COLLEGE COMPLETION CORPS

Initial Analysis of the First Years of Implementation

August 2023

//MCAN
MICHIGAN COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

Public Policy Associates is a public policy research, development, and evaluation firm headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. We serve clients in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the national, state, and local levels by conducting research, analysis, and evaluation that supports informed strategic decision-making.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer set a goal for the state of ensuring 60% of Michigan's working-age residents have a postsecondary degree or certificate by the year 2030. To advance that goal, in 2020, the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) secured grant funding from the Corporation for National and Community/AmeriCorps via the Michigan Community Service Commission to implement the College Completion Corps (CCC). The MCAN program places AmeriCorps members in community colleges and other associate degree-granting institutions throughout Michigan to serve as completion coaches and support college students' persistence to the successful completion of their postsecondary programs.

As CCC approached the end of the first three-year grant cycle, MCAN engaged Public Policy Associates (PPA), a Lansing-based research and evaluation firm, to conduct an initial, third-party analysis of the program. The study was intended to provide an initial understanding into the program's early implementation and guide its future development and sustainability. To conduct the analysis, PPA used existing program data and conducted interviews with current coaches and site supervisors—host college administrators who are responsible for overseeing and supporting coaches' service.

Key Findings

Program Performance

The following findings emerged from the analysis of program data regarding the students served, types of activities provided, and program outcomes.

- The program is likely on track to reach the targeted number of students receiving services, and, although it is too early to fully assess outcomes, the data suggest that students achieved success by key program measures.
- While many students engaged in some form of continuity planning, few students were found to have created formal college success plans.
- Based on the data available, students were more likely to engage with coaches one on one than to attend group activities.

Coach and Supervisor Perspectives

The following findings followed from the analysis of interviews with completion coaches and site supervisors.

- Coaches shared a well-articulated understanding of the CCC mission and their role in advancing it, and coaches saw service both as benefiting students and as a worthwhile personal experience.

- Overall, coaches positively viewed both their pre-service and in-service training and support, despite some variation in how training was experienced.
- Coaches' placement and service experiences were influenced by contextual factors, such as organizational environment and cohort characteristics.
- Due to high demand, coaches tended to prioritize the navigation support and referral components of their role, while devoting less time and attention to small group-learning opportunities and public-service activities.
- Coaches experienced common challenges around student engagement, while other challenges varied by placement.
- Coaches had divergent experiences with data collection, use, and impact on their service activities.
- Site supervisors hold a positive view of the program, and they share its overall goals with a particular emphasis on the need to support nontraditional, underrepresented students.
- Site supervisors performed managerial functions, but they mainly advanced program and college goals by mentoring and supporting coaches. In the process, site supervisors have built effective relationships with coaches in which they recognize coaches' efforts and impact.
- While most site supervisors' expectations for coach responsibilities and performance mainly aligned with the program's expectations and policies, there were instances where they differed.
- Site supervisors maintain an interest in opportunities for program learning, and some suggested a desire for greater dissemination and sharing of program information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, PPA offers the following recommendations for program improvement:

Continue CCC's overall structure and implementation, with focused adjustments based on program experience.

Clarify coach placement status and role, while identifying opportunities for flexibility.

Seek to align CCC service components with institutional infrastructures and systems.

Reinforce efforts to ensure complete and accurate data collection, while being careful not to overburden coaches and site supervisors.

Emphasize the prioritization and coordination of coach resources and activities in the context of college resources and activities.

Foster a range of opportunities for learning and collaboration among coaches and site supervisors.

INTRODUCTION

About the Study

The Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) College Completion Corps (CCC) program aims to promote and support students' persistence to the successful completion of their postsecondary programs. To implement the CCC program, MCAN secured Corporation for National and Community Service (also known as AmeriCorps) grant funding for an initial three-year period beginning in 2020. Although a rigorous impact evaluation is not required under the grant, to support planning and future sustainability, MCAN engaged Public Policy Associates (PPA) to conduct a preliminary study of the program.

The study was conducted between June 2022 and March 2023 and focused on the program's implementation and performance through the first several years of implementation. In particular, the study aimed to provide insights into:

- The program's performance relative to the output and outcome metrics identified in the AmeriCorps grant.
- Perspectives of current coaches and host colleges regarding their experiences and views on the program's implementation and impact.
- Implementation challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Data sources included the program's administrative data collected by coaches and compiled by MCAN, as well as interviews PPA conducted with completion coaches and host college site supervisors. The following report presents the research team's findings, along with recommendations for advancing the program's goals.

Program Overview

For more than a decade, MCAN has been a growing innovator, whether viewed in terms of size, programming, reach, aspiration, or impact. It has received statewide and national attention for increasing college readiness, persistence, and completion, particularly among students with low incomes, students who represent the first generation of their families to attend college, and students of color.

MCAN has focused its advocacy, capacity-building, coordination and collaboration, dissemination of research and data, and grantmaking activities on the achievement of Michigan's goal that by 2030, 60% of Michigan residents will have earned a postsecondary certificate or degree (Sixty by 30). MCAN endeavors to build on its current work to further its service to postsecondary students and prospective students.
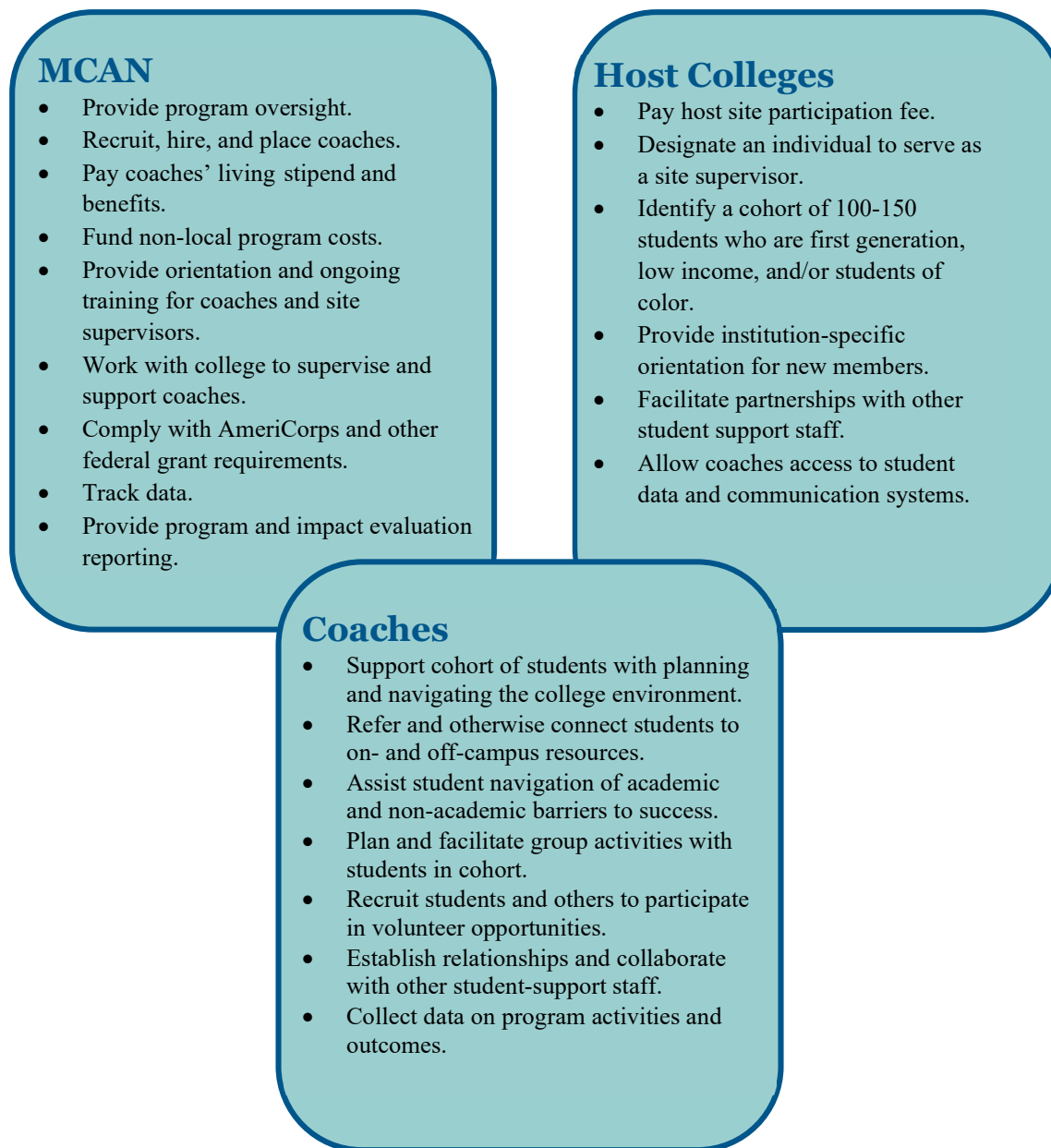
Reaching Sixty by 30 requires an increase in the number of students who enroll in college, as well as an increase in the proportion of enrolled students who successfully persist to complete a postsecondary certificate or degree (or to transfer to a four-year institution of higher education).

