter trauma while in college, which impacts their ability to be academically successful (Hunter, 2022; Read et al., 2011; Shalka, 2019). Institutions that connect trauma informed principles to student experience may improve student engagement by creating more engaging, supportive, and effective online resources for students. They may also improve accessibility and demonstrate a commitment to understanding and addressing the diverse needs of the student population. As leaders in higher education learn more about the impacts of trauma, including large-scale traumatic events, the impacts of micro-aggressions, and daily experiences of injustice, we have a responsibility to

our students to find pathways that help them recognize the impact of the trauma. We must create spaces where students can feel safe and empowered to learn and help them navigate toward academic success. When students feel safe, they can start building a sense of belonging to their peers and institutions (Buckley et al., 2023). Implementing trauma-informed practices throughout the institution creates a campus culture that prioritizes the lived experiences of all students, which opens a pathway for them to feel safe in learning.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix

List of Peer Institutions Used in Scoping Review

- University of Wyoming
- University of Massachusetts Boston
- Tennessee Technological University
- North Dakota State University
- Kent State University
- University of Montana
- University of Maine
- South Dakota State University
- Louisiana Tech University
- Georgia Southern University

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