

Media coverage on
socioeconomically disadvantaged students
of California Polytechnic State University,
San Luis Obispo and its surrounding community

A Senior Project

presented to

The Faculty of the Journalism Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Science in Journalism

By

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March 2017

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ABSTRACT

The following study focused on media coverage on the socioeconomically disadvantaged student population at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Ca. and its immediate surrounding community. Specifically, this study pointed out the gaps in the existing coverage and it looked for ways to fill in those gaps. In addition to filling the gaps, the study emphasized the agenda-setting theory, to bring more awareness and understanding of the struggles and existence of the mentioned student demographic in a city, most commonly known, as an affluent and not so diverse area of California. To bring this awareness and understanding, four interviews were done with local educational professionals in this specific area. The professionals were from Cal Poly and the San Luis Coastal Unified School District, and they're responses from interviews done individually with them were used as qualitative data for this study. The interviews and responses brought to light experiences and issues that were connected to existing literature. The research questions were geared to helping bring a new focus on the media coverage of this demographic. The study concludes with summarizing what could be the new agenda for coverage on this topic, recommendations of possible story pitches, and further study to be done to advance this coverage.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students have lower chances than students of medium or high income households for attending a four-year university. Their socioeconomic background can hold them back from meeting requirements and necessary attributes for being able to attend a university, some more than others. The media has covered this in regards of providing hardcore information on issues around education mobility and student body diversity in higher education.

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) has been specifically covered by the media for the lack of diversity in its student body. This diversity includes socioeconomic diversity and the coverage on the issue has been on the demographics of the university, as well as statements or decisions made by the administration of the university.

The media coverage on low-income students at Cal Poly focuses on data based information, the what, but not on the who and why of the issue that is vital to the audience's awareness.

The issue goes farther than students of this demographic not choosing to attend Cal Poly or Cal Poly not admitting as many of them. The existing media coverage is essential to setting the agenda on the importance of the issue, in this small sample of higher education, but it does not encompass the roots and stems of the issue. The media coverage on low-income students attending Cal Poly, a primarily affluent university, is not showing the audience the story of those in the center of the topic, and how the topic is not solely on the university level.

The story starts before the students enter Cal Poly, and based on the experiences of the students, the coverage can show how the story is present at and around Cal Poly. Based on the information already covered by the media, the issue has a factual ground to stand on but it does not give the perspective of those within the issue. The audience will be able to see the whole picture, be aware of the situation and issues through knowing the story behind the numbers.

Background of the Problem

Media coverage on Cal Poly has included the university's lack of diversity in its student population. The visit to the campus shows that it is composed primarily of students from white, affluent families and students from ethnic backgrounds are the minority. This coverage has focused on the data, the numbers of how many students from these backgrounds attend and the critiques of the people who would like to see the university as a more diverse place. But where it has lacked focus is on the people who this topic is about, this project specifically will focus on the socioeconomically disadvantaged students. There hasn't been a face put on these group of students that are underrepresented at their university, and the issues within this topic has not been further extended other than in numbers.

Along with not having been given a face and more space to tell the story, the problems that students of this demographic have during college and before it has not been looked into, which is part of the issue. There hasn't been coverage with an insight on students' experience of pursuing higher education in an affluent, predominantly white community. Also, there hasn't been an insight on what these student's journey to Cal Poly is like, the education of low-income

students before Cal Poly plays a part in how their experience at Cal Poly, or generally in higher education, is like.

National current events have emphasized the struggles these students go through and might go through, which is why the local agenda should be set on specific coverage on them. New coverage can add to the already presented data and set the agenda for starting the conversation, awareness of the story and issues behind this topic.

Purpose of the Study

Due to current events in the educational political and social climate, it is important that the media covers not only just the facts, but also does coverage that humanizes the issues. By creating coverage that focuses on the subjects of the topic, it appeals to the audience's senses and communicates the importance of this issue beyond the data and cold facts.

Cal Poly is a rigorous university that is ranked as one of the best public universities in the United States, it is also more affordable than most of the other universities. But, it is still not easy for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, low-income students, first-generation college students, who for the most part are from ethnically diverse backgrounds, to attend. By focusing the coverage on the students in this educational area, their struggles, their background, and adjunct issues in their educational experience will create more understanding of how the issue is prevalent at Cal Poly, and its surrounding community. Adjunct issues such as, students not being able to perform as well as their peers because of lack of extra educational resources in their high school, among others, have been overlooked in existing coverage.

Through coverage of the educational issues and experience of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly and in the surrounding community, it can set an agenda that helps the target audience be aware of the situation of this student demographic that is prevalent, yet invisible in this area of higher education.

Setting of the Study

This study will take place at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and its surrounding community, the city of San Luis Obispo as a project-based senior project. Two interviews with Cal Poly faculty will be conducted for an insight on the experience and issues of socioeconomically disadvantaged students on campus. Two interviews with San Luis Coastal Unified School District faculty will be conducted for insight on the adjunct issues and experience of this student demographic.

Research Questions

The following research questions were written in connection with literature on existing media coverage, previously studied experiences and issues of the socioeconomically disadvantaged student demographic.

1. How relevant is the topic of socioeconomically disadvantaged students?
2. What should be the purpose of the media for covering this topic?
3. Who are resources and sources of knowledge on this topic?
4. What issues could be covered?

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined to assist the reader throughout the study.

Socioeconomically disadvantaged: “According to the definition adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE), the "socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup" consists of students who meet either one of two criteria:

1. Neither of the student's parents has received a high school diploma
2. The student is eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program” (2005–06 APR Glossary-API Growth.)

Media coverage: What and how the news media has communicated about a certain topic.

Organization of the Study

This study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the problem of the study and provides general information about it. Chapter Two is a literature review that is relevant to the, also included, research questions. Chapter Three is the methodology of the study and Chapter Four presents the findings in comparison with the literature. Chapter Five summarizes the study, analyzes the findings and includes recommendations based on the research and interviews for how and what the media coverage should focus on when creating coverage on the educational experience and issues of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and its surrounding community.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The relevancy of socioeconomically disadvantaged students

There isn't a story, if the elements for a story do not exist. It is why because it is important to first see what the literature shows about the existence of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly.

The Los Angeles Times published a story titled "Diversity Lagging at Cal Poly," (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004) the story focused on the lack of ethnic diversity on the campus which stemmed from the university's automated admissions process.

The article compares the attendance of minority students at the university with other California schools' enrollment of minority students. The article quotes educators that say Cal Poly faces a problem, the numbers-driven admittance system which selects students through grade point averages and test scores is "an invitation for really low minority enrollments" (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004). According to the story, this is because they do not consider other factors of the student's success like overcoming socioeconomic disadvantages and hardships which could be informed and taken into consideration with an essay like in the University of California application system (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004).

The San Luis Obispo Tribune published a story titled, "How Cal Poly plans to increase diversity on campus" (Wilson, 2015), mentioned that the university had tried to gain diversity by creating opportunities for students at low-income schools. Low-income schools tend to have a higher percentage of minorities. An interview in this story highlighted that there is a problem in how lower-class children, which includes children of color and children who are English as a

second language learners are educated. A quote from the interview said, "Language and proficiency in reading and writing are the gateway to all school subjects" (Wilson, 2015). The story goes on to mention different programs that the university has done to accommodate for first-generation, underrepresented or low-income students.

The SLO Tribune made a brief report on a grant given to Cal Poly by the U.S. Department of Education to help first-generation, low-income students get the support services that they need. The article stated that the grant was to support academic training, counseling services, financial literacy support, mentoring programs and career services. (Wilson, 2015). But the article does not go into depth of what these resources are and who is behind them, how they help the students or why it is necessary.

New Times published a story titled "Out in the open: Cal Poly SLO confronts its diversity problem" (Johnson, 2016), the article pointed at the campus climate and the differences of income. Unlike the previous story which highlighted the benefits for students of lower-income than the majority of Cal Poly's student demographics, it showed the downside of attending Cal Poly as a low-income minority.

Mustang News, Cal Poly's student-run news media, published a data-based story, "Income diversity at Cal Poly amongst lowest in California" (Matsuyama, 2017), the story used infographics to show the centralized issue. This coverage used reports from an outside source, the Equality of Opportunity Project, to illustrate how, "to define and identify rates of upward income mobility in colleges throughout the United States" (Matsuyama, 2017). The article went into detail on how Cal Poly ranked in areas titled as, CSU student family income distribution, family income of CSU students, and average annual cost by university and mobility rate by

university. The article reports that in mobility rate by university, among all colleges in the U.S., Cal Poly's rank was 1,564 out of 2,137. "Despite Cal Poly's relatively high success rates in terms of student earnings, the report shows that the overall mobility of Cal Poly students is relatively low. This is likely due to restricted access to low income families" (Matsuyama, 2017). The biggest takeaway, and controversial point of the story was that three percent of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's student population has a family income less than \$19,800. This three percent are the students who are the most socioeconomically disadvantaged, they are the minority and the percentage reflects that Cal Poly is still lacking on advancing attendance of this population. Specifically this coverage is purely based on the numbers and facts, which is not bad. But, it does not go further into why this issue exists and it's mimicking what has been reported before on the university's student demographic.

The existing coverage sets the conversation for the topic, it is repetitive and it can be seen as old news, old material on a topic that is not starting any new kinds of conversation with its audience. But, the most important thing about the existence of the coverage is that, the topic exists within the university, because of the student population and the issues surrounding it that have come up in the past few years.

Purpose of media coverage on the topic

The media is the communicator of the low-income students at Cal Poly. But right now, the existing coverage is not communicating further than the numbers and the facts. It is not expanding the topic to other parts that might help influence what the majority know or feel about this small population.

News media influences what the people think and deem to be newsworthy content. “Agenda setting describes the process by which the news media shows that public what is important by giving more salience to certain events and issues over others” (Dunaway, 2010). The previously mentioned coverage does this and more coverage on the topic could influence a bigger conversation and insight on the issues of this topic.

“As the theory of agenda setting asserts, the news media influences public perception about what is most important by covering certain events and issues more than others” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1995). Dunaway used the agenda setting theory for analyzation of coverage on the issue of immigration reform, she studied where the coverage was more looked at, by states. What was found through this study was that if people weren’t able to relate, or the issue was obstruive, “individuals lack their own direct personal experience with the issue” (Dunaway, 2010) that the agenda-setting cues were more powerful.

Like with most issues, the key purpose of covering a certain topic is to bring the audience awareness, to inform the audience of what is going on around them. The purpose of the reporting, the reporter should create content that will help the audience be more educated about the world around them. “Even when an issue, is not a daily or immediate concern, constant media attention primes issue awareness by making it more accessible in the mind or by increasing the issue’s perceived importance” (Dunaway, 2010).

The university setting is very common in this country, it is desired and attended by many. Though Cal Poly’s own percentage of students is the lowest, coverage could serve as a place for exposure, of those who are involved with this student demographic and the students themselves.

“California’s public colleges and universities enroll the vast majority of low-income students in the state...” (Johnson, 2014).

The literature on the agenda-setting theory creates the pathway for media coverage that will shape the views of the audience. It is a position of power that can be used to inform, create awareness, and educate those who have no personal experience with a specific topic. The majority population of Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo are not socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Therefore, the purpose of the media coverage, according to the literature, should make this experience accessible to the minds of those who hold the most power by quantity.

Resources and sources of knowledge on this topic

To make the minds, of those with no knowledge, accessible to a certain kind of information, the information should come from resources and sources of knowledge on the topic.

“Knowledge of professional school counselors' perceptions of low-income families may lead to a better understanding of their current practice and how their perceptions may influence the quality of their collaboration with these families” (Cole, 2010). A study on the perceptions of urban counselors on low-income families, showed that this demographic of students can exist in non-urban areas and that counselors there can have the same perceptions as the those in urban areas (Cole, 2010). This is very true for a school like Cal Poly, that although it has shown to be mostly comprised of affluent, above low-income class students, there are still resources that cater to the needs of this demographic. Within these resources are people that work directly with this demographic, based on the previously mentioned study, the resources are those with staff that hold counseling positions with the university.

The resources, specifically are, Student Support Services and Educational Opportunity Program. Student Support Services' mission "is to inspire, inform, empower and contribute to the success of underrepresented students by supporting students' academic, personal and professional growth" (Student Academic Services). The Educational Opportunity Program aims to improve the access, retention and graduation of students who have been historically, economically and/or educationally disadvantaged (Educational Opportunity Program).

These are the most ideal resources for sources that work as counselors for this specific demographic of students. Through their experience, they are able to empathize, relate and be informed of the experiences of these students. They also serve as help for these students, help that not all students need if they do not lack the disadvantage.

"The professional school counselor is called to demonstrate the values of equity and equality for all students and their families by working for the academic, career, and personal/social success of students. Equitable treatment refers to providing students from low-income families the opportunities or resources they may be lacking due to their socioeconomic status" (Cole, 2010).

The insight for being a low-income student might not end on the university counseling area. "It is quite clear that improving access and success in college requires a continued push to improve the education students receive in their elementary and secondary schooling. This emphasizes quite clearly how closely linked K-12 and postsecondary education are" (U.S. Department of Education). Because of this, resources that are essential for coverage of the students' experience could stem from elementary and secondary schools. Specifically in San

Luis Obispo, this resource would be the San Luis Coastal Unified School District and the sources within this resource could be professionals in the elementary and high school settings.

“The obstacles that students from low-income families face often act as challenges or barriers to the students in fulfilling their potential for academic success” (Cole, 2010). A student comes into college already being a low-income student, so their challenges or barriers occur before the higher education, their academic success can be affected before and during it. The “achievement gap,” doesn’t end once in college. (Cole, 2010). It fits to know what influences students’ academic tracks through those who advise and assist them during and before they are in college.

Along with that, the most direct sources would be students from this demographic. In a pilot study for self-efficacy and vocational outcome expectations for adolescents of lower socioeconomic status, it was stated, “One way to understand these experiences in rich detail would be to conduct qualitative investigations that would allow youth to express how they believe that their social class background has influenced their task-specific self-efficacy beliefs,” (Ali, S., McWhirter, E., & Chronister, K., 2006). This could be applied to how the overall educational experience of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, letting themselves express how their background has influenced their time at Cal Poly.

The resources that were previously mentioned could be good pathways for getting in contact with such students, because of their close relationship with the student demographic. The literature on the resources at Cal Poly, sets the purpose of the work for those within the resources to be informed of what these students have gone and are going through before and during their time at Cal Poly.

Issues to cover regarding this topic

The current coverage, mentioned earlier in this review, touched on the percentage of admitted students from this background, the success and failures of Cal Poly's progress to expand their diversity, which includes a socioeconomic diversity. There is more that this coverage can expand to, to make the audience more aware of the situation and why students are in this situation when at Cal Poly and even just in a city like San Luis Obispo. The topic can be expanded through setting the agenda, finding the resources and sources for the story. But, there still needs to be a focus on what issues of the topic will be covered.

“Many of them have overcome a wide range of special challenges that more traditional, ‘mainstream’ students typically have not confronted. These challenges often include exposure to communities pervaded by drugs and violence, substandard schooling characterized by poor facilities and poor instruction, poverty-related family problems, and language and cultural barriers” (Hurtado, Haney and Garcia, 1998). Because the coverage focuses on the university, it doesn't look beyond it, to the roots of these students' experience. There is a story behind the struggles of the students that shouldn't be overlooked.

