

**February 2024**

# **Greenville Technical College Title III**

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## **YEAR 3 Evaluation Report**



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**PREPARED BY**

Pacific Research and Evaluation, LLC

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# Executive summary

The Department of Education (ED) awarded Greenville Technical College (GTC) a Title III grant in fall 2020 to implement the Student Transformation Center (STC) Project. The grant is being utilized to administer a culture of care professional development for faculty and staff, implement the 360 Institute cohort for first time in college students, and address basic needs insecurities of students. Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) is collaborating with GTC to evaluate this Title III grant project. During Year 3, this evaluation included interviews with program leadership, two student focus groups, a faculty/staff survey, a student survey, and an analysis of student outcome data. Key findings are presented below and organized by key grant activities.

**Culture of Care:** Almost half of faculty/staff survey respondents (44.5%, n = 98) completed one or more professional development training. As a result of professional development, faculty and staff reported an increased ability to support students and identify issues that cause students to stop out/drop out of college. According to faculty, the top three reasons for students dropping out/stopping out of college are 1) childcare issues, 2) working too many hours, and 3) housing insecurity. Faculty/staff strongly agree that employees at GTC are educated on potential barriers facing students, share an understanding of the importance of addressing student needs beyond academic interventions, and the college provides effective services to help students with basic needs insecurities.

**Basic Needs/STAR Center:** Students, including both Cohort 3 360 Institute and general freshman, reported most commonly accessing the STAR Center for books or other related college materials, food, and transportation support. 360 Institute students and general freshman agreed or strongly agreed that they received the support they needed from the STAR Center. The STAR Center has been moved to a more central location on campus to increase awareness, access, and usage of services. Additionally, the STAR Center plans to improve its caring corner food pantry to provide students in need with a more dignified “shopping” experience and hopes to build and leverage their relationship with community partners to sustain efforts and connect students to services not directly provided by the center.

**Academic Advising:** Cohort 1 and 2 students reported via focus group discussions that 360 Institute advisors were easily accessible, very responsive, always willing to help, and cared how they were doing in school and in life more generally. The student survey findings showed that a large majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen had met with an academic advisor. General freshmen and 360 Institute students agreed or strongly agreed that

they have received the necessary information from their academic advisors. General freshmen and 360 Institute students typically preferred meeting with an advisor in person. General freshmen and 360 Institute students found academic planning to be the most useful academic advising activity.

**Financial Literacy:** As a result of participation in the 360 Institute, Cohort 1 and 2 students reported via focus group discussions an increased understanding of budgeting, saving, credit cards, credit scores, scholarship opportunities, and financial planning. Survey findings showed that Cohort 3 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshman to have met with a coach from the Financial Empowerment Center, and 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshman to be aware of the Financial Empowerment Center as a resource. Among the students who accessed support from the Financial Empowerment Center, both 360 Institute students and general freshman found financial aid services to be the most useful type of financial support.

**Career Readiness:** Cohort 1 and 2 360 Institute student focus group participants reported an increased understanding of possible career paths that would align with their strengths and desired salary/lifestyle because of career counseling and the budget simulator. Survey findings showed that a large majority both Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen have selected a career field that they would like to pursue. 360 Institute students and general freshmen most commonly agreed that they are confident in their chosen career paths and in their ability to obtain a career in their chosen paths, and that they know what it takes to do so. Students in the 360 Institute were more likely to have met with a career counselor than general freshmen. Of the students who met with a career counselor, they most commonly agreed that they received the support they needed.

**360 Institute:** Cohort 1 and 2 students participated in focus groups and across both groups shared that the 360 Institute experience exceeded students' expectations. Cohort 1 and 2 students found the monthly check-ins with their advisor, BudgetCon, the campus scavenger hunt, financial planning workshops, and connection to various resources and services especially helpful. Cohort 3 students completed the student survey in which respondents provided positive feedback about their experience and noted they would recommend the program to other eligible students. Over half (65.4%, n = 64) of general freshman survey respondents indicated that they would have been interested in joining the 360 Institute had they been aware of the opportunity.

**General Student Feedback:** Cohort 1 and 2 360 Institute students reported that the support they received from the 360 Institute advisors for their academic, financial, and

mental/emotional needs was invaluable in increasing their self-confidence and perseverance and played a big part in their ability to continue their education at GTC. Cohort 3 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshmen students to be registered for Spring 2024 classes with nearly all 360 Institute students registered and over three-quarters of general freshmen registered for Spring 2024 classes by November 20, 2023. Among students who have not registered for Spring 2024 classes, the most commonly cited reasons were transferring, not having met with an advisor yet, or financial constraints. 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshman to anticipate completing their degree or certificate at GTC. Both 360 Institute students and general freshmen agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend GTC to others living in the area.