CCC was designed to address the latter. Through an AmeriCorps planning grant, MCAN engaged community colleges throughout the state in an extensive assessment to identify opportunities to fill gaps and enhance existing services and resources to support student success. It was determined that Michigan's community colleges lacked the resources needed to provide personalized support and guidance to help students, especially students with low incomes, students who are the first generation in their families to attend college, and students of color, successfully navigate the college landscape.

To fill that gap, CCC places AmeriCorps members at partnering Michigan community colleges and other associate degree-granting institutions to serve as completion coaches. Each coach is assigned a caseload of 100-150 priority students, who they engage and connect with existing campus and community support. Coaches work with the students in their cohorts to create a plan for securing financial aid, identifying available supports and resources, addressing challenges related to scheduling and/or coursework, and addressing other needs related to college persistence and completion.

As noted, the program operates as a partnership between MCAN and the participating community colleges, with the coaches at the center. Figure 1 highlights the key roles and relationships between MCAN, the host colleges, and the coaches.

MCAN
- Provide program oversight.
- Recruit, hire, and place coaches.
- Pay coaches' living stipend and benefits.
- Fund non-local program costs.
- Provide orientation and ongoing training for coaches and site supervisors.
- Work with college to supervise and support coaches.
- Comply with AmeriCorps and other federal grant requirements.
- Track data.
- Provide program and impact evaluation reporting.

Host Colleges
- Pay host site participation fee.
- Designate an individual to serve as a site supervisor.
- Identify a cohort of 100-150 students who are first generation, low income, and/or students of color.
- Provide institution-specific orientation for new members.
- Facilitate partnerships with other student support staff.
- Allow coaches access to student data and communication systems.

Coaches
- Support cohort of students with planning and navigating the college environment.
- Refer and otherwise connect students to on- and off-campus resources.
- Assist student navigation of academic and non-academic barriers to success.
- Plan and facilitate group activities with students in cohort.
- Recruit students and others to participate in volunteer opportunities.
- Establish relationships and collaborate with other student-support staff.
- Collect data on program activities and outcomes.

Figure 1. Key Roles and Relationships Between MCAN, the Host Colleges, and the Coaches

REVIEW OF PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

To review the program's progress toward the metrics established in the AmeriCorps grant, Public Policy Associates (PPA) relied on data tracked and reported to the Michigan College Access Network by the coaches. During the first year of the program, coaches submitted monthly reports with summary counts of students in their cohort, as well as counts for key services delivered and outputs. After the first year, the program worked with an outside firm to develop a more robust data-tracking system that provided more consistency in how data were tracked across sites and made data entry easier for coaches. With the new system in place in the second year, the format of monthly reporting changed from aggregate counts to more detailed data about individual students and services delivered. A list of the variables included in the current monthly data reports is included in Appendix A.

The comprehensive list of data elements included in the monthly tracking creates the potential for robust analysis of the characteristics of students engaged in the program, services delivered, and outcomes achieved. However, in reviewing the monthly data sheets, the PPA team encountered several gaps and inconsistencies in the data. For example, there were multiple instances of missing or duplicate student ID numbers, conflicting data entered for individual students, data entered in the wrong column, or columns without any data entered. Given that the program is still in the early stages of development, along with the level of detail and volume of data, these types of data-entry issues are to be expected.

However, the gaps and inconsistencies did limit the analysis that could be completed for this study. Therefore, the findings below mostly present outcomes in terms of averages and aggregates at points in time. In cases where the analysis required matching data across multiple reports (i.e., months), the analysis was restricted to just the data for students who could be matched on both reports, meaning a significant number of cases were excluded from those analyses. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the outcomes reported here may not completely reflect the program's true outcomes. Instead, the data reported here are intended to provide a benchmark to inform the program's ongoing development and future data collection.

Findings

Average cohort sizes were consistent with the target.

For the four months of the 2022 winter term, the average number of students assigned to each coach was 100-138. Thus, based on assigned cohorts, the College Completion Corps (CCC) is meeting the target of 100-150 students per coach, as indicated in the proposal to AmeriCorps; however, not all the students assigned were currently enrolled.

About 70%-75% of students assigned to cohorts were listed as enrolled for the relevant term. As shown in Table 1, if the students not currently enrolled were removed from the cohort count, the average cohort size would fall short of the target for three of the four months. However, it is not uncommon for students facing numerous barriers to not enroll for a semester but still resume

enrollment in a future semester. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that a coach's assigned cohort would include some proportion of students who were not currently enrolled.

Table 1. Average Cohort Sizes by Month, Winter 2022

Month	Average Number of Students Assigned per Coach	Average Number of Currently Enrolled Students Assigned per Coach	Number of Coaches Reporting
January	104	74	15
February	111	79	14
March	138	99	16
April	133	101	14

Many students engaged in some form of continuity planning, but few created formal college success plans.

Based on the months reviewed, about 9 students per coach had created their success plan, far below the goal of three-fifths of all students assigned to cohorts, which would be closer to 44-60 students per coach, depending on cohort size. The absence of a formal success plan, though, does not mean that coaches did not engage the students in their cohorts in any sort of planning. In fact, an average of closer to 40 students per coach (30% of students or 40% of enrollees) had completed at least one plan or assessment to support continuity of their enrollment (e.g., Initial Assessment, Academic Plan, Financial Strategies). Figure 2 shows the ratio of students with completion plans per coach based on the data for July 2022.

Target # of Success Plans based on April's enrollment.

Target # of Success Plans based on January's enrollment.
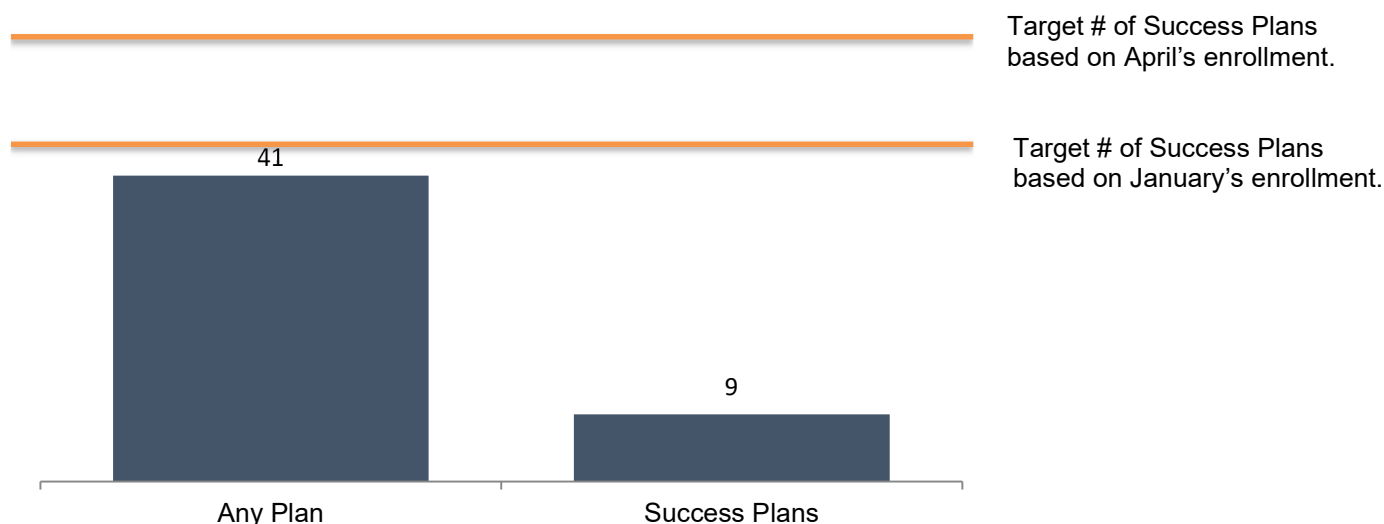
Figure 2. Number of Students per Coach Who Had Created Completion Plans vs. Any Type of Plan, July 2022