From the issue of the students' education pre-college, it would grab the attention of those who have not experienced it. The majority of the San Luis Obispo community could see this as an obtrusive issue, because they are not going through it personally. Though, the literature shows that it exists in the university level and it could in the elementary and secondary level. Expanding minds to knowing the start of such student's story could make an impact.

Though the struggles of a socioeconomically disadvantaged revolves around their financial need and lack of social mobility, it is felt and seen in other ways. “In sum, low-SES

children often suffer a negative cycle of failure and disinterest, whereby failure increases disengagement, and disaffection fosters additional failure. Hope arises from the knowledge that equally potent positive cycles are possible, in which academic success could foster interest and vice versa” (Arnold, D. H., & Doctoroff, G. L. 2003). The experience of a socioeconomically disadvantaged student is very open-ended, they have more on their plate than most of their peers. “The problem is that the factors which contribute to the academic success of some low-income students are not fully known or understood” (Phillips, 2011). The media coverage on these issues could help with making it more fully known and understood.

These issues could bring up other topics that have been overlooked, such as stereotype threat. Stereotype threat can happen when a student is performing in a situation in which a stereotype of their group is likely to surface, this can negatively affect the outcome of the performance by underperforming (Sergeant, 2014). It can affect any kind of member that identifies with a specific group, and the literature defines what it is, it gives an insight to how this could be applicable for students who are attending Cal Poly and might be going through the same thing. Again, with that could come with looking for information on the before college, which has been overlooked by the coverage, yet could be of high influence on the situation of socioeconomic students at Cal Poly.

In a story published on The Chronicle, it said, “...the startling increase in the cost of higher education and the inability of financial aid to keep pace — which damages low-income students' access to college. Another obstacle is the continuing failure of our K-12 system to prepare students from low-income and minority backgrounds for the rigors of higher education” (Yankelovich, 2005). Students of this demographic, most of the time, are able to afford college

through the use of financial aid and without it, it creates a bigger issue for their entire college experience, which might not exist. Cal Poly is a rigorous university and without the right preparation to attend, the student could underperform due to their position.

Finally, by using new and old issues, there could be issues within the big topic that has not had full coverage. The experience of socioeconomic students is unique in the Cal Poly student mass, but coverage on it could make those around, who are not the position, aware of what is going on around them. “Higher education remains a cornerstone upon which American society was built and now, more than ever in its history, colleges and universities have a responsibility to find ways to improve the academic success of all students” (Snyder, 2008).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data Sources

The data sources used for this case study were two Cal Poly staff members and two San Luis Coastal Unified District faculty members. Each participant were given different sets of questions tailored to their position, professional and personal experiences.

Interview Respondents

Cal Poly staff members:

- Director of Student Support Services; Jeffrey Alexander
- Educational Opportunity Program counselor; Jonatan Diaz

San Luis Coastal Unified District faculty members:

- Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement; Amy Shields
- AVID/English high school teacher; Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

Interview Design

The questions were asked in a formal journalistic interview format. Each interview had different quantity and types of questions, which pertained to their contribution to this project.

Questions for Jeffrey Alexander:

- How are students from a socioeconomically disadvantaged background traditionally underrepresented?
- What are the background of your these students like?

- What does Student Support Services and Cal Poly have to keep in mind about these students when creating and providing resources?
- How does Student Support Services assist prospective students?
- How does Student Support Services assist students balance their academic and personal lives?
- How does current and outside politics affect these students?
- What successes have the university's efforts had?
- For a university to be successful, with these students, what are key critical positions?

Questions for Jonatan Diaz:

- What are the kinds of students you advise?
- What are the backgrounds of these students like?
- How does EOP assist prospective students?
- What differences are there with Cal Poly resources compared with other universities?
- What do these students need to succeed?
- How do students struggle in a city like San Luis Obispo, at a school like Cal Poly?
- Why don't students from this kind of background attend the university?
- What successes have the university's efforts had?
- How are the students that come here, able to come here?

Questions for Amy Shields:

- What are the district's goals regarding socioeconomically disadvantaged?
- How do these academically and socially struggle?

- How are knowing and seeing these struggles taken into consideration when the school creates plans?
- How do plans differ between districts?
- What have been successes and failures of SLCUSD regarding these students?
- What extraneous problems or circumstances arise that affect students' success?
- How have students' struggles changed within the past few years?
- What barriers for college readiness exist for these students and how are they tackled?

Questions for Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

- What is your experience with socio-economically disadvantaged students?
- What are the students like in the classroom setting?
- How do you and the school provide your students resources?
- How do extraneous circumstances affect their educational achievement and experience?
- Other than lack of family income, where else do these students lack that other students do not?
- How are students in SLO's situations similar and different than those in other areas?
- What are misconceptions of this student demographic?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses for college readiness?

Collection and Presentation of Data

The data was collected in person by interviews that were digitally recorded. Each interview was done separately and took about an hour each. These interviews have been transcribed to provide tangible and clear data.

Limitations and Delimitations

The main limitation of this study was the time allowed for the study. With it being a ten-week study, a more in depth text-analysis on existing coverage faults was not able to be done. Because of this limitation, the first angle of this study was changed from a project to a research paper.

The limitations led me to delimitations, changes in the original plan of the study. The main delimitation was scratching the original idea of it being a project, a multimedia feature story and turning it into a research paper on the existing and missing coverage of this demographic. This delimitation included not including two interviews with two Cal Poly students, these interviews were done mostly to feature in what would've been the attached multimedia feature story.

The time constraints forced me to narrow down the bigger vision of the study, to create of a recommendation and guide than a tangible example of work. Though, that work, the multimedia feature story will be done post publication of this study.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 is comprised of four parts: details about the Cal Poly staff members and SLCUSD faculty members interviewed for the study, the responses to the interview questions which is the qualitative data, literature that answers the research question and connection of the qualitative data with the literature. Because of the details and personalization in the qualitative data, the answers to the interview questions have been included in their entirety.

Description of Interview Respondents

Cal Poly Staff Members

Jeffrey Alexander is the director of Student Support Services at Cal Poly. Student Support Services assists underrepresented students in their personal, academic and professional growth. SSS is part of TRiO, which is a “part of a national effort by the U.S. Department of Education to make the opportunity for success in college available to low-income and first generation students, and/or students with disabilities” (Student Academic Services). Alexander was a low-income first generation college student of color who struggled at a Predominantly White Institution. His own personal experience is why he entered the field to help students who share his same background.

As a counselor to socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly, Jonatan Diaz has a professional insight to the story of these students. He acts as an expert source on the topic, that the media, when covering this demographic of students can use as an insight on them. He also connects with students on a personal level, something the media can not always do, because

of his own personal background. Diaz was born in Honduras but grew up in the U.S. in a low-income family and is a first-generation college graduate. He received his bachelor's degree in psychology from Brigham Young University-Idaho. From there Diaz went to work in admissions at Argosy University and Western Governors University. At WGU, he also got his masters degree in education and then he came to Cal Poly as an Educational Opportunity Program counselor.

San Luis Coastal Unified School District Faculty Members

The story of these students do not necessarily start when entering higher education, but at the start of their educational journey. For an insight on this part of the student experience I spoke with Amy Shields, director of elementary learning and achievement at San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD). Because this study is being conducted in the city of San Luis Obispo, which is seen as an affluent city, it emphasis the existence of these students in this city, not just in the university setting. Shields, a self-described Anglo-American has a degree in Chicano Studies from Cal State Los Angeles, a teaching credential, a master's degree and, fluent in Spanish, started off as a bilingual teacher in the Los Angeles County. Her experience in education has been as an administrative intern, assistant principal, principal in the Los Angeles area and now as a director within the San Luis Obispo district. As an expert source with a well-rounded experience in education, Shields's knowledge is valuable in encompassing an overall grasp of socioeconomically disadvantaged students in this area.

Following the educational journey of these students includes an insight on the pre-college experience, when they are in high school. For this, the expert source was Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp, an AVID/English High School Teacher in San Luis Obispo. Delkeskamp

is from Los Angeles, Ca, a daughter of immigrants, English as a second language learner, she herself was a socioeconomically disadvantaged student. She started off her teaching career as an English teacher, then as an English language development teacher. From there she went to Cal Poly, got a masters in educational leadership and has had roles in the education field as a dean of students, assistant principal, director of English language learner and migrant education. In the San Luis Coastal Unified School District she has held a position in instructional services and because of budget cuts she has decided to teach again before she retires. Her day-to-day interaction and background with these demographic of students, helps grow the insight on the student story and awareness.

Media Coverage for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Interview Responses

Each interview respondents were asked a set of questions during their interview. The sets were different, based on their personal and professional positions. The different questions and responses have been grouped into three main categories or questions, background, resources and experience. Because of the details and personalization in the qualitative data, answers to the interview questions have been included in their entirety. But the full context of the interview responses can be found in the Appendices.

1. What are these students' backgrounds like, what are these students like?

Jeffrey Alexander

- “The majority of my students’ families makes less than 50,000 dollars and some of them are coming from families of like six people and their families make 50,000 dollars. So knowing that that is their family income it also relates back to

where they have their high school. Where their schooling was in high school and that is probably the biggest indication of where they have been underserved by the university is because these students come in ill-prepared to step into Cal Poly's rigorous academic mixed standards. A 4.0 at a los angeles unified school district is very different than a 4.0 of a student that went to like, let's say Mission Prep here, completely different. I've had students whose high school didn't even offer AP courses" (Appendix A).

- "So for students who are hispanic/latino and they're first-generation low income I have a lot whose families are migrant workers. So I have a lot from that experience. Watching their mom or dad be migrant workers or clean houses, things of that nature. My students who are white, have an ag background from what i'm seeing. My asian or pacific islander students, their background is just a very hard working family background where they're coming from places where they multiple people living in a home of those who have recently migrated so it's really a lot of people at home. All of them have the same, they have to finish as quickly as possible because they need to give back, give money to their family. That is one of the biggest things that our students share amongst their differences. They share the pressures of the family to get this degree in a timely fashion and provide back home" (Appendix A).

Jonatan Diaz

- "The population that I work with specifically is part of the EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) here at Cal Poly. In order for students to be part of EOP

they have to be first generation college students and come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and historically low-income backgrounds. So, there is a specific income criteria that students have to meet in order to be eligible for EOP, but I think that the population that we serve fits into, not just low-income, it's not just first gen, it's all of them together... There's a recent article that showed statistics on the population at Cal Poly, it showed that at Cal Poly three percent of the student population come from low-income backgrounds and sixty percent, I believe don't quote me on that, of the population comes from high income backgrounds. So the disparity thing makes it very hard for students in that three percent of low-income backgrounds because of the little things, connecting with roommates and friends on campus" (Appendix B).

- “Many of the students, because of the historically low-income criteria that we look at, have been in poverty for much time of their lives and specific cases for them vary from student to student but they have a lot of similarities. So, we'll get a lot of students that come from single parent homes or homes where there are a lot of challenges. Not only are they coming here, from their own low-income background, but some of them might even have to support their families back home. They're stressed and worried about how to help out their families, they will use some of their financial aid to help out their families back home or their siblings. Some of the parents might have a disability or not able to work, so their incomes are very low and it's a lot of pressure that falls on our EOP students.

Again it's not for everyone, but for many of them they do have this additional challenge of supporting their families back home" (Appendix B).

Amy Shields:

- "You really don't think low income when you think San Luis Obispo and yet you would be very surprised to know that over 30% of our students who attend our schools fall in the low income category. So we do have students with needs based on poverty in every single one of our schools. The needs I see really come from an elementary perspective, we see children who come to school hungry, we see children who come to school from homes or living situations that wouldn't be acceptable to you or me. We have kids that are homeless in our district, we have kids who don't have their basic needs being met in the way of sleep, food, comfort, stability, domestic violence is there and we know that, that is part of the factor, that's not just a socioeconomically disadvantaged factor. So when kids come to school, especially students living in poverty we will sometimes see they are not ready to learn, they are not prepared to learn. They have come to school with crisis, their issues and we have to figure out a way to support that so that we can support them to learn and we do a lot of different approaches" (Appendix C).
- "I would say that for the most part [lack of parent participation] to no fault of their own, if you have a family living in poverty and both mom and dad need to work to make ends meet and it might not be your white collared day jobs, it might be night jobs, I've got parents who do all kinds of things to put food on the table and put a roof over their head over their children and for them, quite often there's a

trust and hope in the school that they are going to do the educate their child part and they see it as sometimes, and I don't want to stereotype anybody, or any group but there is a respect for the school and the work that the school does, and I sometimes think that there must be a little less respect for the school and more of an accountability of the school to work with the parents and bring them in and figure out what's gonna be worth their time to come to, so they can be engaged in their child's education" (Appendix C).

Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

- "There are also other students, you don't have to be an immigrant to be as a person of lower economic status, it can just be things that happen in your life. I have one of my students that is getting ready to college but her life changed when her parents divorced, their house went into foreclosure and they ended up living in women shelters...They may not have access to the same technology as everybody else, you can't say take out your phones using your smartphones because they might not have them. They might have phones but the phones have limited texting or they don't have wifi, gotta make sure they can ease up their minutes. Even as simple as school materials. Most people could go to the 99 cent store, which I do. For some students it is not a priority because the priority in their house might be different, maybe paying the rent, maybe paying the bills and may not be buying materials for school" (Appendix D).
- "We're not allowed to ask if somebody qualifies for free or reduced lunch, and if you wanted to, you could stand in the cafeteria and see who might be. But for

example, the student who...was homeless for a while, she's not an immigrant. There are other students who have come up to me and, are of different ethnicities, have asked me for a binder, etc. Even though, most of the students that I know, because I work with them, are kids of immigrants and immigrant kids who may be of lower economic status but then there are other students too who their families for whatever reason do not have those resources. I know another student, whose family background was very difficult, in fact, she doesn't even live with her parents, she lives with her sister and I know that she works because they don't have a lot of money either. They all look different. Most people think, in our area, that they are students, who are of Latino or hispanic ethnic/origins, and they wouldn't think that the Euro-American looking girl in my second period would need help, resources" (Appendix D).

2. What resources, assistance do these students need?

Jeffrey Alexander

- "It's not always financial. I think we focus so much on the financial piece where we think students don't persist at Cal Poly because they didn't have the necessary funding or the money to persist and that was one of the barriers for them being academically successful. The campus climate and culture is very much something that we always have to keep in consideration, that's why my program focuses so highly on the mentorship program that I have or the social activities and events that I do, it's to make sure that they have a support mentoring system. So they can be academically successful, they know that there is people they can call, they can

visit. That they can hang out with when they are stressed, missing home, when they can't call their parents for help because their parents can't help because they're first generation students, having that network of support is something that we always have to keep in mind. We have to keep building more networks of support from faculty, staff and students across the campus” (Appendix A).