**Summative Evaluation:** Student outcomes show that Cohort 1 and 2 360 Institute students are meeting objectives related to advising, career readiness, and persistence. While Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students did not meet the retention objective, Cohort 2 students saw a 15.8 percentage point higher rate in retention compared to Cohort 1.

PRE has the following **evaluation insights** to offer:

1. Almost half of faculty/staff respondents (44.5%, n = 98) completed one or more professional development training. GTC could consider making the poverty simulator and other related professional development trainings mandatory for all faculty moving forward, especially given that those who attended these trainings provided positive feedback.
2. According to faculty, the top three reasons for students dropping out/stopping out of college are 1) childcare issues, 2) working too many hours, and 3) housing insecurity. Efforts to build faculty awareness of the prominence of issues students face like food insecurity, in addition to the top three reasons faculty selected, may be needed to keep faculty accurately informed of the extent to which students are facing these issues.
3. Faculty/staff suggested GTC provide training on student experiences that increases their empathy for students, information sessions on all the services and resources available to students, how to identify mental health issues among students and connect them to services, how to make fair and effective accommodations for struggling students, how to engage in difficult conversations while protecting student privacy and dignity, and how to support students with cognitive differences. A full list of faculty recommendations can be found on page 17.
4. The 360 Institute participation is exceeding students' expectations and the self-reported impact the program has had on students in addition to the observations of advisors and program leadership is compelling evidence in support of the high touch advising model. As

GTC begins to scale this program model college-wide, they should remain cautious about maintaining the quality of care and capacity to provide high touch support by keeping manageable caseload sizes for advisors and hiring additional staff, if feasible.

5. 360 Institute students reported greatly benefiting from financial literacy workshops and resources provided to them through the 360 Institute. GTC should consider expanding this financial literacy programming college-wide to benefit all students, which may contribute to increased retention and reduced financial barriers to persistence at GTC.
6. Findings across data collection activities suggest that GTC should increase its marketing efforts of the 360 Institute to build awareness across campus. A full list of student recommendations for improving the 360 Institute can be found on page 41-43.
7. Students, faculty, and staff also highlighted the need for one easily accessible centralized hub that lists all resources and services available to students on the GTC website.
8. The majority of general freshman survey respondents (65.4%, n = 64) indicated that they would have been interested in joining the 360 Institute had they been aware of the opportunity. This finding suggests a need to expand 360 Institute programming to address the notable desire for additional support in navigating academics, career, and finances among GTC freshman. This finding also indicates a potential to expand or improve upon marketing efforts to build awareness about the opportunity to join the 360 Institute.

# Introduction

**Greenville Technical College (GTC) was awarded a Title III grant from the Department of Education (ED) in the fall of 2020 to implement the Student Transformation Center (STC) Project. This project is comprised of administering professional development for faculty and staff focused on culture of care and implementing the 360 Institute cohorts for first time in college students.**

The college has partnered with Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE) to evaluate this project. The report that follows includes findings from interviews with program leadership and two focus groups held with Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 360 Institute students during an in-person site visit conducted in April 2023, a faculty/staff survey administered in April 2023, a student survey conducted in November 2023 with Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen, and student outcome findings for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 360 Institute students. The purpose of this report is to convey any changes in culture of care as a result of professional development trainings provided during the course of the grant, inform future efforts around culture of care, convey the impact of the 360 Institute on participating students in Cohorts 1, 2, and 3, and provide recommendations for improvement of the 360 Institute in future years.

# Methods

In Year 3, evaluators conducted a site visit at GTC in April of 2023 where they met with program leadership of the STAR Center and 360 Institute for informal interviews and to conduct focus groups with Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 360 Institute students. PRE also administered the annual faculty/staff survey in spring of 2023 and the annual student survey for Cohort 3 and general freshmen in the fall of 2023. The methods for each data collection activity are described in more detail below.

## Site Visit and Leadership Interviews

During the in-person site visit in April 2023, PRE met with program leadership to conduct informal interviews and gather contextual insight to inform other data collection efforts on the STAR Center, culture of care, and 360 Institute. PRE also met with three members of the 360 Institute team, including two academic advisors/105 course instructors and a career counselor to learn about implementation, progress, and areas for growth within the 360 Institute. A sample of interview questions can be found in **Appendix A**. During this site visit, PRE also presented findings from the Year 2 annual report to the grant steering committee.

## 360 Institute Student Focus Groups

PRE conducted two in-person focus groups with 360 Institute students in April 2023 at the GTC campus. All Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 360 Institute students were invited to participate via email sent by the Title III Activity Director. The first focus group included five ( $n = 5$ ) Cohort 1 students who started in Fall 2021. The second focus group included fifteen ( $n = 15$ ) Cohort 2 students who started in Fall 2022. Students were provided the opportunity to share their reasons for joining the 360 Institute, their experience and value gained from participating in the 360 Institute, and how the 360 Institute can be improved for future cohorts. The focus group questions can be found in **Appendix B**.