Of all the plans and assessments, students were most likely to have completed their financial aid plan and least likely to complete their completion plan. In part, this difference may be an indication that addressing the costs of attending college is among the most prominent barriers

facing the students assigned to coaches. It is also the case, though, that completion of the FAFSA is a requirement for enrollment, whereas creating a completion plan is not. Figure 3 shows a snapshot from July 2022 of the proportion of students assigned to the program who had completed each type of plan or assessment tracked by coaches.
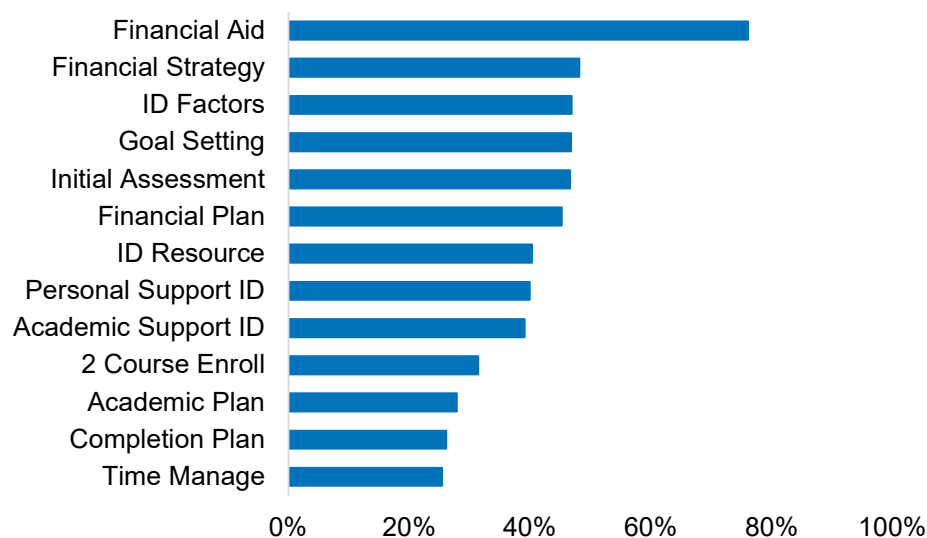
Figure 3. Plan Completion Rate by Type of Plan

Students were more likely to engage with coaches one-on-one than attend group activities.

Over the course of the winter semester coaches combined for an average of 220 one-on-one interactions with students per month, or 13 per coach. Looking only at cases where enrollment data could be matched with engagement data, about 25% of enrolled students had at least one personal meeting with a coach during this time frame.

Conversely, during the winter semester coaches reported a combined total of 46 workshops. Although the number of students attending was only reported for about half of the workshops, the average attendance for those workshops was seven students. Again, excluding students who never engaged with coaches, only 3.5% of students attended either a workshop or group activity.

Students did seek out coaches for a wide variety of reasons across the winter semester, as coaches made campus or community referrals across 18 different topics. Of these, students were most likely to seek academic advisement (19%), tutoring services (14%), counseling (13%), or help with financial aid (13%). Interestingly, approximately 15% of workshops were about finances and 19% were about academic skills (studying, test taking, tutoring resources). Similarly, 16% of workshops were about studying or tutoring and 19% involved academic advisement (e.g., how to drop a class, class registration, information about summer semester). Therefore, the topics of the workshops and group activities seemed to align well with the topics the students cared about. The relatively low rate of participation in group activities, then, may

indicate that students are either less interested in engaging in group settings or find it easier to work an individual meeting into their schedules than adjust their schedules to attend a workshop.

It is too early to fully assess outcomes; however, the data suggest that students made progress on key program measures.

Unsurprisingly, coaches did not identify many students who ended the 2022 winter term with an associate degree, a certificate, or a transfer to four-year university, as they totaled under 2% of the recorded population. This makes sense, as most participating students had only been enrolled for a single term and CCC had only existed for a year by that point. On the plus side, though, over the course of the semester only about 4% of the enrolled students were recorded as having either dropped out or withdrawn from all classes. In addition, among students for which grade point average (GPA) data were reported, there were three times as many students with GPAs above 2.00 than those with GPAs below 2.00. While incomplete, the data suggest that students participating in the program were achieving some success.
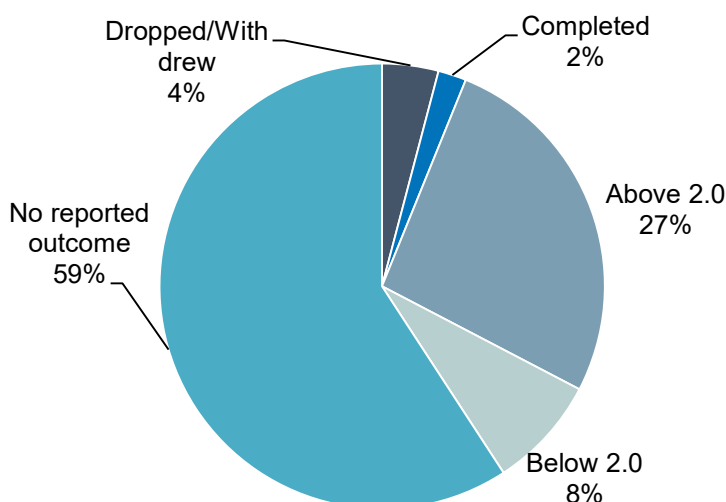
Figure 4. Student Outcomes Reported at End of 2022 Winter Term

Regarding continuity, in July, only about a third of assigned students were registered for the fall semester. Just under half of those registered for the fall were students who first started in summer 2022, which indicates that the summer 2022 cohort had a retention rate over 60%.

Using the remaining number as a proxy for students enrolled in winter 2022 yields a retention of just 33% from winter to fall semester of 2022. This falls far below the goal of 50% established in the CCC proposal. However, it is important to keep in mind that students likely had until sometime in August to register, and that record keeping for students who did not enroll in the summer semester might not be as accurate during the summer months. Thus, the retention rate between the winter 2022 and fall 2022 terms may have been higher than the available data suggest.
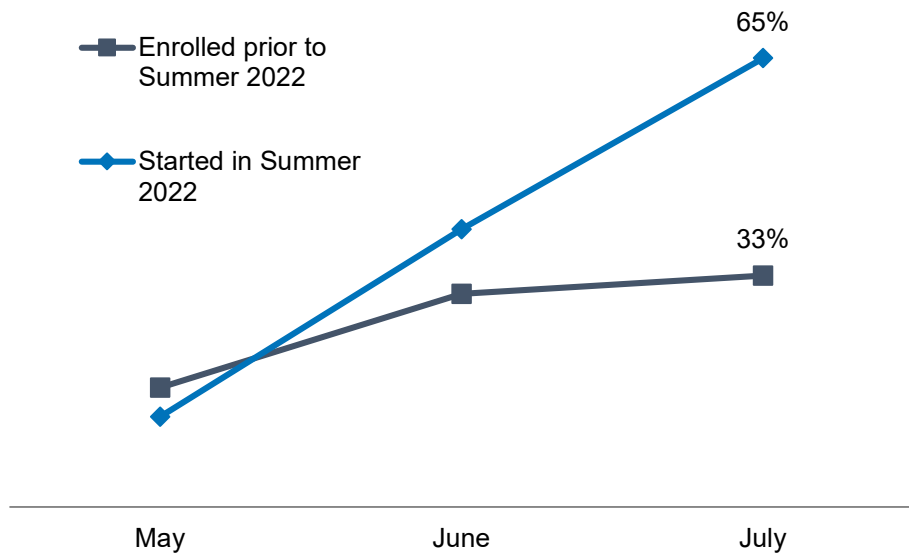
Figure 5. Percentage of Students Who Have Registered for Fall

COACH PERSPECTIVES

Beyond what the program's administrative data can reveal, it is also important to understand how coaches perceive the program's implementation and outcomes thus far. To collect that input, Public Policy Associates conducted interviews with coaches between November 2022 and January 2023.

The interviews focused on the following elements:

- General background on each coach's placement
- How each coach joined the College Completion Corps (CCC) program and their initial training for their placement
- The components, activities, and responsibilities comprising completion coach service
- Each coach's perspective and reflection on the completion coach experience and impact overall
- Suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of completion coach service, and suggestions for CCC program improvement

At the beginning of the data-collection period, there were a total of 16 completion coaches with active placements in a total of 8 community colleges across the state. All were invited to participate, with 2 interviewed during the piloting process for the interview instrument, and 3 ultimately not responding or declining to participate. Thus, the findings discussed here are based on a total of 11 interviews. The numbers of interviewees expressing a particular viewpoint are provided in parentheses. A more detailed breakdown of interview participants and a copy of the interview instrument are included in Appendix B.

Findings

Coaches shared a well-articulated understanding of the CCC mission and their role in advancing it.

All interviewed coaches (11) readily identified the overall goal of the CCC as helping students persist in the completion of their college programs. A large majority (8) likewise described the role of a CCC coach in terms of persistence and completion. As one coach put it: "Our umbrella, overall goal is to get students to graduation or completion and that looks a little different for each student depending on what their goals are. But throughout that process, it's our responsibility to help them break down any barriers that may hinder getting to that goal."

Similarly, half of the interviewees who explained their motivation for joining the CCC said they wanted to provide the support that they themselves needed to succeed in college, and five wanted to use their prior college experience (as a student or employee) and felt that a coach position would be a good fit.

Coaches saw their service as both benefiting students and as a worthwhile personal experience.