- “SSS [Student Support Services] falls under the trio umbrella, which are programs funded by the programs of education. So you have Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search for high school and middle schoolers, these programs historically do campus tours, campus visits to expose first generation low income college students to college campuses, to let them know the college campuses they can potentially attend. Usually when they are on campus reach out to me, to help provide a student panel of some sort or more information about the university or campus tour, I would say that that is the most interaction I have with prospective students in my role as SSS director” (Appendix A).
- “As far as academic resources, one of the biggest things that I've seen that we offer is free tutoring. I have the ability to reach out to current cal poly students who have taken a course. For instance, a biomedical class, a class that typically does not have tutors, the university doesn't offer that class for tutoring. I have the ability to locate students who have taken that class and have received at least a B+ or better in that class for BMED 350. I can offer them like 12 dollars an hour to tutor a student in SSS, so my personal one one one tutoring that I offer is probably my biggest academic piece because one it breaks down the barrier for our students

of asking for help, it gets them to open up to the thought of tutoring and help. Being from first generation low-income students, typically struggle asking for help or feeling vulnerable or trying not to be smart enough. That is one of the biggest components that I have, another one is our mentor program, every incoming student is paired with a peer mentor that is a current Cal Poly student and is also a first generation low income. Through the mentors, it provides multiple resources and personal stories that open up the door for these students to go talk to their faculty. They also combine through colleges, upperclassmen usually know of more resources available through the college. So exposing them to different things, being that have go-to person that they don't have at home. A legacy student at Cal Poly can call home and ask their parents how they got around this, how did they do this, while they are at Cal Poly. My first-generation students do not have that, so that's why I give them a peer mentor who they can ask that question to but tutoring is probably the biggest" (Appendix A).

Jonatan Diaz

- “As part of our EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] program, we have a lot of interventions for students, that help out. First and foremost, we want to help with the access for students coming into college. So for students who are coming in and applying to Cal Poly, we as EOP counselors are there to support them with general questions that they might have regarding what happens in that transition from high school to college life. As part of that, we include our program which is called Summer Institute for our incoming freshman students, so as part of our

Summer Institute program we admit sixty to ninety students and we provide them with the opportunity to take baccalaureate courses that they can credit for and it helps them prepare for what life would be like during fall quarter in a more intimate setting. Students get to connect with each other academically and get ready for the academic year. During the student's first quarter at Cal Poly, whether they're freshman or transfer students, we ask all of our EOP students to participate in what is first year seminar and during this we cover topics that are very relevant to our EOP population, so we will discuss things like financial aid, self advocacy, some helpful things like time management and connections with their colleges and a little bit more. This is during that first term, so afterwards and during their time at Cal Poly we ask students to meet with their EOP counselor once or twice a year so they can continue to get support and help. Then students always have the ability to meet with their EOP counselor to get regular support, we also provide tutoring and at different times during the academic year we will provide specific workshops that are relevant to our EOP population, whether it is applying for financial aid or applying for classes in the summer or career readiness types of workshops" (Appendix B).

- "A lot of it varies by campus, so for example, Summer Insitute at other campuses is designed to help students in more of the remedial courses, or math and English. Here at Cal Poly, a lot of our students don't have the remedial need, so because of that we include a psychology class that fulfills the D4 requirement at Cal Poly. Other Summer Institute programs might be three or four days, whereas ours is a

three and a half weeks long, I think it's one of the longer programs compared to other CSU campuses. In terms of other interventions, other campuses might provide an EOP peer mentor program, which would be great to have here at Cal Poly, which has been done in the past. Other campuses might provide a summer bridge program for transfer students. For the most part, the model is going to be the same where there are EOP counselors meeting with students and providing that extra support for the students" (Appendix B).

- "I think there is a lot that can be done, the Summer Institute program has been beneficial for EOP students because they get an opportunity to connect with each other and to have those bonds when they come here during fall quarter. I think a lot of time what happens, specifically for the EOP population, they tend to not connect as well with the general population...Other students will be able to have their parents financing things that they need, our population of students might struggle paying for basic classroom needs. There's a student that I met with just yesterday that is struggling with a class because the class requires online access to an online program that costs eighty dollars and this particular student did not have eighty dollars to pay for that, so he's gone on this half of the quarter without having access to this and because of it he's failed all the assignments that have been on this online program. We talked and got him some resources to help him cover that fee but now he's gone through half the quarter without having access to that. I'm thinking about another student, more on the emotional side, where this student came into my office asking if she could leave luggage over the summer

break with us as storage. She didn't have any place to store it on campus, so we talked about why she was hoping for that and she talked about how her mom does not know English, the finances are very tight back home and for her mom to come and pick her up is not possible" (Appendix B).

Amy Shields

- "The socioeconomically disadvantaged students are a real target focus as part of our district plan and each of our school plans. We first of all identify needs, we establish hunches about what might be going on and we develop goals to close the achievement gap. I think we've come little ways from there in that for some students at closing the achievement gap may or may not be a realistic goal and where we're evolving to is looking at relative progress, what we don't want to do is seeing kids staying stagnant, we want to see kids moving towards their dreams, learning to read, learning to write, learning skills that is actually going to get them not just reading to get into college but get ready to do well in college and that's a real challenge for our students that come from low-income backgrounds"

(Appendix B).

- "...we have been able to facilitate a lot of interventions, before and after school programs, breakfast and lunch served at every school site, a lot of supports, we have two community resource centers, one out on the coast and one here in town. We kind of facilitate the bringing in of lots of social services to be local and available and support our families in need. We have a full time homeless resource liaison to support families needing help with transportation, job acquisition and

just support for getting out into the world of this community. Districts around us have not been so fortunate to be able to do those kinds of services and now that we are facing the beginning of knowing that we are going to have less funds, we are going to reevaluate and think about what are the most important things we want to make sure we keep in place as part of our district and school plans and this is the place where our parent groups become really critical to help us prioritize what do they need the most..." (Appendix C).

- "It's like, how do we reach 100 percent, if a family wasn't able to show up for open house, how do we bring open house to them, how do we get the teacher to go visit and share the great things that that child is doing. I think in one way, in one of our schools I've seen them do this better than others, they've used video calls, skyping, facetime and twitter to bring the school day to our parents. Not surprisingly, a lot of families living in poverty still have cell phones, they still get messages and we are able to connect and share those moments of glory of their child with them. Even if they are at their job and can not leave, through our more modern technology and that is worth something" (Appendix C).
- "I serve as the facilitator for our DELAC group which is our English Learner advisory committee as well as our DTAC which is our district title one advisory committee, both of these are made up of parents and community members that represent those LPAC area needs. The DTAC representing families living in poverty, which is why we receive title one dollars, the DELAC representing our English learners and we speak with them and meet with them and ask them what

can we do to better support your family, support your child, your student and I will tell you the reasons San Luis Coastal still has transportation to and from school, as well as summer school, as well as a number of after school programs is because our DELAC, our English learner advisory committee has held very strong that we need these extra support for our children to succeed” (Appendix C).

Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

- “At the beginning of every term, I explain to the students what they need for my class and I say you’re gonna need a three ring binder, you’re gonna need these specific dividers, you’re gonna need paper, two pens and two pencils. Because I want you to be successful and if you don’t have that with you, I’m gonna give that to you right now and sometimes some students show up on the first day without anything because they think it’s gonna be a free day. So, they show up without anything and then they say, oh I’ll bring mine tomorrow but I always insist and I say sorry, everybody has just got to leave my classroom with all of these materials because when you go to the next class I want you to be prepared. If you decide that you don’t want my materials, bring them back tomorrow and show me that you have your own” (Appendix D).
- “Another thing that I do in terms of technology, if I’m going to assign students to type something up in the computer and share it with me through Google Docs, to create a presentation about a certain topic that they research, I always make sure that I schedule a day or two, depending of the project in a computer lab so that everybody can get started together because otherwise if you don’t have internet at

home or a computer, it's gonna take you much longer to get that project done trying to stay after school to use the computers at school or trying to use them at lunch or before school. Then someone who can sit at home and just start typing and type until midnight if they want" (Appendix D).

3. What is it like to be a socioeconomically disadvantaged student?

Jeffrey Alexander:

- "But if you look at it from admissions, university standpoint, you gotta weed out 60,000 applicants a year so how do you do that but when you have to be so formulaic to get down to 10,000 students that you accept cause roughly only half are going to come, it weeds out first generation low income college students, for multiple reasons. GPAs every year Cal Poly boasts about GPA is rising higher and higher, last year was 4.1 and this year is 4.2. Well what about my student who doesn't have any AP classes so they are only graded on a 4.0 scale, they can't get no higher than a 4.0. That issue we have to look at, the districts from where they are coming from, why are they only offering one or two AP courses. When I think about my high school experience being from LA, we had AP art, history and I think English, we only had three. So we have to look at it from the local levels of what we are providing students in low income areas. We're not providing enough AP courses or enough college prep courses" (Appendix A).
- "Not until recently, students in low-income areas were taking A-G requirements. They are the requirement classes needed for students to even be eligible to be accepted into a college. Low-income areas didn't have to take those classes, lower

standards to even graduate. So there's those barriers that students fight for, when you look at it at the Cal Poly level, a student who fights through all the challenges they have through their high schools, get accepted to Cal Poly. If you're an engineer and your engineering 101 course you are expected to know how to code, you're not taught how to code, you're expected to know already. That doesn't benefit a first gen student who never took a course in engineering but we have students who come from affluence whose schools had engineering classes, so they learned how to code in high school. That's one huge disconnect. So when you look at the differences in GPA, the average Cal Poly student GPA is a 3.0 but if you look at first-gen low income college students it's like a 2.8, 2.7, where's that difference it's because they didn't have the certain tools. It's not that they are not smart enough it's they never learned how to code so it's takes them 5 weeks just to learn how to code but in week 5 there's already a midterm, then they are already behind the 8-ball. It's very convoluted from what we're providing students in low-income areas because that is the baggage they come with to Cal Poly and Cal Poly doesn't do a great job of supporting these students from these areas. They treat every Cal Poly student as if they are exactly the same but research will tell you that they are not" (Appendix A).

- "CPC scholars is a start but if you were to look at the income levels of CP scholars, they don't rival the income level of my students like for example, I have a student who is in a household of six and their family only made 17,000 dollars last year, but because they weren't from a partner school, they weren't the top of

their class, the indicators does not show that they will be highly successful at Cal Poly, even though they got in. They aren't a CP Scholar student. So the requirements to get into some programs that benefit you the most are hard to reach for most generation low income college students, now EOP and SSS, we don't look at how well you did in high school, we look at family income, do you have a history of being low-income, what challenges have you faced and how can we help you overcome those barriers. These two programs in particular have done a lot of legwork and we have a thousand of success stories of students who graduated from these programs. But are they necessarily on the university's radar? Not quite. Are we getting to that point? Yes. There's been efforts from new staff in these roles" (Appendix A).

Jonatan Diaz

- "I think part of it can be an income challenge with the local community, with things being a little bit more expensive in this area than in other places, even the grocery store. The comfortability, because other students come from high income backgrounds at Cal Poly, there could be a challenge with little things as in, a group of my friends are going to out to eat, whereas an EOP student might not be able to afford that on a regular basis, so there might be that challenge for connection. Some students might have issues with housing cost in the area and that tends to be a big challenge, whether that's living on campus or even off campus where costs are very high for students" (Appendix B).

- “I think another factor could be the demographic here, whereas the majority of the population is white. We’ve seen where some students come from very ethnically diverse backgrounds and they might not feel as comfortable coming to a place that is totally different from their used to back home. I think there’s cultural things like this where I think as applicants are applying to Cal Poly they might see that. I think cost is also a challenge, the difference in financial aid that students receive from a CSU versus a UC can be a lot different and I think that could be a huge driving factor. Also, apart from Cal Poly being such a prestigious university is that it is competing against such universities like UC Davis, Berkeley, UCLA and because it is competing against them and the UC system has the ability to offer more financial aid resources could be a challenge for students choosing Cal Poly” (Appendix B).
- ”In terms of successes, there’s a great partners ambassadors program that is being implemented. EOP offers an additional grant for students, SSS offers grants for students offset costs for students. The university starting the Cal Poly scholars program which also offers additional grants to students. All these programs provide additional resources and support for our students. The university has been particularly mindful about the undocumented students on campus, so they are currently working on a dream center for undocumented students, a place where they can get additional support and legal counsel, perhaps come in and find out about scholarships and financing options, there’s a lot of support that way” (Appendix B).

- “In general, the campus climate has also been changing, where faculty and staff have begun to get a lot of buy in for supporting underrepresented students on campus, I think there has been a climate of change for that, there have been partnerships formed with counseling services and student academic services, for example, where a class was created to serve first generation college students who are also students of color and so this serves for students being able to get that counseling from a licensed counselor. I think there’s a lot that way. In terms of ideas of what can be improved, I think part of it, oh and another thing is Polycultural weekend, I know that helps draw in students to Cal Poly. But I think there could be a lot more outreach done that way and the financial support is the biggest part, there’s a focus for students to live on campus and studies have found living on campus helps students to retain, grow and perform better academically but part of the challenge is that living on campus can be expensive, so if the university could provide financial options to be able to afford campus housing, it would go a long way to help them” (Appendix B).

Amy Shields

- “I think technology has helped and hindered our students living in poverty and helped on the one case, if you have some technology in the home and there’s communication that’s immediate, we can message families at a moment’s notice, we can get to parents and they to us very fairly quickly now through text, voicemail and all of that. But with that said if the google classroom, something that is very common in our elementary schools, using the google platform in our

middle school and our high schools, there's an expectation that students will be able to access their google classroom site at their home and in a quiet calm place where they can do their homework and if the access at home is on mom or dad's cellphone, that's not gonna work. So there becomes a real issue of equity, and I think our district and many districts are struggling with what that should look like and I've heard of mobile hubs or hot spots where you offer access at hours of the evening in locations that you know will be of high need" (Appendix C).

- "We've had some of our libraries with their tech areas open at night time, I think we can do better than that and open them up on the weekends and have a time at night time when parents can come in and use the computers. I think that because our numbers are right above noticeable, we do somethings, I think if we had higher percentages of students living in poverty it would be the norm to do more, which makes San Luis Obispo, kind of an interesting place because it's kind of very a liberal place, overall passionate community but yet sometimes I think some of these students in need are still somewhat invisible to the community at large" (Appendix C).
- "You really don't think low income when you think san luis obispo and yet you would be very surprised to know that over 30% of our students who attend our schools fall in the low income category. So we do have students with needs based on poverty in every single one of our schools...When I think about our families coming from socially disadvantaged homes, especially if the children we are talking about have not been to college, the parents do not necessarily know or

understand that really extensive road that you have to navigate to get to college.

Not even to be ready for college but the application process, which classes to take in high school, which classes to take, when to take them” (Appendix C).

- “I was lucky enough to teach a Cal Poly seminar class about a year and a half ago, eight students, all female and all but one of them fit the stereotypical polly dolly, middle class Cal Poly student. The one student who didn’t was an advocate for herself, she kind of became the advocate for herself when there was anything that needed to be clarified, she was very strong in her convictions, she had an amazing belief system, there was no question for me that it was because of her personality, her will, her perseverance. She took on the toughest issue for her paper and fought both sides, did this all great thinking. It was who she was, it was her core and she did it. She was the exception to the rule” (Appendix C).

Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

- “Partly to, their parents aren’t sure of what to do sometimes when the students are having difficulties or when their behaviors begin to change, because our culture here is much more about the individual and the ability of the individual to determine their own path. Yet some of our cultures are very family based and so I think sometimes the students, see the freedoms of being an individual and yet feel constrained by behaving a certain way, being a part of the family means that what they do reflects on all of them. So, those are some difference that other students may not need to worry about” (Appendix D).

- “When we have a dance, some students only have to decide whether they’re going to dance or not, but when you don’t have money you start quickly doing the math, okay the ticket costs this much money, if I want to look nice, am I gonna need to buy something or borrow something from somebody, especially when you get into senior year and it’s about prom or something like that. Some students may just not go and there’s no way they can compete with the people that show up in a limousine. It doesn’t mean that they can’t attend because our school has a special fund to help students, I know that just by talking to their counselors, if they really wanted to attend and it were a financial issues, we would figure out a way to help them, just like we do for graduation...” (Appendix D).
- “The cost of living is higher here, and the students recognize it. So some of them are able to stay here and live here and some are not. Some are able to stay here and they live in maybe some of our public housing and those who are able to get into public housing, that really helps them a lot. It’s a good thing that we have here, unless you know where public housing is, I don’t think it stands out likes projects. They tend to fit in the different neighborhoods. In terms of food, our students are the first to figure out where to go and their families know where to go shop. We have families who drive down to Santa Maria because the prices are better in Santa Maria. They know the different stores where they can go buy food for less money. But there are some families who try to move here, realize they can’t afford it and move somewhere else” (Appendix D).

- “We’re lucky in this community that we have Cal Poly and Cuesta College near us and the counselors that we have because they go around every single grade level and they talk to them using this program that we have to show them how to take a career interest survey, how to look for scholarships, how to prepare a resume, all of the students are shown the Cuesta College application. We’re lucky to have these colleges because they have conferences or they have days that help us connect with students. My students, tell their friends to go and after, I will have students come into my class, that I may not know, come into my room and say, hey can you help me with. Word spreads about where you can get help. Cal Poly with their MECHA Youth Conference is another opportunity for our students to also learn about college” (Appendix D).

Media Coverage for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Research Questions

The following research questions were created to find information on socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly and the surrounding community of San Luis Obispo, and find the gaps for future coverage.

1. How relevant is the topic of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly?
 - The Los Angeles Times published a story titled "Diversity Lagging at Cal Poly," (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004) the story focused on the lack of ethnic diversity on the campus which stemmed from the university's automated admissions process.

- The article quotes educators that say Cal Poly faces a problem, the numbers-driven admittance system which selects students through grade point averages and test scores is "an invitation for really low minority enrollments" (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004).
- According to the story, this is because they do not consider other factors of the student's success like overcoming socioeconomic disadvantages and hardships which could be informed and taken into consideration with an essay like in the University of California application system (Silverstein, S., & Smith, D., 2004).
- The San Luis Obispo Tribune published a story titled, "How Cal Poly plans to increase diversity on campus" (Wilson, 2015), mentioned that the university had tried to gain diversity by creating opportunities for students at low-income schools.
- The SLO Tribune made a brief report on a grant given to Cal Poly by the U.S. Department of Education to help first-generation, low-income students get the support services that they need. The article stated that the grant was to support academic training, counseling services, financial literacy support, mentoring programs and career services. (Wilson, 2015).
- New Times published a story titled "Out in the open: Cal Poly SLO confronts its diversity problem" (Johnson, 2016), the article pointed at the campus climate and the differences of income. Unlike the previous story which highlighted the benefits for students of lower-income than the majority of Cal Poly's student

demographics, it showed the downside of attending Cal Poly as a low-income minority.

- “Despite Cal Poly’s relatively high success rates in terms of student earnings, the report shows that the overall mobility of Cal Poly students is relatively low. This is likely due to restricted access to low income families” (Matsuyama, 2017).

2. What should be the purpose of the media for covering this topic?

- “Agenda setting describes the process by which the news media shows that public what is important by giving more salience to certain events and issues over others” (Dunaway, 2010). The previously mentioned coverage does this and more coverage on the topic could influence a bigger conversation and insight on the issues of this topic.
- “As the theory of agenda setting asserts, the news media influences public perception about what is most important by covering certain events and issues more than others” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1995; McCombs and Shaw, 1972).
- What was found through a study was that if people weren’t able to relate, or the issue was obstruive, “individuals lack their own direct personal experience with the issue” (Dunaway, 2010) that the agenda-setting cues were more powerful.
- The purpose of the reporting, the reporter should create content that will help the audience be more educated about the world around them. “Even when an issue, is not a daily or immediate concern, constant media attention primes issue awareness by making it more accessible in the mind or by increasing the issue’s perceived importance (Dunaway, 2010).

- Though, Cal Poly's own percentage of students is the lowest, coverage could serve as a place for exposure and building awareness, of those who are involved with this student demographic and the students themselves. "California's public colleges and universities enroll the vast majority of low-income students in the state..." (Johnson, 2014).

3. Who are resources and sources of knowledge on this topic?

- "Knowledge of professional school counselors' perceptions of low-income families may lead to a better understanding of their current practice and how their perceptions may influence the quality of their collaboration with these families" (Cole, 2010)
- A study on the perceptions of urban counselors on low-income families, showed that this demographic of students can exist in non-urban areas and that counselors there can have the same perceptions as the those in urban areas (Cole, 2010). This is very true for a school like Cal Poly, that although it has shown to be mostly comprised of affluent, above low-income class students, there are still resources that cater to the needs of this demographic.
- The resources, specifically are, Student Support Services and Educational Opportunity Program. Student Support Services' mission "is to inspire, inform, empower and contribute to the success of underrepresented students by supporting students' academic, personal and professional growth" (Student Academic Services).

- The Educational Opportunity Program aims to improve the access, retention and graduation of students who have been historically, economically and/or educationally disadvantaged (Educational Opportunity Program).
- “The professional school counselor is called to demonstrate the values of equity and equality for all students and their families by working for the academic, career, and personal/social success of students. Equitable treatment refers to providing students from low-income families the opportunities or resources they may be lacking due to their socioeconomic status” (Cole, 2010).
- The insight for being a low-income student might not end on the university counseling area. “It is quite clear that improving access and success in college requires a continued push to improve the education students receive in their elementary and secondary schooling. This emphasizes quite clearly how closely linked K-12 and postsecondary education are” (U.S. Department of Education).
- “The obstacles that students from low-income families face often act as challenges or barriers to the students in fulfilling their potential for academic success” (Cole, 2010). A student comes into college already being a low-income student, so their challenges or barriers occur before the higher education, their academic success can be affected before and during it. The “achievement gap,” doesn’t end once in college. (Cole, 2010).
- In a pilot study for self-efficacy and vocational outcome expectations for adolescents of lower socioeconomic status, it was stated, “One way to understand these experiences in rich detail would be to conduct qualitative investigations that

would allow youth to express how they believe that their social class background has influenced their task-specific self-efficacy beliefs,” (Ali, S., McWhirter, E., & Chronister, K. 2006). This could be applied to how the overall educational experience of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, letting themselves express how their background has influenced their time at Cal Poly.

5. What issues could be covered?

- “Many of them have overcome a wide range of special challenges that more traditional, ‘mainstream’ students typically have not confronted. These challenges often include exposure to communities pervaded by drugs and violence, substandard schooling characterized by poor facilities and poor instruction, poverty-related family problems, and language and cultural barriers” (Hurtado, Haney and Garcia, 1998).
- Though the struggles of a socioeconomically disadvantaged revolves around their financial need and lack of social mobility, it is felt and seen in other ways. “In sum, low-SES children often suffer a negative cycle of failure and disinterest, whereby failure increases disengagement, and disaffection fosters additional failure. Hope arises from the knowledge that equally potent positive cycles are possible, in which academic success could foster interest and vice versa” (Arnold, D. H., & Doctoroff, G. L. 2003).
- The experience of a socioeconomically disadvantaged student is very open-ended, they have more on their plate than most of their peers. “The problem is that the

factors which contribute to the academic success of some low-income students are not fully known or understood” (Phillips, 2011).

- Stereotype threat can happen when a student is performing in a situation in which a stereotype of their group is likely to surface, this can negatively affect the outcome of the performance by underperforming (Sergeant, 2014).
- In a story published on The Chronicle, it said, “...the startling increase in the cost of higher education and the inability of financial aid to keep pace — which damages low-income students' access to college. Another obstacle is the continuing failure of our K-12 system to prepare students from low-income and minority backgrounds for the rigors of higher education” (Yankelovich, 2005).
- “Higher education remains a cornerstone upon which American society was built and now, more than ever in its history, colleges and universities have a responsibility to find ways to improve the academic success of all students” (Snyder, 2008).

Media Coverage for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students Data

For gaining more knowledge and finding gaps on the coverage of the topic, related to Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo, the qualitative data was recorded through audio interviews with Cal Poly staff members and SLCUSD faculty. Jeffrey Alexander, director of Student Support Services, Jonatan Diaz, Educational Opportunity Program, Amy Shields, director of elementary learning and achievement, Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp, AVID/English high school teacher, were asked different questions on the background, resources and experiences of socioeconomically

disadvantaged students. The tables below include their answers, and are connected to the literature review.

1. How relevant is the topic of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly?

Being that Cal Poly, the city of San Luis Obispo included, is generally seen as an affluent population, this question helps determine if the topic has any relevancy to the area, even more, its public. The literature shows that this topic is very prevalent to this area, though it has gaps, the coverage on this topic exists and has already begun conversation on it.

Tables 1 showcases how this student demographic exists within the Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo community. The interview respondents hold positions that assist or work directly with students of this demographic. Their descriptions of the experience of this demographic are very similar and demonstrate how they are a population that can be seen as invisible. According to this qualitative data, specifically at Cal Poly, this topic is on three percent of the student population and over thirty percent of the student population within the San Luis Coastal School District. The small percentage at Cal Poly, communicates that there is a lack of students attending the institute of higher education, contrasting the percentage of students that are receiving a general public education in the same geographical area. These responses will be summarized through key quotes.

Tables 1 *Key quotes on relevancy of topic at Cal Poly and surrounding community*

Respondent:	Jeffrey Alexander
Title:	Director of Student Support Services (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The majority of my students’ families makes less than 50,000 dollars and some of them are coming from families of like six people and their families make 50,000 dollars” (Appendix A).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So you have Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search for high school and middle schoolers, these programs historically do campus tours, campus visits to expose first generation low income college students to college campuses, to let them know the college campuses they can potentially attend. Usually when they are on campus reach out to me, to help provide a student panel of some sort or more information about the university or campus tour...” (Appendix A). • It’s very convoluted from what we’re providing students in low-income areas because that is the baggage they come with to Cal Poly and Cal Poly doesn’t do a great job of supporting these students from these areas. They treat every Cal Poly student as if they are exactly the same but research will tell you that they are not” (Appendix A).
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Respondent:	Jonatan Diaz
Title:	Educational Opportunity Program Counselor (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So, we’ll get a lot of students that come from single parent homes or homes where there are a lot of challenges. Not only are they coming here, from their own low-income background, but some of them might even have to support their families back home” (Appendix B). • “So, there is a specific income criteria that students have to meet in order to be eligible for EOP, but I think that the population that we serve fits into, not just low-income, it’s not just first gen, it’s all of them together” (Appendix B). • “There’s a recent article that showed statistics on the population at Cal Poly, it showed that at Cal Poly three percent of the student population come from low-income backgrounds and sixty percent, I believe don’t quote me on that, of the population comes from high income backgrounds. So the disparity thing makes it very hard for students in that three percent of low-income backgrounds because of the little things, connecting with roommates and friends on campus” (Appendix B).

Respondent:	Amy Shields
Title:	Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement (SLCUSD)

Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “The socioeconomically disadvantaged students are a real target focus as part of our district plan and each of our school plans” (Appendix C). ● “You really don’t think low income when you think San Luis Obispo and yet you would be very surprised to know that over 30% of our students who attend our schools fall in the low income category. So we do have students with needs based on poverty in every single one of our schools” (Appendix C). ● “We kind of facilitate the bringing in of lots of social services to be local and available and support our families in need. We have a full time homeless resource liaison to support families needing help with transportation, job acquisition just support to getting out into the world of this community” (Appendix C).
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Respondent:	Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp
Title:	AVID/English High School Teacher (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “They all look different. Most people think, in our area, that they are students, who are of Latino or hispanic ethnic/origins, and they wouldn’t think that the Euro-American looking girl in my second period would need help, resources” (Appendix D). ● “There are also other students, you don’t have to be an immigrant to be as a person of lower economic status, it can just be things that happen in your life. I have one of my students that is getting ready to college but her life changed when her parents divorced, their house went into foreclosure and they ended up living in women shelters...” (Appendix D). ● “The cost of living is higher here, and the students recognize it. So some of them are able to stay here and live here and some are not” (Appendix D).

2. What should be purpose of the media for covering this topic?

This student demographic is the minority and because of it, it may not be simple or obvious for the majority to understand or recognize the need for covering this topic. The literature backs up the purpose of the media for covering this topic through the agenda-setting theory.

Tables 2 provides examples for how this coverage’s audience is very different and unaware of the issues and subjects of this topic. Therefore, giving those with no personal experience a connection to the topic and its issues. These examples will be communicated through quotes that illustrate the disconnect with the major population of Cal Poly and it’s surrounding community.

Tables 2 *Quotes that illustrate the purpose for coverage, based on existing disconnections*

Respondent:	Jeffrey Alexander
Title:	Director of Student Support Services (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If you’re an engineer and your engineering 101 course you are expected to know how to code, you’re not taught how to code, you’re expected to know already. That doesn’t benefit a first gen student who never took a course in engineering but we have students who come from affluence whose schools had engineering classes, so they learned how to code in high school. That’s one huge disconnect” (Appendix A).

Respondent:	Jonatan Diaz
Title:	Educational Opportunity Program Counselor (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think part of it can be an income challenge with the local community, with things being a little bit more expensive in this area than in other places, even the grocery store. The comfortability, because other students come from high income backgrounds at Cal Poly, there could be a challenge with little things as in, a group of my friends are going to out to eat, whereas an EOP student might not be able to afford that on a regular basis, so there might be that challenge for connection” (Appendix B).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Some students might have issues with housing cost in the area and that tends to be a big challenge, whether that’s living on campus or even off campus where costs are very high for students” (Appendix B).
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Respondent:	Amy Shields
Title:	Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think we work hard to flip that attitude of, oh my goodness that family must be so busy keeping their head above water, what can we do to now follow up, because they weren’t able to be here. It’s like, how do we reach 100% if a family wasn’t able to show up for open house, how do we bring open house to them, how do we get the teacher to go visit and share the great things that that child is doing” (Appendix C).

Respondent:	Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp
Title:	AVID/English High School Teacher (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When we have a dance, some students only have to decide whether they’re going to dance or not, but when you don’t have money you start quickly doing the math, okay the ticket costs this much money, if I want to look nice, am I gonna need to buy something or borrow something from somebody, especially when you get into senior year and it’s about prom or something like that. Some students may just not go and there’s no way they can compete with the people that show up in a limousine” (Appendix D).

3. Who are resources and sources of knowledge on this topic?

Though this student demographic is the minority, there are resources and sources of knowledge at Cal Poly and in the surrounding community. The literature informs on the general positions to look for as the ideal hubs of information. This coverage is to be about the experience of the current students in this area.