## Faculty/Staff Survey

PRE administered the faculty/staff survey online with only full-time GTC faculty and staff in Year 3 of the grant from April 13 to May 3, 2023. GTC Title III project team staff emailed the survey link to 698 full-time faculty and staff at the college and sent reminder emails while the survey was open. As an incentive to complete the survey, PRE randomly selected five respondents to receive a prize from the GTC bookstore. **The survey was completed by 220 employees for a response rate of 31.5%**. Findings from the Year 3 faculty/staff survey will be compared in this



report to findings from the faculty/staff survey conducted in Year 2 that serves as a baseline. The Year 2 faculty/staff survey was administered from November 3 to November 19, 2021. It is important to note that the Year 2 survey was administered to all GTC faculty and staff; however, **data has been disaggregated to only compare responses of full-time faculty and staff from Year 2 survey findings to Year 3 survey findings.** Details about the faculty and staff who completed the surveys are provided below. Year 3 survey questions can be found in **Appendix C.**

*Table 1. Faculty/staff survey respondents' role at GTC*

Role	% (n) in Year 2	% (n) in Year 3
<b>Full-time staff</b>	37.8% (n = 127)	50.9% (n = 112)
<b>Full-time faculty</b>	33.9% (n = 114)	40.0% (n = 88)
<b>College Administrator</b>	1.8% (n = 6)	3.6% (n = 8)
<b>Other</b>	2.4% (n = 8)	5.5% (n = 12)
<b>Total</b>	n = 255	n = 220

*Table 2. Faculty/staff survey respondents' length of time working at GTC*

Length of time at GTC	Year 2 % (n)	Year 3 % (n)
<b>Less than a year</b>	9.0% (n = 23)	6.4% (n = 14)
<b>1-5 years</b>	27.5% (n = 70)	28.6% (n = 63)
<b>6-10 years</b>	20.4% (n = 52)	19.5% (n = 43)
<b>11-15 years</b>	14.9% (n = 38)	18.6% (n = 41)
<b>More than 15 years</b>	28.2% (n = 72)	26.8% (n = 59)

## Student Survey

The student survey was developed in collaboration with GTC and PRE to assess student experiences with the STAR Center, freshmen seminar, academic advising, financial literacy, career readiness, and the 360 Institute. A general freshmen survey was sent to freshmen enrolled in an in-person Freshmen Seminar class but who were not enrolled in the 360 Institute. The survey was sent via email communications from GTC starting on November 6, 2023 and closed on November 20, 2023. The general freshmen survey was sent to 460 students and a total of 109 students completed the survey for a response rate of 23.7%. Respondents were incentivized to complete the survey with the opportunity to be randomly selected to receive one of three \$50 gift cards to Amazon. Year 3 general freshman survey questions can be found in **Appendix D.** A second student survey was administered via email from GTC to all students

involved in Cohort 3 of the 360 Institute. The survey was open from November 6 to November 20, 2023. Survey questions were identical to the general freshmen survey and included additional questions about the 360 Institute. The 360 Institute survey was sent to 86 students and a total of 71 students completed the survey for a response rate of 82.6%. An incentive provided two survey completers the opportunity to be randomly selected to receive a \$50 Amazon gift card. Year 3 360 Institute survey questions can be found in **Appendix E**.

## **Student Outcome Data**

GTC provided PRE with student outcome data for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 of 360 Institute students regarding grant objectives related to advising, career readiness, persistence, and graduation.

# Findings

This report is organized by key grant focus areas including culture of care, basic needs/STAR Center, freshman seminar, academic advising, financial literacy, career readiness, the 360 Institute, and general GTC feedback. The findings from the interviews, focus groups, and surveys are provided below, which include summaries of open-ended responses<sup>1</sup>. This report also includes an analysis of student outcome data to measure grant impact.



## CULTURE OF CARE

*GTC is providing professional development opportunities to create a culture of care among faculty and staff to better support students.*

### Key Findings

- Almost half of faculty/staff survey respondents (44.5%, n = 98) completed one or more professional development training.
- As a result of professional development, faculty and staff reported an increased ability to support students and identify issues that cause stop out/drop out.
- According to faculty, the top three reasons for students dropping out/stopping out of college are 1) childcare issues, 2) working too many hours, and 3) housing insecurity.
- Faculty/staff strongly agree that employees at GTC are educated on potential barriers facing students, share an understanding of the importance of addressing student needs beyond academic interventions, and the college provides effective services to help students with basic needs insecurities.
- Faculty/staff suggested GTC provide training on student experience that increases empathy for students, information sessions on all the services and resources available to students, how to identify mental health issues among students and connect them to services, how to make fair and effective accommodations for struggling students, how to engage in difficult conversations while protecting student privacy and dignity, and how to support students with cognitive differences.