Virtually all interviewees thought they had made a positive impact on at least some students, with six citing their contribution to student success. Four noted that their successful engagement benefited students by giving them voice and a sense of belonging in the college community, and by letting them know that someone cared about how they were doing and was there to answer questions, provide non-judgmental support, and help problem-solve. Coaches felt that they were most effective in building beneficial relationships (6) and in helping students understand the college environment and available resources (3). At the same time, seven coaches in closing comments stressed a favorable view of the coaching experience, describing it variously as "meaningful," "amazing," "life-changing," and "phenomenal."

Coaches positively viewed their pre-service and in-service training and support.

Despite differences stemming from when during the year a coach began service (in the fall semester versus the winter semester), 10 of the 11 coaches found the initial training to be useful, and only 2 mentioned any dissatisfaction.

Interviewees recalled the content and significance of the training provided by the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN), which included training on their roles and responsibilities as AmeriCorps members (10). Among the nine interviewees who indicated also receiving orientation training from their host college, two-thirds (6) felt it was a valuable opportunity to learn about the college's technology and resources and meet fellow staff members.

Coaches gave overwhelmingly positive assessments of the ongoing professional development they received from MCAN. Four interviewees further indicated that their colleges made professional development available during their service.

The more useful opportunities identified were the regularly designated Friday online meetings and the annual conference (10), not only for presentations, but as opportunities for coaches to help and support each other. Six interviewees identified MCAN's messaging system (currently Slack) as serving a similarly helpful coach-to-coach support function.

Even apart from participation in the formal CCC evaluation process (7), most coaches indicated that the site supervisor played a key, ongoing role in their service (9) and that when any issue arose, they would go to their site supervisor for help (7). Several coaches would also get help from other coaches (3) or student services staff (3). Three interviewees had occasion to seek help from MCAN staff, and seven identified MCAN staff as playing a role in their service distinct from formal evaluation.

Placement and service experiences were influenced by organizational environment and cohort characteristics.

Beyond the obvious differences among CCC host colleges (e.g., size, locale, resources, technology, extent of online or hybrid classes), some aspects of individual placements more

directly affected coaches' CCC experience (for a detailed summary of interviewees and their placements, see interview participant data table in Appendix B). For example, seven coaches had a prior connection with their host college and its staff, whether as an alumnus and/or as an employee. An additional coach had a prior MCAN/AmeriCorps connection. Coaches at different points in their interviews reported that their prior experience and background acquaintance with the college and staff gave them an advantage in knowing the nature of the student body, as well as where to go and who to see for help. This knowledge also assisted coaches in making connections with and for students.

The size of student cohorts varied among coaches, as did cohort composition or focus. Cohorts varied not only by student demographic characteristics, but also by the funding program (e.g., Michigan Reconnect) or academic program (e.g., nursing) to which most of their cohort belonged. A coach's cohort frequently varied over time; only three interviewees reported a little or no change in their cohort during their service.

Cohort changes affected the level and nature of coaches' workloads, as they might often have additional and new students who required contacts, relationship building, and different kinds of help. Further, coaches might have to update their data collection, planning and scheduling, and outreach practices or activities.

Due to high demand, coaches prioritized navigation support and referral activities.

Coaches' descriptions of where and how they allocated their attention and effort tended toward more individualized navigation and referral activities. For example, when asked about their activities during a typical week, coaches described the time and effort devoted to responding and following up on individual student referrals from college personnel (including through college "early warning" systems and the like) (10), communicating information to cohort students (7), sending "nudge" and "check-in" types of communications to students and responding to student questions or requests (7), one-on-one student meetings (scheduled and drop-in) (6), and collaborating with college staff to coordinate and update information on student services (4). Such activities seemed driven by known or expected student wants and needs, as well as a desire among many coaches to continue building the substantive knowledge of student circumstances and broadening awareness of college (and sometimes community) resources required to respond effectively to student needs.

Five interviewees noted that how they spent time during a given week varied with the time of year, and this fact emerged as well from the coaches' discussion of navigation and referral activities. The former included individualized academic and related planning (10), and assistance with the course registration and financial aid processes (6), all of which were usually concentrated at the beginning and end of a semester. Together these activities not only served the goal of persistence and completion (6), but they helped build coach-student relationships (4) and improved students' comfort and connection with the college and its processes.

In responding to student needs, all coaches made referrals to college resources, many of them involving financial aid and academic services and support, such as advising and tutoring (11). These included a coach's referral to a specific college staff member or advice on where to go or what to do in response to a student's question.

Beyond campus supports, other referrals included community resources to meet personal needs or circumstances (6). Thus, referrals advanced several related purposes, from connecting students with supports that improve retention to obtaining personally targeted help for students to matching student needs with the appropriate resources.

Most of the interviewees also described specific approaches to following up on referrals. When possible, some personally "handed off" the student to the appropriate college staff person (5). Others directly contacted (or attempted to contact) the student later to ask about referral results (5) or to check with the individual or office to which the referral was made (5).

Coaches devoted less time and attention to small group-learning opportunities and public-service activities.

Consistent with the administrative data, interviewees acknowledged that small groups (e.g., workshops) and service activities were less emphasized among the various parts of the coaching role. This seemed largely attributable to student wants and needs, as well as college preferences for how coaches spend their time. In any case, at least some of the host colleges have already organized and hosted these kinds of activities on a regular basis.

Even so, more than one-half of interviewees indicated that they had put on or contributed to at least one student-learning event involving student success topics (6), academic or financial aid help (3), or study and related skills (3). On the other hand, four coaches either had been minimally involved or had not engaged at all in this type of activity, and three had not gone beyond preparing to do so.

Six coaches reported initiating or organizing a service activity.[1] On the other hand, five coaches commented on the challenge of engaging students in service activities, and six said that such activities had been infrequent during their service. Reasons given for the lack of service activities included the pandemic, the large proportion of online students, and the lack of student time or interest.

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[1] When the program started, it was a requirement of the Michigan Community Service Commission (the body that administers AmeriCorps funding for the State of Michigan) that each member engage 20 volunteers in community service. After the first program year, though, that requirement was removed. While some coaches and/or host colleges continued to organize service activities after the first year as a way of engaging with students, it was not an expectation of the program that coaches organize community service activities.

Coaches experienced common challenges with student engagement, but other challenges varied by location.

Student engagement is the necessary precursor to the assistance coaches offer. It was also the single largest, most persistent challenge coaches faced. The challenge of obtaining and sustaining student engagement is one that many educational programs experience and was likely exacerbated by the pandemic. When asked about challenges, more than half the coaches (6) identified gaining student engagement and building relationships as top challenges. In addition, one interviewee cited past engagement efforts generally as the least effective component of their service as a coach, while one each named workshops and in-person meetings as the least effective compared to their other activities. The engagement challenge may have varied with the size, composition, and stability of coaches' cohorts (see Appendix B). Another factor may have been the degree of wholly online or hybrid student attendance.

The nature and scope of the challenge were indicated by the time and effort coaches expended in outreach and other communication efforts. All coaches reported using a wide array of communication modes; these prominently included email, including mass or other group contacts, as well as combinations of phone and text. Five interviewees relied on informal opportunities to meet with students, such as drop-in visits and being visible on campus or at college events. Five interviewees mentioned the use of incentives to encourage student engagement. Over 80% of coaches (9) intentionally varied the mode and frequency of contact by individual student.

Apart from student engagement, about a third of interviewees faced the challenge of maintaining a positive attitude or outlook, albeit for different reasons that ranged from a lack of initial success engaging students to the isolation of the college to all the disparities students faced. Two interviewees indicated challenges concerning institutional culture in the placement, and three mentioned the effect of changes in MCAN staff. These engendered disruption and uncertainty in communication and relationships, with some valued MCAN staff departing and new staff appearing. In addition to requiring coaches to adjust, interviewees felt that professional development and coach morale were adversely affected as well.

Coaches had differing experiences with data collection, use, and impact related to their service activities.

When asked about their role as CCC coaches in data collection and reporting, eight of the coaches described the MCAN data tracker. But while nine interviewees acknowledged the expected use of the tracker to compile reports for MCAN, only three said they used the data themselves or saw it as beneficial. Seven coaches used the college's data or developed a data-tracking system of their own. More than half (6) described CCC record-keeping as a burden or a challenge to complete. Three coaches identified data tracking as a significant duty on a weekly basis, and two other coaches said that data collection was the least effective part of their role. With some hyperbole, perhaps, one interviewee recounted another's year-end comment that "we made it through our data trackers without crying."

SUPERVISOR PERSPECTIVES

Like the coach interviews, Public Policy Associates also conducted interviews between January and February 2023 with the site supervisors from the host colleges. These focused on the following elements:

- General background on each site supervisor position and in the college context
- How the College Completion Corps (CCC) program came to each site supervisor's college, how each assumed the site supervisor position, and how each learned of and about the CCC program
- The components, activities, and responsibilities comprising the position of site supervisor at each college
- Each site supervisor's overall perspective on and experience at their college with the CCC program, completion coaches, and their own role
- Suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of completion coach service and site supervisor work, and suggestions for CCC program improvement

At the beginning of the data-collection period, there were a total of 13 site supervisors located in a total of 12 community colleges across the state. All were invited to participate, with one interviewed during the piloting process for the interview instrument, and two ultimately not responding to the interview invitation. Thus, the findings here are based on feedback from a total of 10 interviewees at nine college placements.[2] The numbers of interviewees expressing a particular viewpoint are provided in parentheses. A more detailed breakdown of interview participants and a copy of the interview instrument are included in Appendix C.