Through the use of the qualitative data, tables 3 provides the names of groups, positions, and departments within the educational community of this area being studied. This information can be used to gain more information and expert point of views on this topic, which can add to the validity of the coverage.

Tables 3 *Informational hubs and experts for validity of coverage.*

Respondent:	Jeffrey Alexander
Title:	Director of Student Support Services (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “SSS [Student Support Services] falls under the trio umbrella, which are programs funded by the programs of education. So you have Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search for high school and middle schoolers...” (Appendix A). • “CPC scholars is a start but if you were to look at the income levels of CP scholars, they don't rival the income level of my students like for example, I have a student who is in a household of six and their family only made 17,000 dollars last year, but because they weren't from a partner school, they weren't the top of their class, the indicators does not show that they will be highly successful at Cal Poly, even though they got in. They aren't a CP Scholar student” (Appendix A).

Respondent:	Jonatan Diaz
Title:	Educational Opportunity Program Counselor (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In order for students to be part of EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) they have to be first generation college students and come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and historically low-income backgrounds” (Appendix B). • “As part of our EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] program, we have a lot of interventions for students, that help out. First and foremost, we want to help with the access for students coming into college. So for students who are coming in and applying to Cal Poly, we as EOP counselors are there to support them with general questions that they might have regarding what happens in that transition from high school to college life...we include our program which is called

	<p>Summer Institute for our incoming freshman students...” (Appendix B).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ”In terms of successes, there’s a great partners ambassadors program that is being implemented...” (Appendix B). ● “There’s a student that I met with just yesterday that is struggling with a class because the class requires online access to an online program that costs eighty dollars and this particular student did not have eighty dollars to pay for that, so he’s gone on this half of the quarter without having access to this and because of it he’s failed all the assignments that have been on this online program” (Appendix B). ● “I’m thinking about another student, more on the emotional side, where this student came into my office asking if she could leave luggage over the summer break with us as storage. She didn’t have any place to store it on campus, so we talked about why she was hoping for that and she talked about how her mom does not know English, the finances are very tight back home and for her mom to come and pick her up is not possible” (Appendix B).
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Respondent:	Amy Shields
Title:	Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I serve as the facilitator for our DELAC group which is our English Learner advisory committee as well as our DTAC which is our district title one advisory committee, both of these are made up of parents and community members that represent those LPAC area needs” (Appendix C). ● “I was lucky enough to teach a Cal Poly seminar class about a year and a half ago, eight students, all female and all but one of them fit the stereotypical polly dolly, middle class Cal Poly student. The one student who didn’t was an advocate for herself, she kind of became the advocate for herself when there was anything that needed to be clarified, she was very strong in her convictions, she had an amazing belief system, there was no question for me that it was because of her personality, her will, her perseverance. She took on the toughest issue for her paper and fought both sides, did this all great thinking. It was who she was, it was her core and she did it. She was the exception to the rule” (Appendix C).

Respondent:	Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp
Title:	AVID/English High School Teacher (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Some are able to stay here and they live in maybe some of our public housing and those who are able to get into public housing, that really helps them a lot. It’s a good thing that we have here, unless you know where public housing is, I don’t think it stands out likes projects” (Appendix D). ● “We’re lucky in this community that we have Cal Poly and Cuesta College near us and the counselors that we have because they go around every single grade level and they talk to them using this program that we have to show them how to take a career interest survey, how to look for scholarships, how to prepare a resume, all of the students are shown the Cuesta College application” (Appendix D). ● “Cal Poly with their MECHA Youth Conference is another opportunity for our students to also learn about college” (Appendix D). ● “I know another student, whose family background was very difficult, in fact, she doesn’t even live with her parents, she lives with her sister and I know that she works because they don’t have a lot of money either. They all look different” (Appendix D). ● “Most people think, in our area, that they are students, who are of Latino or hispanic ethnic/origins, and they wouldn’t think that the Euro-American looking girl in my second period would need help, resources” (Appendix D).

4. What issues could be covered?

After knowing or having an idea of the resources and sources for the coverage, the focus can be on the issues of what these subjects experience. The literature gives information on some issues that this demographic of students personally have dealt with.

By covering these issues in connection with subjects within the community, it can help successfully set the agenda for bringing awareness to the disconnected community. In addition, to using the issues in the literature, touching issues that specifically affect students in this area will enhance the relevancy of the coverage. Tables 4, provides examples of issues that the interview respondents know has affected students at Cal Poly and the surrounding San Luis Obispo community.

Tables 4 *Issues being dealt by students at Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo*

Respondent:	Jeffrey Alexander
Title:	Director of Student Support Services (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “All of them have the same, they have to finish as quickly as possible because they need to give back, give money to their family. That is one of the biggest things that our students share amongst their differences. They share the pressures of the family to get this degree in a timely fashion and provide back home” (Appendix A). ● “The campus climate and culture is very much something that we always have to keep in consideration, that’s why my program focuses so highly on the mentorship program that I have or the social activities and events that I do, it's to make sure that they have a support mentoring system. So they can be academically successful, they know that there is people they can call, they can visit. That they can hang out with when they are stressed, missing home, when they can't call their parents for help because their parents can't help because they’re first generation students, having that network of support is something that we always have to keep in mind. We have to keep building more networks of support from faculty, staff and students across the campus” (Appendix A). ● “Being from first generation low-income students, typically struggle asking for help or feeling vulnerable or trying not to be smart enough” (Appendix A). ● “That issue we have to look at, the districts from where they are coming from, why are they only offering one or two AP courses. When

	<p>I think about my high school experience being from LA, we had AP art, history and I think English, we only had three. So we have to look at it from the local levels of what we are providing students in low income areas” (Appendix A).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We’re not providing enough AP courses or enough college prep courses. Not until recently, students in low-income areas were taking A-G requirements. They are the required classes needed for students to even be eligible to be accepted into a college. Low-income areas didn’t have to take those classes, lower standards to even graduate” (Appendix A).
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Respondent:	Jonatan Diaz
Title:	Educational Opportunity Program Counselor (Cal Poly)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So, we’ll get a lot of students that come from single parent homes or homes where there are a lot of challenges. Not only are they coming here, from their own low-income background, but some of them might even have to support their families back home. They’re stressed and worried about how to help out their families, they will use some of their financial aid to help out their families back home or their siblings. Some of the parents might have a disability or not able to work, so their incomes are very low and it’s a lot of pressure that falls on our EOP students. Again it’s not for everyone, but for many of them they do have this additional challenge of supporting their families back home” (Appendix B). • “Other students will be able to have their parents financing things that they need, our population of students might struggle paying for basic classroom needs.” (Appendix B)

Respondent:	Amy Shields
Title:	Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s like, how do we reach 100 percent, if a family wasn’t able to show up for open house, how do we bring open house to them, how do we get the teacher to go visit and share the great things that that child is doing. I think in one way, in one of our schools I’ve seen them do this better than others, they’ve used video calls, skyping, facetimeing and

	<p>twitter to bring the school day to our parents...Even if they are at their job and can not leave, through our more modern technology and that is worth something” (Appendix C).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I think technology has helped and hindered our students living in poverty and helped on the one case, if you have some technology in the home and there’s communication that’s immediate, we can message families at a moment’s notice, we can get to parents and they to us very fairly quickly now through text, voicemail and all of that. But with that said if the google classroom, something that is very common in our elementary schools, using the google platform in our middle school and our high schools, there’s an expectation that students will be able to access their google classroom site at their home and in a quiet calm place where they can do their homework and if the access at home is on mom or dad’s cellphone, that’s not gonna work. So there becomes a real issue of equity, and I think our district and many districts are struggling with what that should look like and I’ve heard of mobile hubs or hot spots where you offer access at hours of the evening in locations that you know will be of high need” (Appendix C). ● “When I think about our families coming from socially disadvantaged homes, especially if the children we are talking about have not been to college, the parents do not necessarily know or understand that really extensive road that you have to navigate to get to college. Not even to be ready for college but the application process, which classes to take in high school, which classes to take, when to take them” (Appendix C).
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Respondent:	Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp
Title:	AVID/English High School Teacher (SLCUSD)
Key quotes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “They may not have access to the same technology as everybody else, you can’t say take out your phones using your smartphones because they might not have them. They might have phones but the phones have limited texting or they don’t have wifi, gotta make sure they can ease up their minutes” (Appendix D). ● “Even as simple as school materials. Most people could go to the 99 cent store, which I do. For some students it is not a priority because the priority in their house might be different, maybe paying the rent, maybe paying the bills and may not be buying materials for school” (Appendix D).

Chapter 5

Discussions and Recommendations

Summary

The media has the power to spark the topic of conversation. San Luis Obispo is a small city and the biggest part of its population is made up by students. The majority of the residential and student community are from affluent families. But, not all students fit into this demographic, they are socioeconomically disadvantaged. It's a bit rare to be socioeconomically disadvantaged in SLO, but it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Education is an important topic, it sets everyone off to follow their future career and life paths. It have an farther, greater impact on students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds.

Students at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo are no exception, as well as students in the same area of San Luis Obispo. Media coverage can influence greatly to tell their story and bring awareness to what their experience is like, it can bring to light issues that are not being talked about and could be, especially because the topic of conversation has already been started.

Interview Respondents were given different set of questions that were connected to the following research questions:

1. How relevant is the topic of socioeconomically disadvantaged students?
2. What should be the purpose of the media for covering this topic?
3. Who are resources and sources of knowledge on this topic?
4. What issues could be covered?

Discussion

In this section, the data found in Chapter 4 is analyzed for making conclusive answers for the research questions.

1. How relevant is the topic of socioeconomically disadvantaged students?

The qualitative data, the answers from the four educational professionals, showed that the topics is very relevant to Cal Poly, and its surrounding community. The answers from Jeffrey Alexander, Jonatan Diaz, Amy Shields and Dr. Rita-Delkeskamp, prove that these students are pursuing an education in San Luis Obispo. It also shows that their struggles are different than the majority of students in the area. Along with that, it highlights issues of the student experience at Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo, a predominantly affluent university and city. The literature also supports this through demonstration of past coverage on the topic.

2. What should be the purpose of the media for covering this topic?

The existing disconnections between the community and these students backup a purpose for covering this topic. These disconnections can be seen through the anecdotes that the four professionals have given in their interviews. The disconnection is a bit understandable, because the majority of the community has not gone through what these students have, they don't understand. As well as, the university has not taken enough consideration for the lack of resources that these students might have because of their background. Highlighting this experience through media coverage can help let those, not in the shoes of the students, know how and why it is difficult for them. The purpose is to bring awareness of these students educational experience, which is different than the majority's.

3. Who are resources and sources of knowledge on this topic?

The professionals used for this study are the kind of resources and sources of knowledge on this topic. They are able to inform more on their own organizations and groups, plus on the experience and stories of this demographic of students. They are a good link to the students that this topic is focused on, and they are able to give their expert opinion on what the situation at Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo is like. As far as for coverage, these would be ideal interviews to do and include in coverage on this topic.

Programs like the Educational Opportunity Program and Student Supports Services are not fairly uncommon, but they are essential to the student experience at Cal Poly. Amidst the difference these students experience, by being part of what is essentially an invisible community, these are the people they can rely on for help, this is their support. On the surrounding community spectrum, professionals who focus on the elementary and secondary school settings, are able to give input on what it is like to be a student of this demographic in a place like San Luis Obispo, plus give insight on what is the experience of mostly any socioeconomically disadvantaged student.

4. What issues could be covered?

Based on the literature and qualitative data, issues to be covered within this topic are the following:

- Struggles with the college system, because parents did not attend a four-year university
- Problems with inclusion of students who did not have the same resources in high school as the majority of the student body

- Influence of elementary and secondary education on their educational achievement success during their time at Cal Poly
- The personal hardships of students during elementary and secondary education
- The personal hardships of students during higher education
- How the university can work to assist these students better, before and after entering the realm of higher education
- Adjunct issues that give roots to this demographic of students, such as immigration or disabilities

Recommendations for Further Study

Though this study touched on important key points of what the coverage is like and what it should be on, in regards of this demographic of students, there are some holes that could still be filled with further study. Something that could help give more insight on the existing coverage is further analyzation of the structure and content of past stories, text analysis. Something else for further study, would be finding out what the people affected by this coverage would like to see in the coverage, what they think the media has lacked in the time that this issue has been reported on. Finally, a look into the inner parts of the higher education system that is still lacking on covering the whole story of these students by lacking in creating policy or support tactics.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the information that has been gathered, a feature story on the those interviewed and the students they serve is recommended. I will be following up on this by creating a feature story on the experience of two socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly. Other than that, what is recommended is specific coverage on the issues mentioned that could be covered.

Overall, a more well rounded, human focused media coverage on the struggles and issues of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo is recommended for practice.

Conclusion

The media should be of service of those who need to have their story told. Journalism is a self-less job and by covering such a topic, there is awareness of an underprivileged community that needs help adjusting to an area where they are not the norm. With more awareness of this invisible population, the agenda is set to care more about their existence and struggles. There could be more of a sense of empathy and consideration on the campus and the city. By expanding from the existing coverage, the audience could get a perspective that actually clicks with them and brings change.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Jeffrey Alexander

The following interview was conducted to gain knowledge on Cal Poly's Student Support Services and obtain a perspective of a professional who serves socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Interviewer: Melissa Nuñez

Respondent: Director of Student Support Services (Jeffrey Alexander)

Date of Interview: February 8, 2017

Interview Transcription

Melissa Nuñez: "Students Supports Services is able to assist students who are from a background that are traditionally underrepresented by the university system, so how have students in the past and currently been underrepresented in the university system?"

Jeffrey Alexander: "As in relation to Cal Poly, SSS programs are for first generation, low income college students and they are not accepted based on their racial or ethnic background. What makes that significant at Cal Poly is if you look at, there was just a recent report actually, that shows the income of incoming students or the family of incoming students and Cal Poly in just terms of all the California schools if you look at private, public institutions there like 12 that the average income is 150,000 dollars for an incoming student. The majority of my students' families makes less than 50,000 dollars and some of them are coming from families of like six people and their families make 50,000 dollars. So knowing that that is their family income it also relates back to where they have their high school. Where their schooling was in high school and that is probably the biggest indication of where they have been underserved by the university is because these students come in ill-prepared to step into Cal Poly's rigorous academic mixed standards. A 4.0 at Los Angeles Unified School District is very different than a 4.0 of a student that went to like, let's say Mission Prep here, completely different. I've had students whose high school didn't even offer AP courses. We have students who come in and their whole senior year was nothing but AP courses so how does that affect our students? If you just look at the way that registration is, registration is based off of your completion, how close you are to graduation. So students who are coming in at sophomore standing versus my students who come in as very much a true first-time freshman with zero credits versus somebody who came with a 100 extra credits, it's harder for them to get classes that they need, then it is for somebody who comes in as a sophomore based on credits that they accumulated through their high school programs, some high schools have dual programs where some students come in with an AA already so when they

come in they are above par what a first generation low income college student has that ability to do.”

MN: “What are the backgrounds of your students like?”