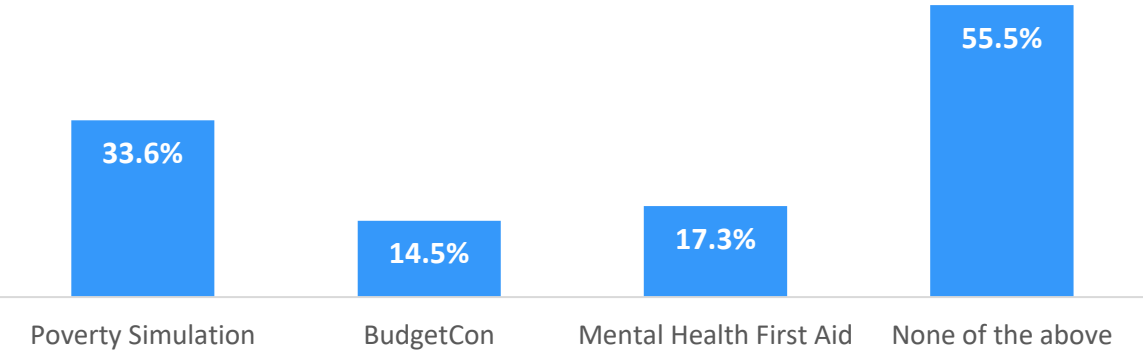
<sup>1</sup> Respondent comments were drawn from researcher notes and have been edited for grammar and brevity.

In year 3 of the grant, GTC provided professional development opportunities to faculty and staff around creating a culture of care to better support students. These professional development opportunities included a poverty simulation experience, BudgetCon event, and mental health first aid training. Findings presented in this section are from the faculty/staff survey and explore their experience with professional development, awareness of student needs, and sense of preparedness to contribute to the culture of care initiative.

### Findings from the Faculty/Staff Survey

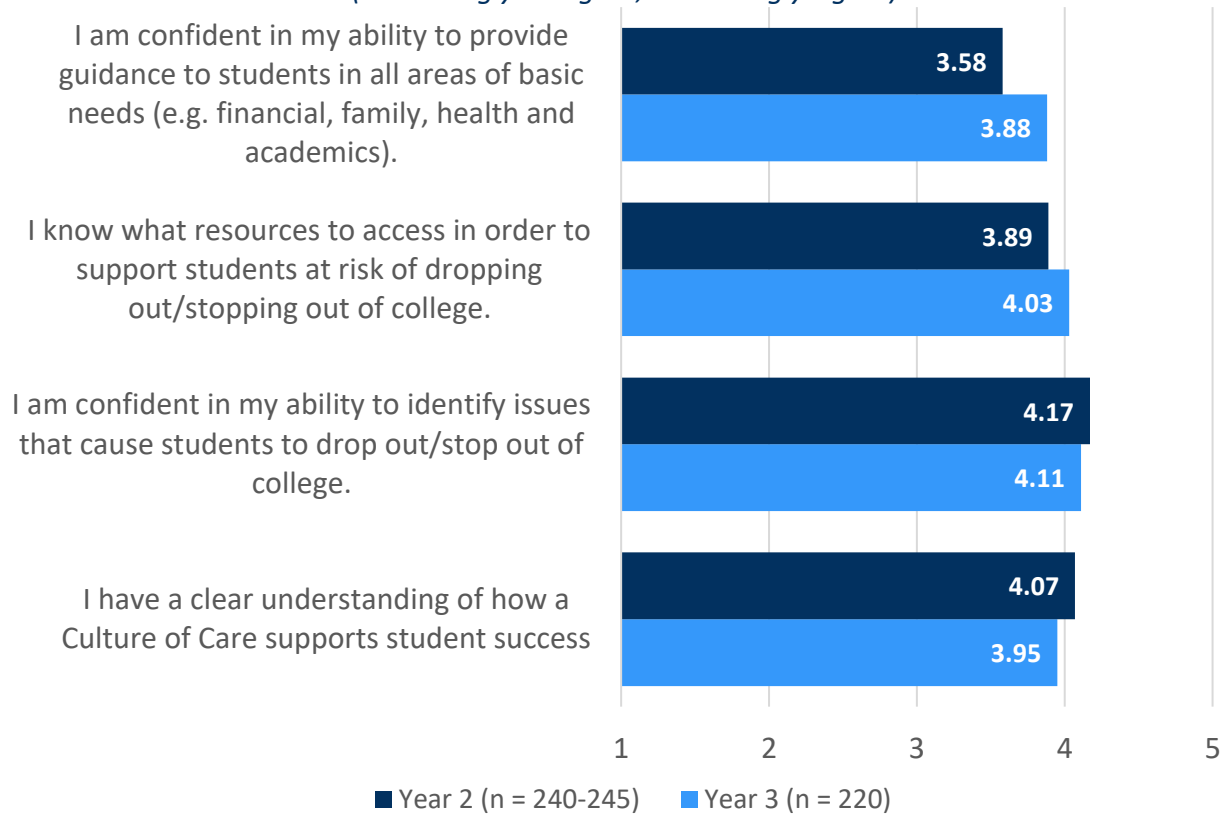
Of the full-time faculty and staff who responded to the Year 3 survey, approximately one third (33.6%, n = 74) participated in the poverty simulation professional development activity and less than a quarter participated in Mental Health First Aid training (17.3%, N = 38) and BudgetCon (14.5%, n = 32). A little over half of respondents (55.5%, n = 122) did not participate in any professional development trainings provided around culture of care (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percent of faculty/staff who attended each professional development training around culture of care (Check all that apply) (n = 220)