Findings

Supervisors viewed the program positively and shared its goals, including an emphasis on the need to support nontraditional, underrepresented students.

Two-thirds of interviewees identified the overarching CCC program goal as persistence to completion (6), a response that overlapped with the somewhat more than two-thirds who spoke about supporting student success (7). Importantly, site supervisors in both cases stressed the program's—and the host college's—application of the goal to disadvantaged students. Similarly, eight interviewees offered unsolicited praise for the program, most of which referred to its focus on underserved students. One site supervisor, for example, concluded the interview with these remarks: "I think it's a great program, especially for underrepresented students and the underrepresented high schools, and we are serving, trying to serve that population. It is great. I think it's an excellent program."

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[2] At one site, two college staff members shared site supervisor duties; they were interviewed together.

Supervisors performed managerial functions, but they mainly advanced program and college goals through mentoring and supporting coaches.

Most site supervisors identified the managerial role of monitoring and supervising the coaches as a main function (5), and three described using the position to connect coaches to college resources and staff. As with the coaches, most of the site supervisors noted that the types of activities they engage in as site supervisors varied throughout the academic year. In the managerial role, though, site supervisors ensure, for example, that coaches understand applicable employee processes (e.g., payroll, work hours and locations), can access college data and communication systems, and work with other coaches while performing their duties within the bounds of the CCC program and college policies.

While all nine interviewees participated in their coaches' formal performance evaluation, eight of nine indicated that they relied more on formative assessment and feedback, during regular weekly meetings or informal communications, for example. As one site supervisor summarized: "I help the coaches navigate how to be an employee at [the host college]."

The same site supervisor immediately went on to add: "I help them. I coach them in how to coach." Among the eight supervisors who responded to the question about their most prominent roles, half pointed to coach mentoring and skill development (4). Other site supervisors agreed in response to later questions. For example, when asked to describe a typical week, a large majority highlighted how they guided and supported coaches through regular interactions, both formally (7) and informally (8).

In other responses, site supervisors described how they contributed to program success by providing information and resources (5), helping coaches navigate their relationships with the college (4), and directly teaching or advising coaches on skill development (2).

Finally, responding to a question about their activities and communications with coaches, site supervisors explained how they guided coaches through Socratic-like questioning that often was intended to prompt coaches' self-reflection (6); answered coaches' questions and helped them problem-solve student situations (5); and connected with college staff and resources, while referring coaches to cohort students needing assistance (3).

Supervisors built effective relationships with coaches and recognized coaches' efforts and impact.

Site supervisors depend on concerted teamwork among themselves, CCC coaches, and other advisors or student services staff. Given that coaches must only commit to a year of service with a mid-academic year start for the typical coach, site supervisors value the rapid development of relationships with coaches, as coach activities and expectations ramp up quickly. One strategy that two-thirds of site supervisors referenced for facilitating a fast start involves hiring coaches with a prior connection to the host college or its community (6).

Site supervisors also suggested that new coaches may want to apply themselves more to the CCC experience when it fits with their future career plans (4). Further, virtually all site supervisors try to support a coach's learning curve, for example, by working in proximity to coaches and by engaging them in regular and frequent interactions (8). Most interviewees also highlighted how they use technology (e.g., MS Teams) to facilitate communication (5).

All seven supervisors who responded to a direct question about the quality of their relationships with coaches described highly positive relationships and experiences with CCC coaches. In addition to the factors mentioned above, site supervisors attribute a coach's success to a variety of individual strengths, such as experience, motivation, attitude, and effort. For example, interviewees described the coaches they have worked with as "having had to work hard to succeed," "self-sufficient and self-directed," "a natural fit," and "go-getters."

Only a few site supervisors spoke to a handful of cases, in total, from the program's first three years, where there were concerns with a coach's performance (4). In two of these cases, the coach voluntarily departed during the period of their service. Only two other cases of coach turnover were identified, both involving effective coaches who left mid-year to take a preferred job. (At least three site supervisors think that coaches' compensation should be increased and/or service requirements loosened.)

Site supervisors cited the impact of coach efforts, whether described as positive in general (4/8) or more specifically as building relationships and providing personal support for student success (5/8). In a related response set, seven of nine site supervisors said that coaches contributed to program success through their service as a first point of student contact, establishing student relationships, and connecting students with resources. (Three interviewees expressed generally positive views of coach efforts.)

Similarly, most interviewees felt that coaches were most effective as dedicated student contacts and connections (5), and one-third pointed to coaches' dedication to a specific cohort of underserved students (3/9). One site supervisor elaborated, saying that "coaches are those dot connectors that build that relationship with that student and helps them through the challenges that inevitably come up in their college degree [program] and to cheer them on, to provide confidence…" A different site supervisor summed up this way: "They [coaches] … contribute a ton. They are—you know, every day—they're making impacts on the students, and when we track all that, MCAN has amazing … coaches."

While most site supervisors' expectations for coach responsibilities and performance aligned with the program's expectations and policies, there were instances where they differed.

Site supervisors have multiple, if related, expectations for coaches and their work with students, which generally mirror the expectations defined by the CCC program. Nearly all, for example, want coaches to be the point person for student contacts, both sending and receiving (8/9). Two-thirds of site supervisors also expect coaches to know their cohort students and help them

build a college-going identity and understanding (6/9). Other expectations include making referrals and providing information about resources (4), participating in student events and activities (3), and following college and program rules (3).

When directly asked to compare their expectations with the Michigan College Access Network's, most site supervisors affirmed high (2) or significant alignment (4). However, most interviewees (5) shared a perception that some program terms are overly restrictive. According to these site supervisors, program limits on coach activities or requirements for other program activities at worst occasioned conflicts with the host college needs, and at best created a tension between host college and program expectations.

Moreover, at other points in the interviews, five site supervisors identified various examples where the nonalignment of program/college practices created challenges or barriers for coaches (e.g., coaches being considered employees for limited purposes only, differing calendars for college and service events, differing college/program needs or requirements for coach work).

It is worth noting that several circumstances outside the program's control may have contributed to perceived misalignments. First, AmeriCorps grant requirements limited program discretion over the nature and scope of coaches' role and service. Second, some scheduling conflicts were effectively unavoidable due to the challenge of coordinating program activities among coaches serving at more than a dozen colleges, each with its own calendar. Finally, it is possible that some perceived misalignments emerged from introducing new program practices in the context of established host college routines.

Site supervisors maintain an interest in opportunities for program learning; some suggested a desire for greater dissemination and sharing of information.

Most site supervisors received information on the program-provided professional development for coaches (5), and four were aware that coach professional development included an annual conference. Site supervisors did indicate an interest in participation in the monthly online meetings of site supervisors statewide (7) and/or the annual conference (4). Four interviewees had little or no experience with either the monthly or annual meeting opportunities due to work demands.

Most site supervisors indicated that they received little or no individual feedback from the state level CCC program (5), although most respondents were open to program outreach on this topic. Moreover, although three interviewees did not currently face a significant challenge, other responses reflected a continued desire for relevant, regular, and consistent program information.

Five site supervisors found managing their individual and college roles a challenge, and this challenge included how to effectively balance site supervisor responsibilities with managing CCC program relations and maintaining a strong focus on student persistence, among other roles and responsibilities they may have on campus; Two site supervisors identified the challenge of

onboarding new coaches; and two spoke to the then-recent reorganization of CCC program staff, including the disruption in communications it involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the first years of implementation, MCAN successfully put the CCC model into practice and helped numerous students navigate the challenges of achieving success at the post-secondary level. Based on the findings discussed above, Public Policy Associates (PPA) offers the following recommendations for improving the program.

Continue the College Completion Corps' (CCC's) overall structure and implementation, with focused adjustments based on program experience.

In partnership with community colleges across Michigan, the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) has developed and launched the CCC during its initial three-year grant period—and in the face of a pandemic. Based on the available program data, and in the unanimous estimate of interviewees, completion coaches' activities and impact have advanced the shared goals of the program and host colleges to the benefit of underserved students.

Since the program's launch, new colleges have come on board to host coaches. With foundational components and processes established and maturing, the program need not make significant, potentially disruptive changes; nor should it. Rather, stability and sustainability should be the aim. At the same time, three years of program experience suggest opportunities for improvement that build on the existing program configuration.

Clarify coach placement status and role, while identifying opportunities for flexibility.

Because CCC coaches are not college employees, but rather AmeriCorps service members in effect embedded in a particular institutional structure and culture, college-specific expectations may sometimes be in tension with those of the CCC—and with a coach in the middle. All CCC stakeholders have an interest in mitigating even the potential for relational friction to the extent practicable.