JA: “It varies, I think it varies really depending on, this is where the ethnic breakdown shows the variations. So for students who are hispanic/Latino and they’re first-generation low income I have a lot whose families are migrant workers. So I have a lot from that experience. Watching their mom or dad be migrant workers or clean houses, things of that nature. My students who are white, have an ag background from what I’m seeing. My Asian or Pacific Islander students, their background is just a very hard working family background where they’re coming from places where they multiple people living in a home of those who have recently migrated so it’s really a lot of people at home. All of them have the same, they have to finish as quickly as possible because they need to give back, give money to their family. That is one of the biggest things that our students share amongst their differences. They share the pressures of the family to get this degree in a timely fashion and provide back home.”

MN: “What does SSS and along with the CP umbrella have to keep in mind about this demographic of students when creating and providing the resources that they do and plan to do in the future?”

JA: “It’s not always financial. I think we focus so much on the financial piece where we think students don’t persist at Cal Poly because they didn’t have the necessary funding or the money to persist and that was one of the barriers for them being academically successful. The campus climate and culture is very much something that we always have to keep in consideration, that’s why my program focuses so highly on the mentorship program that I have or the social activities and events that I do, it’s to make sure that they have a support mentoring system. So they can be academically successful, they know that there is people they can call, they can visit. That they can hang out with when they are stressed, missing home, when they can’t call their parents for help because their parents can’t help because they’re first generation students, having that network of support is something that we always have to keep in mind. We have to keep building more networks of support from faculty, staff and students across the campus.”

MN: “How do SSS assist prospective students, how are you involved?”

JA: “Very little I would say, we don’t really interact with prospective students on a regular basis, the only time SSS I would say interacts with students is when usually another trio program. SSS falls under the trio umbrella, which are programs funded by the programs of education. So you have upward bound, educational talent search for high school and middle schoolers, so when

these programs historically do campus tours, campus visits to expose first generation low income college students to college campuses, to let them know the college campuses they can potentially attend. Usually when they are on campus reach out to me, to help provide a student panel of some sort or more information about the university or campus tour, I would say that that is the most interaction I have with prospective students in my role as SSS director.”

MN: “Specifically what are the resources that students support services gives for students to succeed in their classes while also having to balance working, what tools are you able to provide and how have you seen that work out?”

JA: “As far as academic resources, one of the biggest things that I’ve seen that we offer is free tutoring. I have the ability to reach out to current Cal Poly students who have taken a course. For instance, a biomedical class, a class that typically does not have tutors, the university doesn't offer that class for tutoring. I have the ability to locate students who have taken that class and have received at least a B+ or better in that class for BMED 350. I can offer them like \$12 an hour to tutor a student in SSS, so my personal one on one tutoring that I offer is probably my biggest academic piece because one it breaks down the barrier for our students of asking for help, it gets them to open up to the thought of tutoring and help. Being from first generation low-income students, typically struggle asking for help or feeling vulnerable or trying not to be smart enough. That is one of the biggest components that I have, another one is our mentor program, every incoming student is paired with a peer mentor that is a current Cal Poly student and is also a first generation low income. Through the mentors, it provides multiple resources and personal stories that open up the door for these students to go talk to their faculty. They also combine through colleges, upperclassmen usually know of more resources available through the college. So exposing them to different things, being that have go-to person that they don't have at home. A legacy student at Cal Poly can call home and ask their parents how they got around this, how did they do this, while they are at Cal Poly. My first-generation students do not have that, so that’s why I give them a peer mentor who they can ask that question to but tutoring is probably the biggest.”

MN “How do current politics, inside and outside of the university affect these students when it comes to resources or being able to progress in their education?”

JA: “Access, is the biggest piece when it comes to dealing with first generation low income students, from the state level to Cal Poly. There is a report where they talked about the MCA score, were based on your GPA, SAT Score, volunteer experience and all of these things give you a picture with what the students’ potential can be and the discourse of how people just didn’t like that. But if you look at it from admissions, university standpoint, you gotta weed out 60,000 applicants a year so how do you do that but when you have to be so formulaic to get down to

10,000 students that you accept cause roughly only half are going to come, it weeds out first generation low income college students, for multiple reasons. GPAs every year Cal Poly boasts about GPA is rising higher and higher, last year was 4.1 and this year is 4.2. Well what about my student who doesn't have any AP classes so they are only graded on a 4.0 scale, they can't get no higher than a 4.0. That issue we have to look at, the districts from where they are coming from, why are they only offering one or two AP courses. When I think about my high school experience being from LA, we had AP art, history and I think English, we only had three. So we have to look at it from the local levels of what we are providing students in low income areas. We're not providing enough AP courses or enough college prep courses. Not until recently, students in low-income areas were taking A-G requirements. They are the requirement classes needed for students to even be eligible to be accepted into a college. Low-income areas didn't have to take those classes, lower standards to even graduate. So there's those barriers that students fight for, when you look at it at the Cal Poly level, a student who fights through all the challenges they have through their high schools, getting accepted to Cal Poly. If you're an engineer and your engineering 101 course you are expected to know how to code, you're not taught how to code, you're expected to know already. That doesn't benefit a first gen student who never took a course in engineering but we have students who come from affluence whose schools had engineering classes, so they learned how to code in high school. That's one huge disconnect. So when you look at the differences in GPA, the average Cal Poly student GPA is a 3.0 but if you look at first-gen low income college students it's like a 2.8, 2.7, where's that difference it's because they didn't have the certain tools. It's not that they are not smart enough it's they never learned how to code so it's takes them five weeks just to learn how to code but in week 5 there's already a midterm, then they are already behind the 8-ball. It's a very convoluted from what we're providing students in low-income areas because that is the baggage they come with to Cal Poly and Cal Poly doesn't do a great job of supporting these students from these areas. They treat every Cal Poly student as if they are exactly the same but research will tell you that they are not. We don't have remedial courses, most colleges have remedial courses, if you're struggling in your math or remedial math classes that you have to begin with, Cal Poly doesn't really have remedial math classes, they expect you to be already at the top and you might not be there. Your GPA might say it but your English classes are very different from a low income area than it is from a rich area."

MN: "We've discussed where the university lacks and has not been successful with, has there been success with what the universities' efforts that they have done, has there been success in that?"

JA: "EOP has been on campus since the sixties, SSS has been here since 1984, so there's always been programs designed to help out first generation low income students. Now, there's been political barriers that have kind of hindered Cal Poly a little bit, but not just Cal Poly, the state of

California in general, such as Prop 209, which states that colleges can't base admission based on ethnicity background, it changed affirmative action drastically in California, it changed the makeup of Cal Poly. The reason you don't see massive numbers of African American students at Cal Poly, which I won't blame Cal Poly because you don't see massive numbers of African American students at many other universities in the system, so as far as Cal Poly and their efforts to support first generation low income college students. CPC scholars is a start but if you were to look at the income levels of CP scholars, they don't rival the income level of my students like for example, I have a student who is in a household of six and their family only made \$17,000 last year, but because they weren't from a partner school, they weren't the top of their class, the indicators does not show that they will be highly successful at Cal Poly, even though they got in. They aren't a CP Scholar student. So the requirements to get into some programs that benefit you the most are hard to reach for most generation low income college students, now EOP and SSS, we don't look at how well you did in high school, we look at family income, do you have a history of being low-income, what challenges have you faced and how can we help you overcome those barriers. These two programs in particular have done a lot of legwork and we have a thousand of success stories of students who graduated from these programs. But are they necessarily on the university's radar? Not quite. Are we getting to that point? Yes. There's been efforts from new staff in these roles. If you were to look at EOP and SSS today versus what it looked like three years ago, it's completely different, whole new staff, whole new turnover, younger professionals so moving the needle and moving towards helping these students be more successful, Cal Poly I would say in that realm we are moving there, are there still barriers and pitfalls, yes. Do Cal Poly know exactly where those lie, I don't know. I think that is the biggest issue with Cal Poly, we have a lot of diagnoses of problems but we don't have a lot of remedies and solutions for them and we are missing some people in some key critical positions, that can push Cal Poly where Cal Poly says they want to go."

MN: "I have a follow up question, it doesn't have to specifically for Cal Poly, but for a university to be successful, with these students what are those key critical positions?"

JA: "If you look at some of the large schools, like Berkeley, they have dedicated centers and multiple staff members to work with these students and affect change. If you look at my department, SSS alone, when I'm fully staffed it is just me and a coordinator. Well 258 students, how can we be truly effective when two people are trying to split 258 first time first generation low-income students, it's difficult. So we focus mainly on first year students and first year transfers, our juniors and seniors, they should be okay, they'd been here. It's the same thing if you look at EOP, who has 600-700 students or something like that, they have three advisors. Just not enough bodies, and that's just lower level positions like advisors and coordinators right, but when it comes to directors or locations. Hillcrest is not even big enough to fit all our programs, we're scattered around campus because the university infrastructure isn't there to truly support

this population and that's with many other populations, it's not just with first-generation low-income, for transfer students that come here there is not a one stop transfer center, so transfers feel lost on campus as well because where do I go as a transfer. So there is key critical positions that need to be filled and when I say that I mean from a coordinator all the way to a director, if you truly want to move the needle, you need multiple hands and multiple help because granted the population that are eligible, roughly thousands of students a year, I'd say like roughly 700 out of a group of 5,000 that come every year qualify as first generation or low income. If you combine first generation and low-income that makes it even more. So they are truly the invisible student population because the majority is so massive they get forgotten. It's hard."

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Jonatan Diaz

The following interview was conducted to gain knowledge on Cal Poly's Educational Opportunity Program and obtain a perspective of a counselor who serves socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Interviewer: Melissa Nuñez

Respondent: Educational Opportunity Program Counselor (Jonatan Diaz)

Date of Interview: February 10, 2017

Interview Transcription

Melissa Nuñez: "What are the kinds of students that you advise?"

Jonatan Diaz: "The population that I work with specifically is part of the EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) here at Cal Poly. In order for students to be part of EOP they have to be first generation college students and come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and historically low-income backgrounds. So, there is a specific income criteria that students have to meet in order to be eligible for EOP, but I think that the population that we serve fits into, not just low-income, it's not just first gen, it's all of them together."

MN: "What are the backgrounds of these students like?"

JD: "Many of the students, because of the historically low-income criteria that we look at, have been in poverty for much time of their lives and specific cases for them vary from student to student but they have a lot of similarities. So, we'll get a lot of students that come from single parent homes or homes where there are a lot of challenges. Not only are they coming here, from their own low-income background, but some of them might even have to support their families back home. They're stressed and worried about how to help out their families, they will use some of their financial aid to help out their families back home or their siblings. Some of the parents might have a disability or not able to work, so their incomes are very low and it's a lot of pressure that falls on our EOP students. Again it's not for everyone, but for many of them they do have this additional challenge of supporting their families back home."

MN: "How does EOP assist or interact with prospective students?"

JD: “As part of our EOP program, we have a lot of interventions for students, that help out. First and foremost, we want to help with the access for students coming into college. So for students who are coming in and applying to Cal Poly, we as EOP counselors are there to support them with general questions that they might have regarding what happens in that transition from high school to college life. As part of that, we include our program which is called Summer Institute for our incoming freshman students, so as part of our Summer Institute program we admit sixty to ninety students and we provide them with the opportunity to take baccalaureate courses that they can credit for and it helps them prepare for what life would be like during fall quarter in a more intimate setting. Students get to connect with each other academically and get ready for the academic year. During the student's' first quarter at Cal Poly, whether they're freshmen or transfer students, we ask all of our EOP students to participate in what is first year seminar and during this we cover topics that are very relevant to our EOP population, so we will discuss things like financial aid, self advocacy, some helpful things like time management and connections with their colleges and a little bit more. This is during that first term, so afterwards and during their time at Cal Poly we ask students to meet with their EOP counselor once or twice a year so they can continue to get support and help. Then students always have the ability to meet with their EOP counselor to get regular support, we also provide tutoring and at different times during the academic year we will provide specific workshops that are relevant to our EOP population, whether it is applying for financial aid or applying for classes in the summer or career readiness types of workshops.”

MN: “From a professional perspective what differences are there with the resources that Cal Poly offers to this demographic, compared with other schools?”

JD: “A lot of it varies by campus, so for example, Summer Insitute at other campuses is designed to help students in more of the remedial courses, or math and English. Here at Cal Poly, a lot of our students don't have the remedial need, so because of that we include a psychology class that fulfills the D4 requirement at Cal Poly. Other Summer Institute programs might be three or four days, whereas ours is a three and a half weeks long, I think it's one of the longer programs compared to other CSU campuses. In terms of other interventions, other campuses might provide an EOP peer mentor program, which would be great to have here at Cal Poly, which has been done in the past. Other campuses might provide a summer bridge program for transfer students. For the most part, the model is going to be the same where there are EOP counselors meeting with students and providing that extra support for the students.”

MN: “What do these students, socioeconomically disadvantaged ones, need assistance in to succeed at Cal Poly?”

JD: “I think there is a lot that can be done, the Summer Institute program has been beneficial for EOP students because they get an opportunity to connect with each other and to have those bonds when they come here during fall quarter. I think a lot of time what happens, specifically for the EOP population, they tend to not connect as well with the general population. There’s a recent article that showed statistics on the population at Cal Poly, it showed that at Cal Poly three percent of the student population come from low-income backgrounds and 60 percent, I believe don’t quote me on that, of the population comes from high income backgrounds. So the disparity thing makes it very hard for students in that three percent of low-income backgrounds because of the little things, connecting with roommates and friends on campus. Other students will be able to have their parents financing things that they need, our population of students might struggle paying for basic classroom needs. There’s a student that I met with just yesterday that is struggling with a class because the class requires online access to an online program that costs \$80 and this particular student did not have \$80 to pay for that, so he’s gone on this half of the quarter without having access to this and because of it he’s failed all the assignments that have been on this online program. We talked and got him some resources to help him cover that fee but now he’s gone through half the quarter without having access to that. Im think about another student, more on the emotional side, where this student came into my office asking if she could leave luggage over the summer break with us as storage. She didn’t have any place to store it on campus, so we talked about why she was hoping for that and she talked about how her mom does not know English, the finances are very tight back home and for her mom to come and pick her up is not possible. This particular student has to take the train, but in order to take the train she can’t take all this luggage with her and she talked about how it felt leaving campus and having roommates, not by any fault of their own, that have their parents come and pick them up after the school year was over and having their parents come and help them out. She talked about how it felt to have that feeling of her mom possibly never being able to come visit her at Cal Poly. I think there’s a lot of emotional challenges in that way as well. I think also in general, the connection, students can have trouble connecting with the general population and I think that can make it tougher.”

MN: “What type of struggles are unique for students in a city like San Luis Obispo?”

JD: “I think part of it can be an income challenge with the local community, with things being a little bit more expensive in this area than in other places, even the grocery store. The comfortability, because other students come from high income backgrounds at Cal Poly, there could be a challenge with little things as in, a group of my friends are going to out to eat, whereas an EOP student might not be able to afford that on a regular basis, so there might be that challenge for connection. Some students might have issues with housing cost in the area and that tends to be a big challenge, whether that’s living on campus or even off campus where costs are very high for students.”

MN: “What factors make it a big reason for students from that demographic not to come to Cal Poly?”