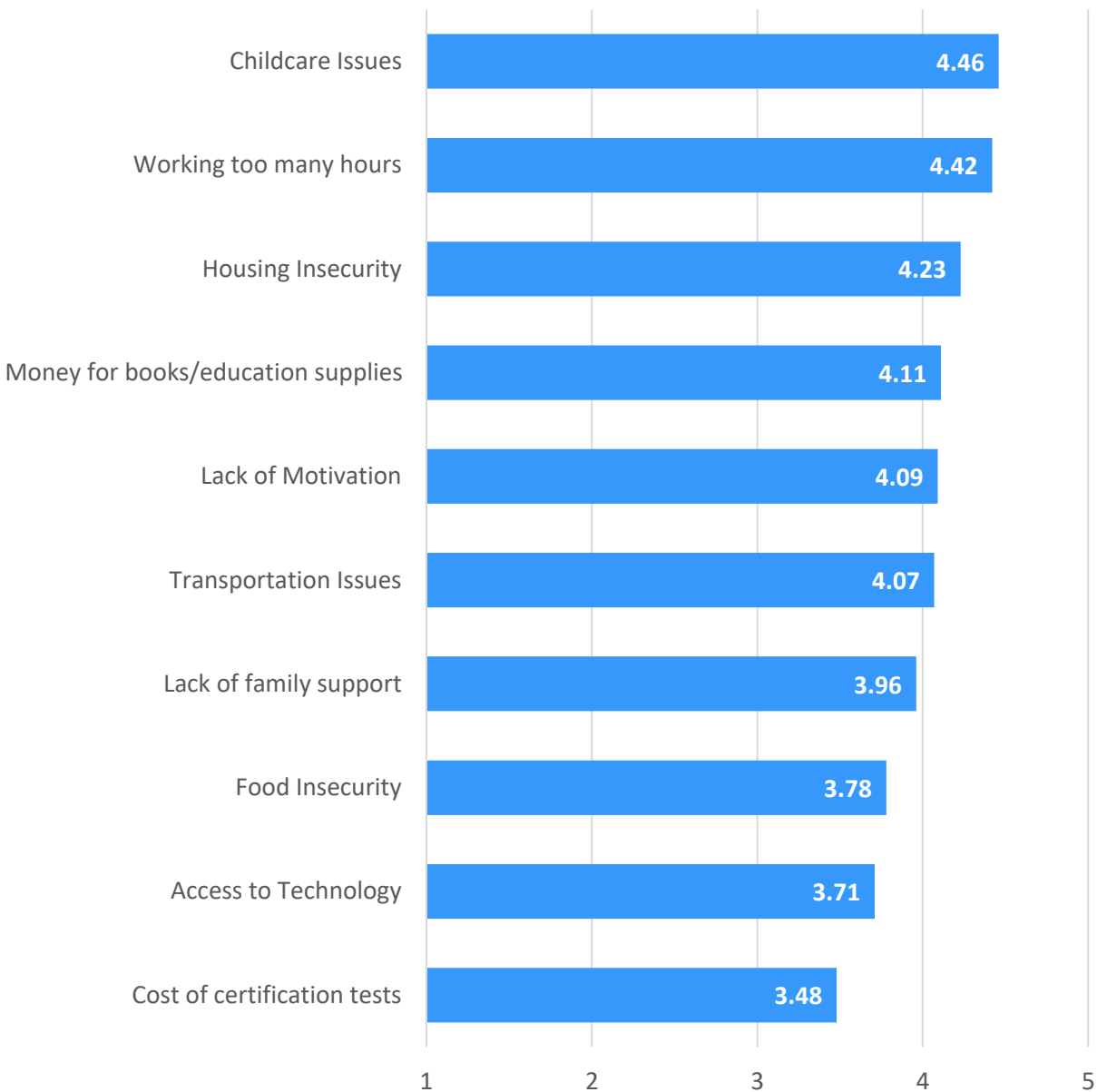
When comparing Year 2 to Year 3 survey results, full-time faculty and staff respondents showed a slight increase in their agreement on a five-point scale regarding confidence in their ability to provide guidance to students in all areas of basic needs and know what resources to access in order to support students at risk of dropping out/stopping out of college. Full-time faculty and staff also showed a slight decrease in the average rating, however remained in agreement or strong agreement that they are confident in their ability to identify issues that cause students to drop out/stop out of college and they have a clear understanding of how a culture of care supports student success (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Faculty/Staff's average ratings related to student success and retention (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