Accordingly, the program, college, and coach should have from the outset a clear and express understanding of each other's needs and expectations in the context of the specific placement. (This understanding should be extended to college staff to preempt concerns that coaches may supplement but not supplant regular employee roles.)

More specifically, MCAN might clearly distinguish between funder restrictions and other program requirements, articulating the rationales for each. Program and college staff should try to anticipate areas or circumstances of potential misalignment or incompatibility, and they should proactively consider where flexibility may be fruitfully introduced or permitted. An efficient, if informal, process to identify and resolve issues that may arise during the year might also be agreed upon.

Seek to align CCC service components with institutional infrastructures and systems.

The CCC program, in collaboration with host colleges, should try to better align service-year timing, event scheduling, and data-collection activities. Although perfect alignment seems impossible due to differences among colleges, the intentional alignment of certain common elements could improve site supervisor relationships along with the effectiveness, consistency, and efficiency of coaches' efforts.

Within MCAN's own time and capacity constraints, for example, CCC initial training could be conducted over the summer preceding a service year that is largely coextensive with the regular academic year. Perhaps in addition there could be increased integration of recruitment, orientation, and onboarding activities. Within the academic year, CCC professional development might be scheduled to avoid the start and end of a quarter or term and the timeline for submitting reports might also be eased. It might also be helpful to prepare for each college a yearly calendar that includes periodic program check-ins with site supervisors and the dates for designated events (e.g., site visits, formal evaluation, in-person conferences or other professional development).

Reinforce efforts to ensure complete and accurate data collection, while being careful not to overburden coaches and site supervisors.

The standardized template MCAN developed for coaches to use for data tracking is a good step toward ensuring data quality. It is important, though, that all coaches are trained in its use and follow consistent data-entry conventions (e.g., careful use of unique identifiers for individual students to allow analysis across months). The use of data-validation rules within the Excel template is another tool that may prevent some common data-entry errors. Even with these types of adjustments, though, the overall volume of data that coaches are expected to enter monthly creates additional opportunity for errors and omissions.

Therefore, to relieve coaches of onerous and duplicative data-reporting obligations, explore opportunities for colleges to export student data from their information systems that could be matched to the coaches' cohort without requiring coaches to manually re-enter the data. (One college was already preparing to do this.) In addition, continue to hone the data-collection process by identifying the formative data most useful to coaches in their daily activities and interactions and show them how to develop a process to collect and analyze it for "what works."

Emphasize the prioritization and coordination of coach resources and activities in the context of college resources and activities.

Both the program and the college should aim to emphasize, model, and enhance support for coaches to learn how to continually re-prioritize and re-balance activities. To the extent not already undertaken, for example, they can design professional development around these issues,

including social-emotional challenges, and provide more opportunities for cross-college and peer collaboration. They can show coaches how to systematically plan and implement efforts in alignment with their cohort focus and the college calendar, leveraging related college activities and resources. Both could permit, even encourage, coaches to satisfy expectations for small groups and volunteer activities by contributing to existing college events. As noted in the previous recommendation, seeking opportunities to better leverage existing data systems at the colleges could help to reduce some of the burden coaches experience related to data management.

Foster a range of opportunities for learning and collaboration among coaches and site supervisors.

Overall, MCAN-provided opportunities for learning and collaboration were received positively by coaches and site supervisors. As the program enters its second three-year cycle, the emergence of challenges and responses is likely to quicken. For example, in response to dissatisfaction with the standard data collection and reporting, several coaches at different colleges independently developed their own systems for tracking and using cohort data. A small group of coaches across several colleges formed their own support group to share coaching experiences. Other coaches described the creation of checklists for their students, and still others spoke about what they learned about effective newsletters and event promotional materials. How widely did such learning and innovation diffuse?

Although there are channels for cross-college information sharing, going forward, the CCC could with intention broaden its approach to professional development in several respects. A wider range of issues might be addressed through a wider range of instructional models. Coaches and site supervisors could be offered a menu of short, focused activities from which to choose. A consulting approach for groups of site supervisors at similar colleges might be developed. An inquiry-based professional learning community approach could be tried. Other ways to identify, develop and spread local ideas and innovations should be explored.

APPENDIX A: CURRENT DATA ELEMENTS AND POTENTIAL ANALYSIS

Table 2 lists all the variables and their associated tables currently included in the Excel template used by coaches to track program data.

Table 2. List of Variables

Variable	Table	Analysis Level	Note
Semester started in cohort	Enrollment	Student	
Degree/certificate program they are completing	Enrollment	Student	
Current semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether registered for next semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether enrolled in current semester	Enrollment	Student	
Number of credits enrolled in current semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether all classes were dropped in current semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether all classes were withdrawn	Enrollment	Student	
End of current Semester GPA	Enrollment	Student	
Credits completed this semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether GPA is above 2.00	Enrollment	Student	
Whether GPA is below 2.00	Enrollment	Student	
Whether the student is in good financial aid standing	Enrollment	Student	
Whether a certificate was completed	Enrollment	Student	
The certificate that was completed	Enrollment	Student	
Whether an associate degree was complete	Enrollment	Student	

Variable	Table	Analysis Level	Note
The associate degree that was completed	Enrollment	Student	
Whether the student transferred this semester	Enrollment	Student	
Whether coach and student had any 1 on 1 this month	Engagement	Student	
Number of workshops attended this month	Engagement	Student	
Number of group activities attended this month	Engagement	Student	
Whether coach and student had this specific 1 on 1	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Date of 1 on 1	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Type of 1 on 1	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Number of campus referrals provided	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Type of campus referral provided	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Number of campus resources student accessed	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Number of community referrals provided	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Type of community referral provided	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Number of community resources accessed	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended

Variable	Table	Analysis Level	Note
Summary of 1 on 1	Engagement	Student	This variable reoccurs for each 1 on 1 attended
Whether Success Plan is completed	Success Plan	Student	
Month Success Plan was completed	Success Plan	Student	
Whether Initial Assessment was completed	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student identified positive and negative factors impacting their experience	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed goal setting	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student identified academic supports	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student identified personal supports	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed Academic Plan	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student planned course schedule for next 2 semesters	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student finished Completion Plan	Success Plan	Student	
Date Completion Plan was completed	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed a Financial Plan	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed a Financial Strategy	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed Financial Aid	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed Time Management Plan	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed a weekly calendar	Success Plan	Student	

Variable	Table	Analysis Level	Note
Whether student completed a monthly calendar	Success Plan	Student	
Whether student completed a semester calendar	Success Plan	Student	
Month of workshop	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Whether this specific workshop was facilitated	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Workshop date	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Workshop topic	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Number of students at workshop	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Number of students in cohort at workshop	Workshops	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each workshop facilitated
Date of campaign	Tech Campaigns	Coach	
Number of students reached	Tech Campaigns	Coach	
Medium of delivery	Tech Campaigns	Coach	
Message summary	Tech Campaigns	Coach	
Month of group activity	Group Activity	Coach	
Whether this specific group activity was facilitated	Group Activity	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each group activity facilitated

Variable	Table	Analysis Level	Note
Date of group activity	Group Activity	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each group activity facilitated
Topic of group activity	Group Activity	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each group activity facilitated
Number of students at group activity	Group Activity	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each group activity facilitated
Number of students in cohort at group activity	Group Activity	Coach	This variable reoccurs for each group activity facilitated

Potential Analyses

The level of detail included among the variables currently tracked could allow for a robust analysis of the program's performance and impact going forward. The following discussion highlights some of the types of analyses that would be possible and what could be learned.

Trend Analysis

Because the data are updated monthly, the point-in-time enrollment, GPA, financial standing, registrations and withdrawals, and other similar student status measures could be used to analyze changes in these measures over time. For instance, the data could be used to pinpoint when, within a semester, students are most likely to drop courses or withdraw from classes altogether, allowing coaches to target outreach and intervention efforts. For evaluation purposes, regression analysis could be used to establish trend lines for various measures and the degree of change over time could be tested for statistical significance.

Cross Tabulation

The ability to link students' demographic characteristics and enrollment status with their participation in CCC services and activities would allow for analysis of a wide array of potential relationships between program activities and student outcomes. For instance, it would be possible to compare completion rates among students who created success plans and those who did not. By adding demographic characteristics to the analysis, it might be possible to infer

which interventions have the most impact for particular groups of students or help identify which students are likely to have the greatest need for particular interventions.

Intervention Testing

Again, by linking the enrollment table to the various other tables, it would be possible to conduct intervention testing. This type of testing could identify significant relationships between outcomes (e.g., enrollment, credits completed, GPA) and program activities (e.g., participation in one-on-one meetings with coaches, workshop attendance, referrals). Ultimately, the analysis might help identify which types of program engagements have the greatest impact on improving student outcomes.