JD: “I think another factor could be the demographic here, whereas the majority of the population is white. We’ve seen where some students come from very ethnically diverse backgrounds and they might not feel as comfortable coming to a place that is totally different from their used to back home. I think there’s cultural things like this where I think as applicants are applying to Cal Poly they might see that. I think cost is also a challenge, the difference in financial aid that students receive from a CSU versus a UC can be a lot different and I think that could be a huge driving factor. Also, apart from Cal Poly being such a prestigious university is that it is competing against such universities like UC Davis, Berkeley, UCLA and because it is competing against them and the UC system has the ability to offer more financial aid resources could be a challenge for students choosing Cal Poly.”

MN: “What successes have you seen within the university to help or draw in this demographic and what improvements have been made or being made?”

JD: “In terms of successes, there’s a great partners ambassadors program that is being implemented. EOP offers an additional grant for students, SSS offers grants for students offset costs for students. The university starting the Cal Poly scholars program which also offers additional grants to students. All these programs provide additional resources and support for our students. The university has been particularly mindful about the undocumented students on campus, so they are currently working on a dream center for undocumented students, a place where they can get additional support and legal counsel, perhaps come in and find out about scholarships and financing options, there’s a lot of support that way. In general, the campus climate has also been changing, where faculty and staff have begun to get a lot of buy in for supporting underrepresented students on campus, I think there has been a climate of change for that, there have been partnerships formed with counseling services and student academic services, for example, where a class was created to serve first generation college students who are also students of color and so this serves for students being able to get that counseling from a licensed counselor. I think there’s a lot that way. In terms of ideas of what can be improved, I think part of it, oh and another thing is Polycultural weekend, I know that helps draw in students to Cal Poly. But I think there could be a lot more outreach done that way and the financial support is the biggest part, there’s a focus for students to live on campus and studies have found living on campus helps students to retain, grow and perform better academically but part of the challenge is that living on campus can be expensive, so if the university could provide financial options to be able to afford campus housing, it would go a long way to help them.”

MN: “How are the students that come here, able to come here? What’s the difference between the students getting accepted from this demographic and not getting accepted?”

JD: “I don’t know exactly from a high school to college perspective, but one thing that I have seen is that some of the high schools that provide extra assistance through whether it would be through TRIO programs like Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search are very beneficial and also just caring counselors, staff or faculty members at the high school level that can coach students, let them know about the benefits of Cal Poly and let them know of resources that are available, could be through the financial aid guidance. I think there’s a fear of loans, taking out loans and coming to college. I think that coaching and knowing that loans don’t have to be the worse thing in the world, that it is a possibility to attend Cal Poly with loans and not taking out the maximum, being smart about it, I think there could be a lot of coaching that way. But I think that’s what makes a difference, that I’ve seen at least, is the support from high schools and professionals at the high school, that go through the extra mile to prepare them for life at Cal Poly or college life in general.”

MN: “Is there anything that came up in your mind or any comments that you may not have addressed with these questions?”

JD: “I think a lot of the challenge is multifaceted, I don’t think that there’s one thing that points to it. I think meeting with students, I think that one thing to keep in mind is, I know in college we always joked about how teachers would sometimes feel like their class is the only class and all the student had to do was to eat, sleep, study for my class and that’s it, but I think the challenge is that there’s so much more to it and I think there’s so much more to a college student by itself, when you’re trying in having to worry about their family back home, stresses back home that are going on and the guilt of being the first of their family to leave home and then coming to campus and the guilt of not being around for their family. The challenge of not having coaching from parents that have gone through the college system themselves, the challenge of figuring things out on their own, the challenge of trying to make ends meet while they’re here, sometimes having to balance a part-time or full-time job while attending school. The challenge of not connecting with the general population and feeling alone, sometimes marginalized, roommate issues, heard of stories of our students not getting along with roommates or roommates marginalizing and making them feel like they don’t belong. Again, it doesn’t happen with everyone but it can happen, so all these things adding together makes it tougher for our population of students and it might just not be one thing, there’s so much going on.”

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Amy Shields

The following interview was conducted to obtain knowledge on the experience and issues of socioeconomically students in the surrounding community of San Luis Obispo.

Interviewer: Melissa Nuñez

Respondent: Director of Elementary Learning and Achievement at SLCUSD (Amy Shields)

Date of Interview: March 1, 2017

Interview Transcription

Melissa Nuñez: “What are the district’s goals for their population of low-income students?”

Amy Shields: “The socioeconomically disadvantaged students are a real target focus as part of our district plan and each of our school plans. We first of all identify needs, we establish hunches about what might be going on and we develop goals to close the achievement gap. I think we’ve come little ways from there in that for some students at closing the achievement gap may or may not be a realistic goal and where we’re evolving to is looking at relative progress, what we don’t want to do is seeing kids staying stagnant, we want to see kids moving towards their dreams, learning to read, learning to write, learning skills that is actually going to get them not just reading to get into college but get ready to do well in college and that’s a real challenge for our students that come from low-income backgrounds.”

MN: “Going off that it is a real challenge for them, how do these students struggle in the classroom, in a general view and specifically in San Luis Obispo? You don’t think low-income when you think San Luis Obispo.”

AS: “You really don’t think low income when you think san luis obispo and yet you would be very surprised to know that over 30% of our students who attend our schools fall in the low income category. So we do have students with needs based on poverty in every single one of our schools. The needs I see really come from an elementary perspective, we see children who come to school hungry, we see children who come to school from homes or living situations that wouldn't be acceptable to you or me. We have kids that are homeless in our district, we have kids who don't have their basic needs being met in the way of sleep, food, comfort, stability, domestic violence is there and we know that that is part of the factor, that’s not just an sed factor, so when kids come to school, especially students living in poverty we will sometimes see they are not ready to learn, they are not prepared to learn, they have come to school with crisis, their issues

and we have to figure out a way to support that so that we can support them to learn and we do a lot of different approaches, we have counselors at our schools, we have a lot of intervention programs, a lot of training for our teachers in differentiating and supporting student needs but it's still that finding that little sweet spot for one student might not be that exact thing that the student sitting next to them might need and so it is a non ending challenge to figure out how to support the kids once they're in school and we haven't even talked about how to engage the families.”

MN: “How are knowing and seeing these struggles taken into consideration when the school creates plans?”

AS: “Let me start with the district and school plans, part of the transition from the old no child left behind to the new every student succeeds act which is the federal and now the california local control funding formula is that school districts receive money to make local decisions about providing services, support and resources for what are called unduplicated target area students and in that group, our largest group is our students coming from poverty and so we are first of all required to show the state and show our stakeholders that we are spending a certain portion of our dollars to meet the needs of these students, our socioeconomically disadvantaged students, our English learners and our foster and homeless youth. So it really sets the goal right there for you before we even start, so what we do is what we're doing now, we develop goals talking to our stakeholders, meeting with our various groups. I serve as the facilitator for our delac group which is our English learner advisory committee as well as our detach which is our district title one advisory committee, both of these are made up of parents and community members that represent those lpac area needs. The DTAC representing families living in poverty, which is why we receive title one dollars, the DELAC representing our English learners and we speak with them and meet with them and ask them what can we do to better support your family, support your child, your student and I will tell you the reasons san luis coastal still has transportation to and from school, as well as summer school, as well as a number of after school programs is because our delac, our English learner advisory committee has held very strong that we need these extra support for our children to succeed.”

MN: “Throughout your professional experience what have you seen how do districts differ on how they are able to support these students, based on budget differences or resources allocated to them?”

AS: “You're talking to somebody that represent san luis coastal at a very interesting time for us because last summer the announcement of the diablo nuclear power plant beginning to close over the next 3-4 years, we're now looking at budget cuts of \$2 million each year and we're adding an additional 2 million for the next 3-4 years, so we are having to reevaluate what services we can provide but at the same time, the lcap requirements, we're at a great situation that we must show

we're providing supports and services for our unduplicated student groups which includes our students of economically disadvantaged, our EL our foster youth and homeless. It's an interesting place to be in, this district is also one that has a long history because of receiving this additional funding of lots of additional programs, a lot of supports at school, lots of field trips and music programs, special educators, we've got a lot of services to our students and we've got a high academic achievement level, with that said, we still have the gaps for our specific targeted groups. Being in a situation where we have been fortunate and we have an abundance of resources, we have been able to facilitate a lot of interventions, before and after school programs, breakfast and lunch served at every school site, a lot of supports, we have two community resource centers, one out on the coast and one here in town. We kind of facilitate the bringing in of lots of social services to be local and available and support our families in need. We have a full time homeless resource liaison to support families needing help with transportation, job acquisition just support to getting out into the world of this community, districts around us have not been so fortunate to be able to do those kinds of services and now that we are facing the beginning of knowing that we are going to have less funds, we are going to reevaluate and think about what are the most important things we want to make sure we keep in place as part of our district and school plans and this is the place where our parent groups become really critical to help us prioritize what do they need the most, what are the supports that we need to keep in place, because different supports are gonna be available, different resources are available but where do you get the most bang for your buck if you're helping a particular family."

MN: "What have been success of the district's plans and goals with socioeconomically disadvantaged student?"

AS: "7 years ago we hired a new superintendent and he spent his first year going out to sites, walking in every classroom, talking to teachers, talking to principals, meeting community members, going to stakeholder meetings, spending a lot of time listening to parents, listening to its school board, and the end of the year he developed a set of 10 initiatives which is a lot of initiatives. It was really about his vision that we were a pretty good, strong school district but that we had a blind spot for most of our underserved students, including our sed students and so in that plan that's now in its 5th year I think the things that i'm most proud of or seen happen is that we now have four preschools that are completely funded by the district that have income eligibility rules, meaning we are supporting students and their families that otherwise would not be able to afford preschool and it's not necessarily kids that would qualify for head start, its families above that poverty line that I would refer to as the working poor that just can't pull off that extra cost of preschool but whose kids if especially their English learners benefit from that extra year. First year of literacy, learning how to play in the sandbox with others, that has been very successful and something we're very proud of. I think our community resources are another thing that we're proud of, where we've brought the resources made them very available, done a

lot of outreach to our families, they are very much a part of our school district vs something that is separate, our families know about it, they receive lots of information there are open houses, a lot of services that enter right into the school sites, that we didn't have in place before so it's like we've got it facilitated and organized in a way that is much more parent friendly. I think based on looking at academic data, we've added after school targeted interventions, we've kept our summer school programs, I think we're the only one left in the county where we don't service anybody, we service English learners and other students. Generally in our sed group that are below academic standard, who need that extra time to either stay current or to get caught up in some of their academic skills and we do that all the way through high school. Those are things that you don't see anymore in districts and I'm very proud of, we also provide interventions during the school day with highly trained teachers, things such as that are called level literacy intervention, early reading intervention, read 180 that is more of a secondary reading intervention, we have online interventions, mind you this is available for any student who needs them but we find that in our data we are generally targeting our students who are not getting tutors outside of our school day, who are not accessing those after school enrichment programs that are available for pay for some of our students. So we are really trying to find what they need and make those programs available. The other thing that we have is counseling services as well as outside counseling services that come on to our campuses at every school site because if students are struggling with issues at home, and emotional issues, we can't expect them to learn, especially with the rigorous curriculum that were asking them to be part of so all of those things.”

MN: “What have been failures, things that haven't worked out, that didn't fall through?”

AS: “Well that's a great question and I'm going to tell you something that was a success and the failure part. Our preschool program, we are now in our fourth year of our preschool program and in looking at our longitudinal data, we see and we measure how our sed students are doing who have had this which we would call a treatment versus those who haven't and we also look at our English learners how this has impacted their lives versus those who didn't have a preschool experience and what we find is in the short term, at least in this district, we make pretty good impact and our kids who have had the preschool are doing better than their counterparts coming from sed homes and/or English learner homes, the long term effects I think our first group now is in third grade so second year second grade, what we found is the benefits had stay in the reading ability of our English learners, not as much for our sed families. Were puzzling right now as to why that is, what that is and it comes down to by giving a child an earlier experience to school that in fact our classes involve a lot of parent education and it's a required component of the program you can jump start and you can get kids going, if language is the issue you've just added an extra year of that child learning English language so you should see long term impacts if economics are the issues, then the instability that goes with economic issues after that

preschool year, as wonderful and fabulous as it may have been and getting the parents connected with the school system doesn't necessarily last. These are hot of the press results that I haven't even shared with my supervisor and printed yet that are just frustrating because to make it work we should probably target this group and then keep them going in a specific where we know we are going to give them a certain treatment each year where it would ensure their growth. We think we're doing things but it is not as right as what the kids get in that preschool year, that's a frustration for me. The other frustration is that with our budget situation we know we are going to have some hard choices ahead of us and even though by law we are required to be providing programs for our sed, our English learners, foster youth and homeless with less dollars it's going to shrink, something has to give in some way, shape or form, in fact the cost of teacher retirement and health benefits in the next seven years they tell me are going to sky rocket, that has to come from somewhere and those are costs we cannot control and we can control the cost of the services that we provide to our students, which is an unfortunate thing for me to be saying. So my concern is that we are going to see it potentially in the size of our classrooms and in that extra support we are able to give our students."

MN: "What extraneous problems or circumstances arise that the district might not be able to control or assist with, that affect the achievement of the students?"

AS: "In the budget and in the current budget woes looking out at the next three to five years, we know we're gonna be making some major reductions. I think also, something that we haven't talked much about that I think is a critical piece and I think we can do a better job of it and I think we could put more focus on it is the issue of family engagement and if you were to come to one of our school events you would probably think that you don't have an issue with family engagement, look you're having a math night and you have hundreds of people show up and that's quite true, or you're having a steam night or back to school, or open house, the rooms are always filled, even in the high school have a packed house for their events but are we reaching the right families, or are we reaching those families that show up for everything, the PTA leaders, etc, it's making sure we reach out and engage with our families who we really need to have part of the system if we're gonna make that difference for their child. That middle, upper class family with the involved parent, that helps that child at school every night because it's a stay at home mom or dad, we're not too worried about that. But if we really want to support the kids coming from a different background, home lives, situations, we need to work harder to make sure we are engaged, engaging those families."

MN: "Can you go a little bit more into how is it that these students aren't able to have the same parent participation than the other students?"

AS: “I would say that for the most part to no fault of their own, if you have a family living in poverty and both mom and dad need to work to make ends meet and it might not be your white collared day jobs, it might be night jobs, I’ve got parents who do all kinds of things to put food on the table and put a roof over their head over their children and for them, quite often there’s a trust and hope in the school that they are going to do the educate their child part and they see it as sometimes, and I don’t want to stereotype anybody, or any group but there is a respect for the school and the work that the school does, and I sometimes think that there must be a little less respect for the school and more of an accountability of the school to work with the parents and bring them in and figure out what’s gonna be worth their time to come to, so they can be engaged in their child’s education and with that said, we do many activities to engage parents and to involve parents in, you won’t find a back to school night that isn’t translated where there isn’t messaging going out to invite parents where we can do more, we can definitely do more. For me, when I think back when we would have events, as a principal, I would walk through and see what parents was there and who was absent, you know it was hard for the teachers not to be sad or almost have bad feelings about that parent or child for not showing up or not being there. I think we work hard to flip that attitude of, oh my goodness that family must be so busy keeping their head above water, what can we do to now follow up, because they weren’t able to be here. It’s like, how do we reach 100% if a family wasn’t able to show up for open house, how do we bring open house to them, how do we get the teacher to go visit and share the great things that that child is doing. I think in one way, in one of our schools I’ve seen them do this better than others, they’ve used video calls, skyping, facetime and twitter to bring the school day to our parents. Not surprisingly, a lot of families living in poverty still have cell phones, they still get messages and we are able to connect and share those moments of glory of their child with them. Even if they are at their job and can not leave, through our more modern technology and that is worth something.”