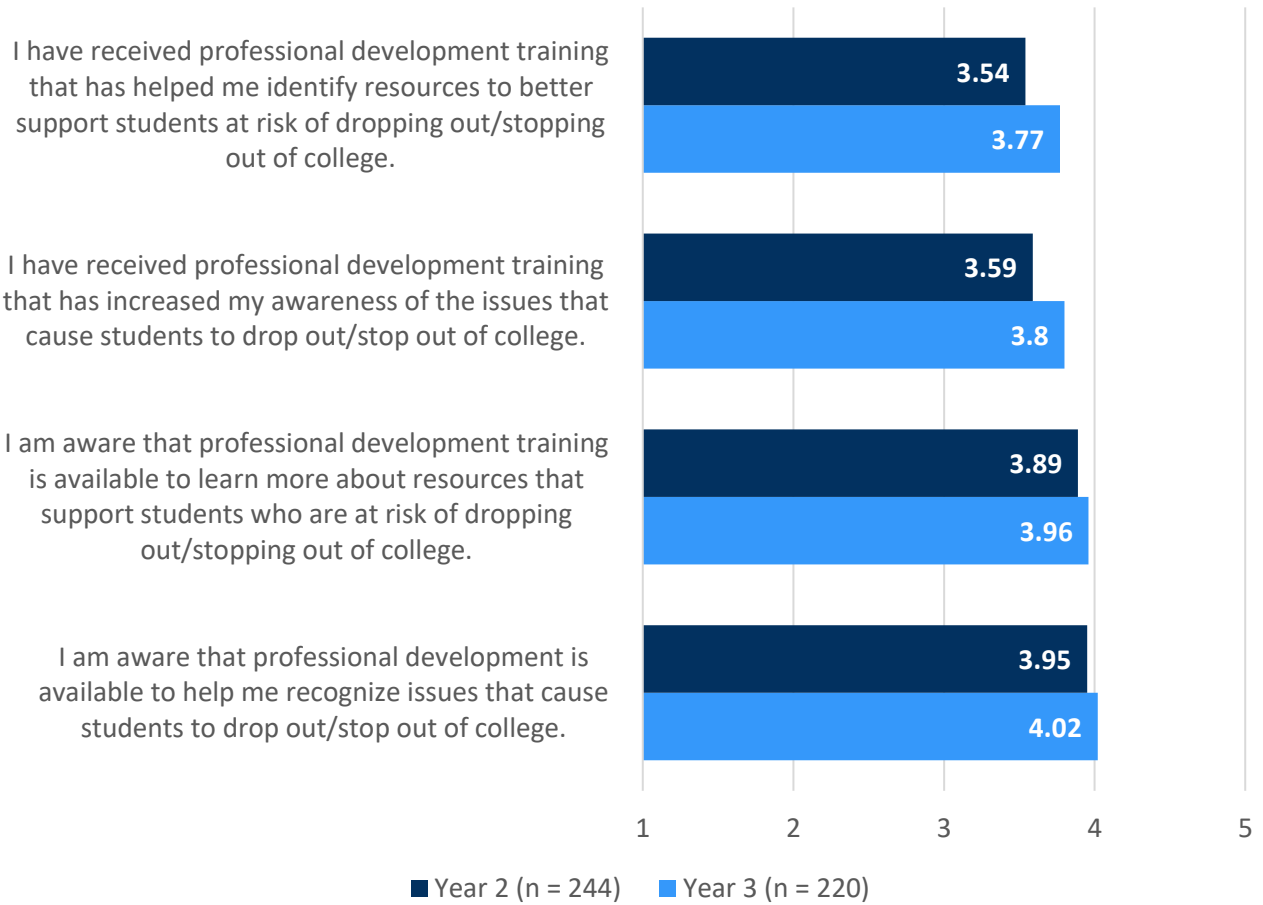
In Year 3, the faculty/staff survey asked respondents to indicate the likelihood of various reasons for students to drop out/stop out of college. Based on their awareness of students, the top three reasons full-time faculty and staff perceive as likely to highly likely reasons for dropping out/stopping out were 1) childcare issues, 2) working too many hours, and 3) housing insecurity. Following the top three reasons, in descending order, were 4) money for books and education supplies, 5) lack of motivation, and 6) transportation issues (see Figure 3 on following page).