Data Structure Requirements

To be able to conduct these and other more robust analyses, there are some requirements regarding the way the data are structured. First and foremost, all students need a unique ID that sticks with them over time and across the various tables/reports. A consistent ID would allow student data to be linked across time periods, terms, and different spreadsheets, without exposing any personally identifiable information.

Additionally, consistent rules should be applied to all data entry. As much as possible, all coaches should be entering the same data, using the same coding scheme (i.e., categories and labels). Of course, in practice, individual student experiences and coach activities are not designed to fit within a perfect data model. Therefore, to facilitate accurate data collection and reduce undue stress on coaches completing data-entry tasks, there will always be a need to allow some flexibility. Where the context of a particular placement requires some variation to established standards, though, it will be helpful to document how and why those data are different to ensure that those differences are accurately factored into any analysis.

APPENDIX B: COACH INTERVIEWEE TABLE AND INSTRUMENT

Interview Participants

Public Policy Associates conducted and analyzed interviews with the following 11 completion coaches each in their fall 2023 placements:

Table 3. Coaches Interviewed and Related Information

Coach	College	Service Years	Starting Month	Cohort Focus	Cohort No.
Amy Denslow	Montcalm CC	1		Academic program, Reconnect	214
Lacey Tullis		2		Reconnect, Futures for Frontliners, local community program	168
Andrew Jordon	Bay de Noc CC	1	June	Academic program, (low-income)	147
Kyle Kelly		1	Dec		
Alexander Walsh	NW Michigan Coll	1	June	Geographic, (low-income)	
Beck Gast	Macomb CC	1	Dec	Reconnect, (race/ethnicity)	208
Kamaria Norwood		1	Dec	Reconnect, Future for Frontliners	190
Hannah Wilcox	Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Coll			Race/ethnicity (incl Native American indigenous)	86
Reese Burks	Oakland CC	1	Dec	First generation, low-income, GPA level, race/ethnicity	168
Ryan Hoppenworth	Kellogg CC	2	June	Reconnect, Future for Frontliners, community program	150
Stephanie Shuman	Bay Mills CC	1	Dec	GPA level	54

Introduction

[Introduce yourself] I am part of the research team from Public Policy Associates, which has been retained by MCAN to study the College Completion Corps (CCC) program of which you are a member as a Completion Coach. The purpose for this Zoom interview is to better understand your role in the CCC, what a Completion Coach like you does, and your experience as a Completion Coach, including your views on the program's implementation and impact. Your input will be used to evaluate the program and to inform program improvements.

This interview may take up to one hour, and we propose to record it so that an accurate transcript may be prepared. The recording is not for any other purpose, and no participant's responses will be shared outside of PPA staff. Nor will the name of any participant be shared in any report.

Do you consent to the recording of this interview? [If yes, **start recording and confirm that the participant by name and interview date has consented.**]

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Background Information

To begin, I would appreciate some background information.

1. Where are you currently serving as a Completion Coach?

    a. Where on campus is your work space? Who from the college also works with you at that location?

2. In general, how would you summarize in a couple of sentences your current role and responsibilities as a Completion Coach?

Becoming a Completion Coach

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you became a Completion Coach.

3. How did you find out about the position and what it involved?

4. How would you describe the orientation or training you received from MCAN or AmeriCorps to become a Completion Coach? What sort of orientation or training did you receive from the college once you were assigned?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Listen for and ask about the one-week virtual program orientation and the three weeks of mandatory campus orientation. What did you learn about during any orientation session or other formal training or preparation?

    a. How helpful or useful to you was the initial preparation for the position?

    b. Apart from the formal orientation or training, how else did you learn what the Completion Coach role involved and what you were supposed to do as a coach?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: For example, did you speak to other coaches, other people at MCAN, or at the college? Do any reading or online research?

Working as a Completion Coach

Next, I have some questions concerning what serving as a Completion Coach is like, what you do as a coach, and what you see as the impact of your service.

5. In your understanding, what is the main goal or purpose of the CCC program?

6. How would you describe a typical work week as a Completion Coach? What sorts of things do you regularly do as a part of your service?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How do you usually spend your work time? Where and with whom? What activities do you typically perform on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? Do your activities as a Completion Coach change over time, for example, from day to day, weekly, or monthly? If so, why?

7. I'm especially interested in your work with students. To start, could you tell me about the students in your current assigned cohort?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How many students are in your cohort, and how were they assigned to you? How did you first meet your students, and how did your relationships with them develop from there? What are your cohort students like, for example, the main or typical characteristics?

a. Of the students in your cohort, how many would you say actively respond to your outreach? As opposed to just going along with little effort? Or not at all responding or participating ?

b. What are the most significant challenges or barriers to college persistence and completion that your students face?

c. How frequently do you typically communicate or interact with your cohort students, and in what kinds of contexts?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Listen for different communication/interaction modalities (1:1 meetings; group meetings; interactions at campus events; individualized or group email, texting, or calling; other); also, listen for the types of activities further asked about in questions 11 - 13 below.

d. Have you worked with the same group of students the entire time? If not, what has been the process for students exiting the cohort and others taking their place?

8. To what extent do you work on service or similar activities with student volunteers? What sorts of activities do you engage in with student volunteers?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: What is the purpose of these activities, and how were the student volunteers recruited? Could you give an example or two of how do you work with those students, i.e., what do you do, when, and how?

a. Over the course of a calendar year, how much of your time and attention does your service with student volunteers take as compared to your service with your cohort students? Why?

9. I want to ask you for a little more detail about certain kinds of coaching activities or interactions involving you and your cohort students. I'll ask you a general question about each kind of activity or interaction, and then for each I'll follow-up with more focused questions.

First of all, how do you help students **plan and navigate** the academic year? What are your interactions with students concerning planning and navigation like?

Things to listen for: the student's Success Plan, academic plan, completion plan, financial plan, time management plan; also listen for plan elements like student-identified positive/negative factors impacting the college experience, goal setting, academic and personal supports, course schedule planning, financial strategy, financial aid, and weekly and semester calendars.

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: If necessary, ask individual to be specific about the different kinds of plans and planning involved and to give some examples of interactions. If not already addressed, ask for

examples of the contexts and modes of communication used, i.e., 1:1 in-person; in-person group meetings; the use of technological means like phone, email, texting; as well as the regularity, agenda, content, and results/follow-up. Who else besides you and one or more students may be involved in these activities or interactions? Why? How do these activities or interactions vary or change with particular students—any specific examples?

a. What do you see as the main purposes or goals of these activities and interactions?

Things to listen for: Aids and barriers to successful student persistence to completion; student progress and growth in their postsecondary program; successful acclimation to the college and campus environment, and compliance with academic or other college requirements.

10. How do you **use workshops and other small group learning sessions** to help students? What are your interactions with students concerning these kinds of activities like?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Ask for examples of the contexts and modes of communication used, i.e., in-person, the use of technological means like phone, email, texting; as well as the regularity, agenda, content, and results/follow-up. Who else besides you and one or more students may be involved in these activities or interactions? Why? How do these activities or interactions vary or change—any specific examples?

a. What do you see as the main purpose or goal of these activities and interactions?

Things to listen for: Aids and barriers to successful student persistence to completion; student progress and growth in their postsecondary program; successful acclimation to the college and campus environment, and compliance with academic or other college requirements.

11. How do you help students by **making referrals**? What are your interactions with students concerning this kind of activity like?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Ask for examples of the contexts and modes of communication used, i.e., in-person, the use of technological means like phone, email, texting; as well as the regularity, agenda, content, and results/follow-up. Who else besides you and one or more students may be involved in these activities or interactions? Why? How does this activity or interaction vary or change—any specific examples?

a. What do you see as the main purpose or goal of these activities and interactions?

Things to listen for: Aids and barriers to successful student persistence to completion; student progress and growth in their postsecondary program; successful acclimation to the college and campus environment, and compliance with academic or other college requirements.

b. What is the follow-up on referrals like? For example, how do you know if a referral is successful? If a student attempts to pursue a referral or actually makes some connection?

12. Now I have a few questions about your work as a Completion Coach beyond interacting with your cohort of students and student volunteers. Could you briefly describe your role (e.g., responsibilities, activities, and interactions) around record-keeping, data collection, and reporting?

Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: What records are kept and data collected, and for what purpose? How is it collected and reported? What do you use the records or collected data for yourself?

13. To what extent have you participated in outreach activities to share information about the CCC with potential coaches, supporters, or other interested parties? Could you give an example or two of what the activity and your role in it were about?

14. How would you describe the training or other professional development that you have engaged in as a Completion Coach? Could you give an example or two?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How frequently is PD offered or required? What is the content and delivery mode? How helpful or useful do you find the PD? Examples of PD and use of PD?

15. How is your service as a Completion Coach evaluated or assessed? What feedback do you receive?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Who evaluates you or gives you feedback? How frequently and under what circumstances? How is an evaluation conducted or feedback given? What does the evaluation include, and what is the content of the feedback? Ask for specific examples.