MN: “What affect does this have on the students if their parents aren't able to participate in these kinds of events, if their parents can't be there for them?”

AS: “I’m thinking in the last few years as we have transitioned in math from the way we used to teach math, to the way kids used to learn math, to a more common core approach and if you’re a parent that missed out on all those parent nights, school nights and parent teacher conferences where teachers were able to explain what the child was struggling with or what their strengths were and how they might be able to help them at home. The child’s gonna miss out, so I think there’s the possibility if you’re not involved in staying with the school as a parent, your child may miss out on opportunities to succeed that were offered but not insisted by the school.”

MN: “How have you seen the struggle of these kind of students, be different from students of different generations, previous years?”

AS: “I think technology has helped and hindered our students living in poverty and helped on the one case, if you have some technology in the home and there’s communication that’s immediate, we can message families at a moment’s notice, we can get to parents and they to us very fairly quickly now through text, voicemail and all of that. But with that said if the google classroom, something that is very common in our elementary schools, using the google platform in our middle school and our high schools, there’s an expectation that students will be able to access their google classroom site at their home and in a quiet calm place where they can do their homework and if the access at home is on mom or dad’s cellphone, that’s not gonna work. So there becomes a real issue of equity, and I think our district and many districts are struggling with what that should look like and I’ve heard of mobile hubs or hot spots where you offer access at hours of the evening in locations that you know will be of high need. We’ve had some of our libraries with their tech areas open at night time, I think we can do better than that and open them up on the weekends and have a time at night time when parents can come in and use the computers. I think that because our numbers are right above noticeable, we do somethings, I think if we had higher percentages of students living in poverty it would be the norm to do more, which makes San Luis Obispo, kind of an interesting place because it’s kind of very a liberal place, overall passionate community but yet sometimes I think some of these students in need are still somewhat invisible to the community at large.”

MN: “On the long term view, being proactive in the elementary setting, starting them off, how have you seen or think these actions helps them with middle school and high school?”

AS: “If you talk academics first, if you don’t get that gap in learning and achievement closed by third grade, research tells us that that chance of ever closing it becomes very limited and each year becomes harder. I would say there is a piece of that, that matches potentially uninvolved families that gets them connected early and gets them to understand. It might be different from their schooling experience, how being an active member of the school community can help their child. I mean, different parents don’t love their kids differently, whether you’re poor or you’re rich or you’re middle class, we assume that everybody loves their child and wants the very best for them, so if a family living in poverty can learn and become engaged earlier in the school system of what it takes to have your child be successful, I think success breeds success and if they see that helps, I think the more you get that partnership going between parents and teachers and principal, the better chances for that child to be the first-generation college student.”

MN: “There’s the gap, I think with this district and other districts working on it, you see it successful with some students but you see students who don’t have the same outcome. Are there any common barriers just because of their situation when it comes to being college ready?”

AS: “When I think about our families coming from socially disadvantaged homes, especially if the children we are talking about have not been to college, the parents do not necessarily know or understand that really extensive road that you have to navigate to get to college. Not even to be ready for college but the application process, which classes to take in high school, which classes to take, when to take them. I tell you as a middle class parent that navigating that, the first time was very complicated in this community and I feel like I’m very well educated. I can only imagine for a family who didn’t have a parent who have been to college, who didn’t understand all the things that went with it. Heaven forbid that you spoke a different language and came to a college night and it wasn’t translated, that’s a place where our high schools, counselors, our avid teachers, really have to be connected with the students, students first at this point and the families to support and get kids really navigated to the right process so they can get into college and so they can get into college ready to be successful. Then we hear about the dropout rate, it’s more than just getting in, it's getting in and the setup success of knowing what it looks like to be a college student and what are the skills you have to have, what are the self-reliance you have to have, what are the perseverance skills you have to have, a whole another set of skills that we should have in high school.”

MN: “Have you seen in the district, how the struggles have been tackled to help those students?”

AS: “Our AVID program is absolutely about dealing with the struggles for first-time, potential college students and navigating the system, having students understand why college should be a goal. For starters, then once it become a goal, looking at what are the roads to get there. With our high school kids, we gotta make sure that our students either have that person that is helping them navigate or that we assign one of us to be that person, to help us navigate through that system.”

MN: “Any last anecdotes or comments?”

AS: “I was lucky enough to teach a Cal Poly seminar class about a year and a half ago, eight students, all female and all but one of them fit the stereotypical polly dolly, middle class Cal Poly student. The one student who didn’t was an advocate for herself, she kind of became the advocate for herself when there was anything that needed to be clarified, she was very strong in her convictions, she had an amazing belief system, there was no question for me that it was because of her personality, her will, her perseverance. She took on the toughest issue for her paper and fought both sides, did this all great thinking. It was who she was, it was her core and she did it. She was the exception to the rule.”

Appendix D

Interview Transcripts: Dr. Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp

The following interview was conducted to obtain knowledge on the experience and issues of socioeconomically students in the surrounding community of San Luis Obispo.

Interviewer: Melissa Nuñez

Respondent: AVID/English High School Teacher (Dr. Rita Mendoza Delkeskamp)

Date of Interview: March 3, 2017

Interview Transcription

Melissa Nuñez: “What has been your professional experience, specifically with socioeconomically disadvantaged students?”

Rita Mendoza-Delkeskamp: “I think that through my work of teacher of English learners and working with their parents too, when you first immigrate to a country it’s a lot tougher, even if you have a higher education in the other country, in doesn’t transfer over from other countries. There are also other students, you don’t have to be an immigrant to be as a person of lower economic status, it can just be things that happen in your life. I have one of my students that is getting ready to college but her life changed when her parents divorced, their house went into foreclosure and they ended up living in women shelters.”

MN: “How are the students like in the classroom setting, different from others?”

RMD: “They may not have access to the same technology as everybody else, you can’t say take out your phones using your smartphones because they might not have them. They might have phones but the phones have limited texting or they don’t have wifi, gotta make sure they can ease up their minutes. Even as simple as school materials. Most people could go to the 99 cent store, which I do. For some students it is not a priority because the priority in their house might be different, maybe paying the rent, maybe paying the bills and may not be buying materials for school.”

MN: “How do you provide your students resources and help, what do you do?”

RMD: “At the beginning of every term, I explain to the students what they need for my class and I say you’re gonna need a three ring binder, you’re gonna need these specific dividers, you’re gonna need paper, two pens and two pencils. Because I want you to be successful and if you

don't have that with you, I'm gonna give that to you right now and sometimes some students show up on the first day without anything because they think it's gonna be a free day. So, they show up without anything and then they say, oh I'll bring mine tomorrow but I always insist and I say sorry, everybody has just got to leave my classroom with all of these materials because when you go to the next class I want you to be prepared. If you decide that you don't want my materials, bring them back tomorrow and show me that you have your own. Another thing that I do in terms of technology, if I'm going to assign students to type something up in the computer and share it with me through Google Docs, to create a presentation about a certain topic that they research, I always make sure that I schedule a day or two, depending of the project in a computer lab so that everybody can get started together because otherwise if you don't have internet at home or a computer, it's gonna take you much longer to get that project done trying to stay after school to use the computers at school or trying to use them at lunch or before school. Then someone who can sit at home and just start typing and type until midnight if they want."

MN: "How does the high school provide tools for these students?"

RMD: "Our library didn't use to be open until 5:00, that was a change that our principal made and I know that as we go through our restructuring of our school, we're modernizing different buildings, he wants us to be able to be open even longer. So longer until the evening maybe 7:00 because we know that some students need the internet and need the computers, that's one way. In terms of materials, I know other departments provide materials for example, when the math department when they require students to have graphing paper and a notebook with graphing paper, they let the students know that if someone doesn't have that, they will give it to them. I know in the science department they have students create interactive notebooks and so if somebody doesn't have the particular kind of notebook they provide them and sometimes those departments give me some, since I'm the one who works with many of the recent immigrants. Then they give them to me so that I could hand them out as necessary."

MN: "How can or do extraneous problems, situations affect their educational achievement experience and what are they?"

RMD: "The first thing that comes to mind is some of the fear that has been created with President Trump's executive orders on immigration. So, the students don't say a lot, in terms of that, at least not to me. Unless you create some kind of situation to talk about it, they don't talk about it. I think there is some concern, for example, one of my students recently travelled outside of the country because her mom was getting married and she was coming back and we were all looking at her, like are you sure you want to go, what if things get bad on the way back. So there's a little bit of concern about the immigration executive orders. What else, simple things, trying to stay after school and needing money to take the city bus home because we don't have

school busses running the whole time. I know just the other day when the students said, do you think you could give me another one of those bus passes and I obtained bus passes from one of the offices, the counseling office one of the employees there hands some and so she gave me some and I gave them to the students who stay after class. But that's something else they worry about, am I gonna have money so that I can take the city bus home."

MN: "Other than the struggle of the lack in family income, how or where else do these students lack compared to their peers?"

RMD: "Their big challenge is to become acculturated to begin to adopt some of the behaviors and customs of this country. Some of their behaviors must seem a little bit foreign to them, and so much of it is difficult at the very beginning because when they don't have the language, they don't understand everything going on around them. All they can do is watch and observe and try to copy what people are doing, so that's just a big disadvantage when you don't speak a language. Partly to, their parents aren't sure of what to do sometimes when the students are having difficulties or when their behaviors begin to change, because our culture here is much more about the individual and the ability of the individual to determine their own path. Yet some of our cultures are very family based and so I think sometimes the students, see the freedoms of being an individual and yet feel constrained by behaving a certain way, being a part of the family means that what they do reflects on all of them. So, those are some difference that other students may not need to worry about. When we have a dance, some students only have to decide whether they're going to dance or not, but when you don't have money you start quickly doing the math, okay the ticket costs this much money, if I want to look nice, am I gonna need to buy something or borrow something from somebody, especially when you get into senior year and it's about prom or something like that. Some students may just not go and there's no way they can compete with the people that show up in a limousine. It doesn't mean that they can't attend because our school has a special fund to help students, I know that just by talking to their counselors, if they really wanted to attend and it were a financial issues, we would figure out a way to help them, just like we do for graduation, no one has to worry that they will have a gown to graduate in, we take care of that."

MN: "Based on your experience here and outside of SLO, how are students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds different between areas?"

RMD: "When I worked in Los Angeles at a middle school, it was probably 95 percent Latino and you could see the difference between recent and not so recent immigrants but socioeconomically there wasn't very much of a difference. When I worked in Santa Maria and I worked at Pioneer Valley high school, it was a more diverse group. I didn't work as a teacher there, so I wasn't as aware there if there were differences. I think that what stood out to me was that we had some

gang issues, even at a brand nice new school, there were people who belonged to gangs and they were just part of the diverse group that added another element and here we've got maybe 20 percent Latino students. So much less, though there is still diversity in our school, it is not much, we are probably about 70 percent Euro-American. Can you see the differences any more than anywhere else, I don't think so. Everywhere you go, there's students here and there's students there. Some of them have more money than others do. Our school is not some kind of elite school, where everybody has got money, that's not our school. Because there are some places, for example you have, the children of the landowners and the children of the people working the land, then you would see a greater disparity, but here, even though the ethnic breakdown might be different from Los Angeles or Santa Maria, you still have some people who are lower economic status and some who are in the middle and some who are higher."

MN: "Do students here struggle in different ways than students in a less affluent city?"

RMD: "The cost of living is higher here, and the students recognize it. So some of them are able to stay here and live here and some are not. Some are able to stay here and they live in maybe some of our public housing and those who are able to get into public housing, that really helps them a lot. It's a good thing that we have here, unless you know where public housing is, I don't think it stands out likes projects. They tend to fit in the different neighborhoods. In terms of food, our students are the first to figure out where to go and their families know where to go shop. We have families who drive down to Santa Maria because the prices are better in Santa Maria. They know the different stores where they can go buy food for less money. But there are some families who try to move here, realize they can't afford it and move somewhere else."

MN: "What is the demographics of a low-income student and what are misconceptions about that?"

RMD: "We're not allowed to ask if somebody qualifies for free or reduced lunch, and if you wanted to, you could stand in the cafeteria and see who might be. But for example, the student who...was homeless for a while, she's not an immigrant. There are other students who have come up to me and are of different ethnicities, have asked me for a binder, etc. Even though most of the students that I know, because I work with them, are kids of immigrants and immigrant kids who may be of lower economic status but then there are other students too who their families for whatever reason do not have those resources. I know another student, whose family background was very difficult, in fact, she doesn't even live with her parents, she lives with her sister and I know that she works because they don't have a lot of money either. They all look different. Most people think, in our area, that they are students, who are of Latino or hispanic ethnic origins, and they wouldn't think that the Euro-American looking girl in my second period would need help, resources."

MN: “What are their strengths and weaknesses for college readiness?”

RMD: “For the students who are not quite ready for college, and I see this as an English teacher, they haven’t read enough. They’re behind in reading books. However, they have ideas because when we have discussions, they provide a perspective that is different from others and they can ask questions that other people haven’t asked before. I see that as a strength. A difficulty for them and their parents is that they may not know the system and that’s for all students of lower socioeconomic status who don’t have parents who graduated from college. They don’t know the processes or the system for getting there. That’s why we have a program like AVID, to help students. Some of them that are lower-income status have a lot of drive and motivation, more than other students. I see that as a strength. Sometimes when life is difficult, you are more motivated to help yourself and help your family.”

MN: “What has your experience been like an AVID teacher?”

RMD: “In my AVID class I have children who are immigrants, I have students who are immigrants, that’s the majority of the students because the program is for students who don’t have a parent who has graduated from a university. It’s one of the best classes to teach. AVID, it’s wonderful because you have all these students who want to go to college, and they just need to understand, one the language of college applications, the process, the importance of reading your email, do what they say to do, meet your deadlines, organize yourself. These are all skills that they might not have picked up from their parents and we provide for them so they will be successful not only here at school but outside of school. What is good about that is that they push themselves and we push them to take challenging courses. To watch them help each other, high five each other, clap for each other as college acceptances come in. They always described it as an AVID family.”

MN: “Follow up question, how are students that are not in AVID and of this demographic, be still college ready?”

RMD: “We’re lucky in this community that we have Cal Poly and Cuesta College near us and the counselors that we have because they go around every single grade level and they talk to them using this program that we have to show them how to take a career interest survey, how to look for scholarships, how to prepare a resume, all of the students are shown the Cuesta College application. We’re lucky to have these colleges because they have conferences or they have days that help us connect with students. My students, tell their friends to go and after, I will have students come into my class, that I may not know, come into my room and say, hey can you help

me with. Word spreads about where you can get help. Cal Poly with their MECHA Youth Conference is another opportunity for our students to also learn about college.”

MN: Great, that’s all my questions. Thank you.