Figure 3. Faculty/Staff's average ratings of perceived reasons for student to drop out/stop out of college  
(1 = Highly Unlikely; 5 = Highly Likely)



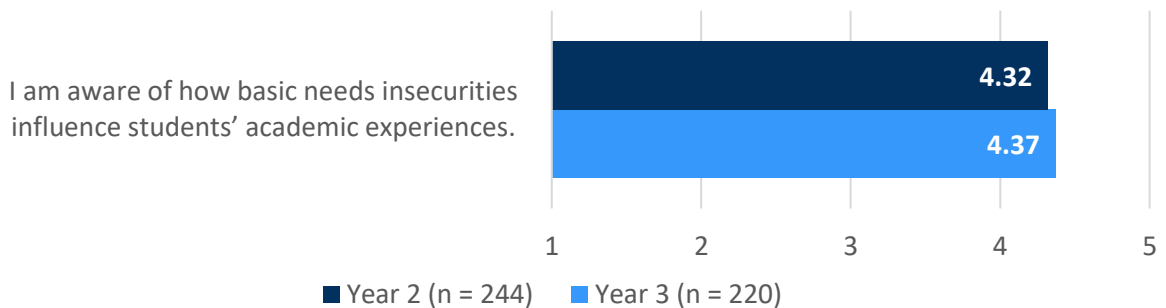
When comparing Year 2 to Year 3 survey results, full-time faculty and staff respondents showed a slight increase in their agreement on a five-point scale across all survey items regarding opportunities for professional development and empowerment. Faculty and staff findings suggest that they have received professional development that has increased their ability to better support students and grow their awareness of identifying issues that cause students to stop out/drop out of college (see Figure 4 on following page).

*Figure 4. Faculty/Staffs' average rating related to training  
(1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



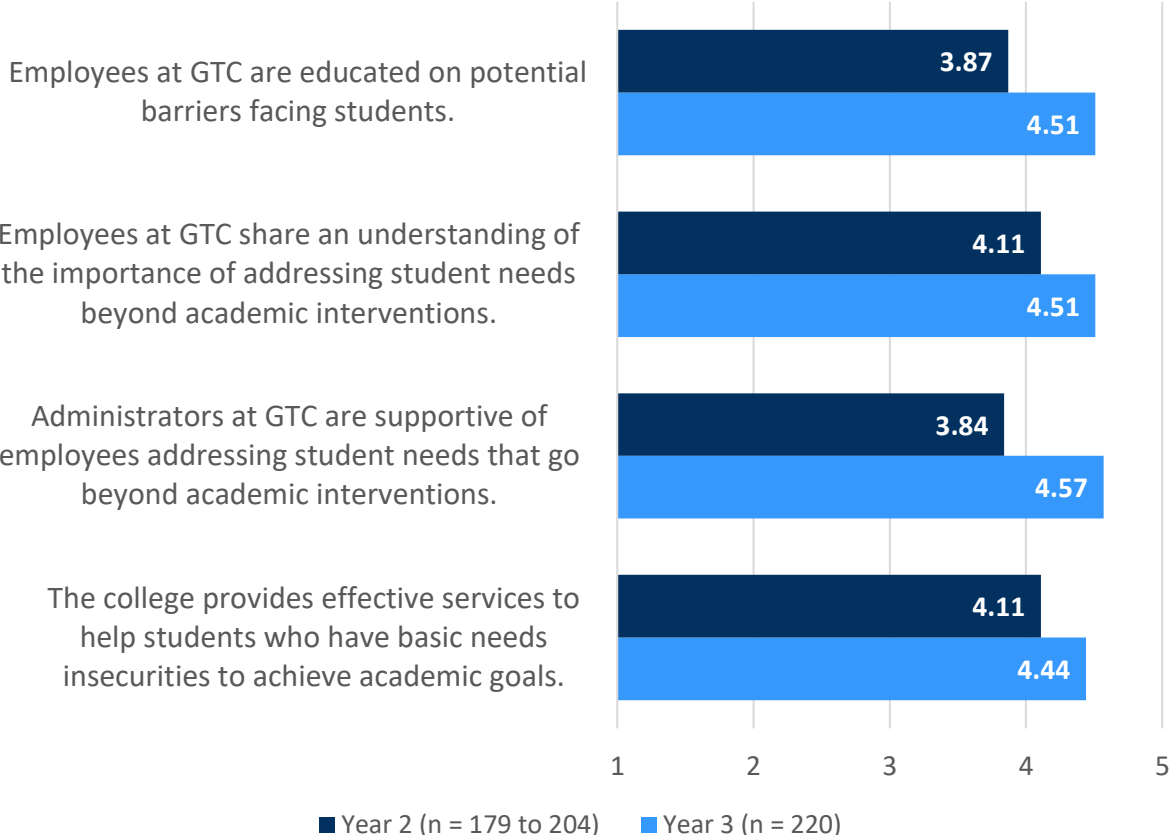
In both the Year 2 and Year 3 survey, faculty and staff indicated that they are strongly aware of how basic needs insecurities can influence students' academic experience (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5. Faculty/Staff's average ratings related to student experience  
(1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