16. In what other activities do you participate with your completion coach peers?
    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: What is offered or required, how frequently, and for what purpose? What is the content, and how helpful or useful is it to you? Examples?

17. How would you describe your work with professional college personnel or staff, such as your site supervisor, college advisors, faculty, and other student support staff? Could you give a couple of examples of such interactions?

    a. To what extent do you think your coaching services affects how other college personnel work?

Completion Coaching Experience and Impact Overall

Let's zoom out a little because I'd like to get your perspective on your experience as a Completion Coach and with the CCC program overall.

18. What challenges have you faced in your work as a Completion Coach?

    a. Where or who do you go to for help with such questions or challenges?

19. What parts of your role as a Completion Coach do you feel are most effective? Least effective? Why?

    a. What would improve the effectiveness of the Completion Coach role?

    b. How might the CCC program be improved?

20. How would you describe the overall impact a Completion Coach such as yourself can have on students?

a. What might help you as a Completion Coach have a greater impact on student persistence or success?

Closing

22. Other than what we've talked about already, do you have anything else about MCAN, the CCC program, or your work as a coach that you would like to share?

Those are all of the questions I have for you. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.

Thank you! **[End Zoom; record completion]**

APPENDIX C: SUPERVISOR INTERVIEWEE TABLE AND INSTRUMENT

Interview Participants

PPA conducted and analyzed interviews the following nine site supervisors at the college of each in the winter of 2023:

Site Supervisor	College	Cohort Focus*	Yrs** with CCC	Total No. of CCC Coaches
L. Gardner	Montcalm CC	None (initially Reconnect)	2	3
Jillena Rose	Bay de Noc CC	Academic program (adult, low-income)	2	4
Sally Smarsty	NW Mich College	First generation, low-income, race/ethnicity	3	~4
Chareles Muwonge, Terri Weakland	Macomb CC	Reconnect, Futures for Frontliners	2	6
Beverly Stanbrough	Oakland CC	First generation, low-income, GPA level	3	3
Wendy Heyrman	Bay Mills CC	GPA level	<1^	1
Heidi Romaro	Muskegon CC	First generation, low-income, Pell eligible	3	3
Kelly Baratono	Henry Ford CC	First generation	<1	4
Sharon Christian	Schoolcraft College	Reconnect, Futures for Frontliners	2	2

* Information on cohort focus obtained from both site supervisor and completion coach interviews; includes primary and any secondary focus.
** Academic years including the current 2022-2023 year.
^The predecessor site supervisor retired before the start of the academic year.

Introduction

[Introduce yourself] I am part of the research team from Public Policy Associates, which has been retained by MCAN to study the College Completion Corps (CCC) program in which you participate as a site supervisor working at one of the participating institutions of higher education. The purpose for this Zoom interview is to better understand your role in the program; what a site supervisor like you does, particularly in your interactions with coaches; and your experience as a site supervisor, including your views on the program's implementation and impact. Your input will be used to evaluate the program and to inform program improvements.

This interview may take up to one hour, and we propose to record it so that an accurate transcript may be prepared. The recording is not for any other purpose, and no participant's responses will be shared outside of PPA staff. Nor will the name of any participant be shared in any report.

Do you consent to the recording of this interview? [If yes, **start recording and confirm that the participant by name and interview date has consented.**]

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Background Information

To begin, I would appreciate some background information.

1. Where are you currently serving as a CCC site supervisor? What is your current position or job title with the college?

    a. How long have you served as a CCC site supervisor? How many CCC program coaches in total to have you worked with as a site supervisor?

    b. Where on campus is your workspace? Who from the college also works with you at that location?

2. How many CCC coaches currently work on your campus, and how many do you supervise?

    a. Where on campus do the current CCC coach(es) have their workspace?

    b.   How many, if any, coaches who are not part of the CCC program do you supervise?

3. As a CCC site supervisor, how would you summarize in a couple of sentences your current roles and responsibilities?

Becoming a Site Supervisor

Now, I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you became a site supervisor in the CCC program.

4. How did you find out about the position and what it involved?
    a.   How did you apply, and how were you selected to serve as a site supervisor?

5. How would you describe the training professional development, or other preparation you received when you first started as a site supervisor?

The Work of Coaches and Working as a Site Supervisor

Next, I have some questions concerning what serving as a site supervisor is like and what you do as a site supervisor.

6.   In your understanding, what are the main goals or purposes of the CCC program?

    a. How do coaches contribute to the achievement of these program goals and purposes?

b. How do you as a site supervisor contribute to the achievement of these program goals and purposes?

7. How would you describe a typical work week as a site supervisor? What sorts of things do you regularly do as a part of your job as a site supervisor?

   Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How do you usually spend your work time? Where and with whom? What activities do you typically perform on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? Do your activities as a site supervisor change over time, for example, from day to day, weekly, or monthly? If so, why?

8. I'm especially interested in your work and interactions with completion coaches. To start, could you tell me about the coach(es) with whom you work or have worked?

   Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How are coaches assigned to you? How did you first meet your coach(es), and how did your relationships with them develop from there? What are your coaches like; for example, what are the main or typical characteristics?

   a. How would you describe your relationship(s) with your coach(es)?

   b. How frequently do you typically communicate or interact with your coach(es), and in what kinds of contexts or situations? Examples?

   c. Have you worked with the same coach or group of coaches during a given year? If not, what has been the process for coaches moving between colleges or exiting the CCC, and others taking their place?

9. I want to ask you for a little more detail about the service of coaches and your work with coaches. First of all, how would you describe the roles, duties, and expectations of a completion coach?

   Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Listen for and ask about communications, activities, and interaction with cohort students about planning and navigating, workshops and small group meetings, campus events, and referrals. Also listen for the coach role in service activities with student volunteers.

   a. As a site supervisor, how would you compare MCAN's and your own goals and expectations for your completion coach(es)?

10. How do you work with your completion coach(es)? Could you give a few examples of your typical activities and interactions, including their topics or subject matter?

    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Listen for and ask about work with completion coaches around their (1) training, performance evaluation/feedback, mentoring/coaching (of coaches); (2) work with cohort students; (3) work with student volunteers; and (4) work with others at college or in community; also, ways the site supervisor works to help coaches be more successful in their roles.

11. How do you assess or evaluate a coach's work performance?

    a. *Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions:* To what extent do you conduct formal or informal, evaluations, and what do they consist of? Examples of each [without naming particular coaches]? How do you deliver and then follow-up on formal or informal assessments or evaluations of a completion coach's work performance?

b. [If experience as a site supervisor with two or more coaches:] How would you describe any variations or differences among coaches' work performances? What might account for such variations or differences?

12. Now I have a few questions about your role as a site supervisor beyond your work directly with your coach(es). First, to what extent do you communicate or interact with a coach's student cohort or individual cohort students? Could you give a few examples [without using particular names]?

    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Why would you have an interaction or communication with a member or members of a coach's cohort? How and how frequently would you have such interactions or communications? Do such interactions and communications differ depending on the coach? Why or why not?

13. Could you briefly describe your role around CCC program data collection, analysis, and reporting?

    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: What records are kept and data collected, and for what purpose? How is it collected and reported? What do you and/or coaches use the records or collected data for? What uses are made by MCAN or the college?

14. In what training or other professional development for your coach(es), have you participated or are you aware of? Can you give a few examples?

    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: How helpful or useful do you find the PD for your coaches? Why?

15. What feedback do you receive on your work as a site supervisor?

    Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: Who gives you feedback—e.g., college superiors, MCAN, coaches? How frequently and how is feedback given, and under what circumstances? Could you give a few examples [without using particular names]?

16. With respect to the CCC program, in what activities do you participate with peers (that is, other site supervisors), other coaches, or with college or MCAN staff? Could you give a few examples?

17. With respect to the CCC program, to what extent do you engage other professional college personnel or staff, such as college advisors, faculty, and other student support staff? Could you give a few examples?

Site Supervisor and Coach Experience and Impact Overall

Let's zoom out a little because I'd like to get your perspective on your experience with coaches, as a site supervisor, and with the CCC program overall.

18. What are the most significant challenges or barriers do completion coaches face in their work?

a. What parts of the completion coach role do you feel are most effective? Least effective? Why?

   b. How would you describe the impact coaches have with their cohort students? The college community?

19. What are the most significant challenges you face as a site supervisor?
   Potential Probes/Follow-Up Questions: What kinds of things do you do to address challenges? Examples?

20. What parts of your role as a site supervisor do you feel are most effective? Least effective? Why?

   c. What would improve the effectiveness of the site supervisor role?

21. How would you describe the overall impact a site supervisor such as yourself can have on coaches? On the college?

   b. What might help you as a site supervisor have a greater impact on coach and student success?

22. Do you have any suggestions for how the CCC program might be improved?

Closing

23. Other than what we've talked about already, do you have anything else about MCAN, the CCC program, or your work as a site supervisor that you would like to share?

Those are all of the questions I have for you. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.

Thank you! **[End Zoom; record completion]**

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