When comparing Year 2 to Year 3 survey results, full-time faculty and staff respondents saw an increase in average rating suggesting that faculty and staff went from agreeing to strongly agreeing that employees at GTC are educated on potential barriers facing students, share an understanding of the importance of addressing student needs beyond academic interventions, and the college provides effective services to help students with basic needs insecurities. Faculty and staff reported the biggest leap in agreement, with a mean rating of 3.84 in Year 2 to 4.57 in Year 3, suggesting they strongly agree that administrators at GTC are supportive of employees addressing student needs that go beyond academic interventions (see Figure 6).

*Figure 6. Faculty/Staff's average ratings related to the culture of the institution (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



**Formative Findings from the Faculty/Staff Survey**

Faculty and staff at GTC were asked to reflect on what areas of professional development the college should focus on to create a culture of care. The responses varied but a list of key themes emerged. In addition to the list of professional development ideas provided below, faculty highlighted the need for on-campus childcare for students with children, tutoring



services, and an easy to access webpage on the GTC website that clearly lists all offices, services, and resources available to connect students.

### **Professional Development Suggestions:**

- Training that increases empathy for students such as poverty simulators, budget simulators, and other struggles students face.
- Offer more frequent professional development or asynchronous virtual trainings to accommodate faculty schedules.
- Training that provides faculty with a comprehensive list and understanding of services and resources available to students through GTC and the broader community.
- Training on mental health such as identifying mental health issues, connecting students to mental health resources, and clarification around what mental health counselors at GTC can and cannot do for students.
- Training on exactly how faculty can effectively support and/or make accommodations for students who are struggling.
- Training on how to engage students in a way that still protects a student's privacy and dignity while asking questions that reveal needs to then connect them to appropriate resources available at GTC and externally.
- A speaker series by counseling services.
- A speaker series with emphasis on celebrating student success stories at GTC.
- Training on how to support students with cognitive differences such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD to succeed in class.

### **Program Leadership Insight**

Program leadership hopes to continue to reach faculty and staff across GTC and further strengthen the culture of care on campus. The poverty simulator has been a strong tool in building understanding among faculty of how basic needs insecurities can impact student performance in school. They hope more faculty will participate in professional development training opportunities like the poverty simulator to increase their ability to identify obstacles causing students to stop out/drop out of college. Program leadership hope to empower faculty to feel supported by GTC leadership to take time to address and accommodate students impacted by basic needs insecurities.



## BASIC NEEDS / STAR CENTER

*The STAR Center provides basic needs supports for students such as financial assistance, groceries and essential needs, and other resources.*

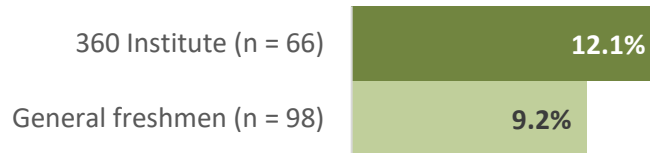
### Key Findings

- The STAR Center has been moved to a more central location on campus to increase awareness, access, and usage of services.
- The STAR Center plans to improve its caring corner food pantry to provide students in need with a more dignified “shopping” experience.
- The STAR Center hopes to build and leverage their relationship with community partners to sustain efforts and connect students to services not directly provided by the center.
- Students, including both 360 institute and general freshman, reported most commonly accessing the STAR Center for books or other related college materials, food, and transportation support.
- 360 Institute students and general freshman agreed or strongly agreed that they received the support they needed from the STAR Center.

During the site visit in April 2023, evaluators from PRE visited the STAR Center to learn more about the location and services provided by the center. The STAR Center seeks to provide students with emergency financial assistance and serve as a liaison between students in need and community services that can support students. The STAR Center also houses the caring corner, a free food pantry for students. The center was recently moved to a central location on the GTC campus to increase awareness and usage among students in need. At the time of the site visit, the STAR Center was engaging the services of a consultant preparing a report to provide recommendations for how to improve the center’s operations and effectively meet the needs of students. GTC has intentions to revamp the caring corner to look more like a grocery store to provide students with a more dignified “shopping” experience when using this resource. Moving forward, the STAR Center hopes to build upon its relationship with community partners to serve as a satellite location where these partners can provide their services to students and the efforts of the STAR Center can be sustained. Since the site visit, GTC has used Title III grant funds to hire a full-time STAR Center director who started their role in November 2023.

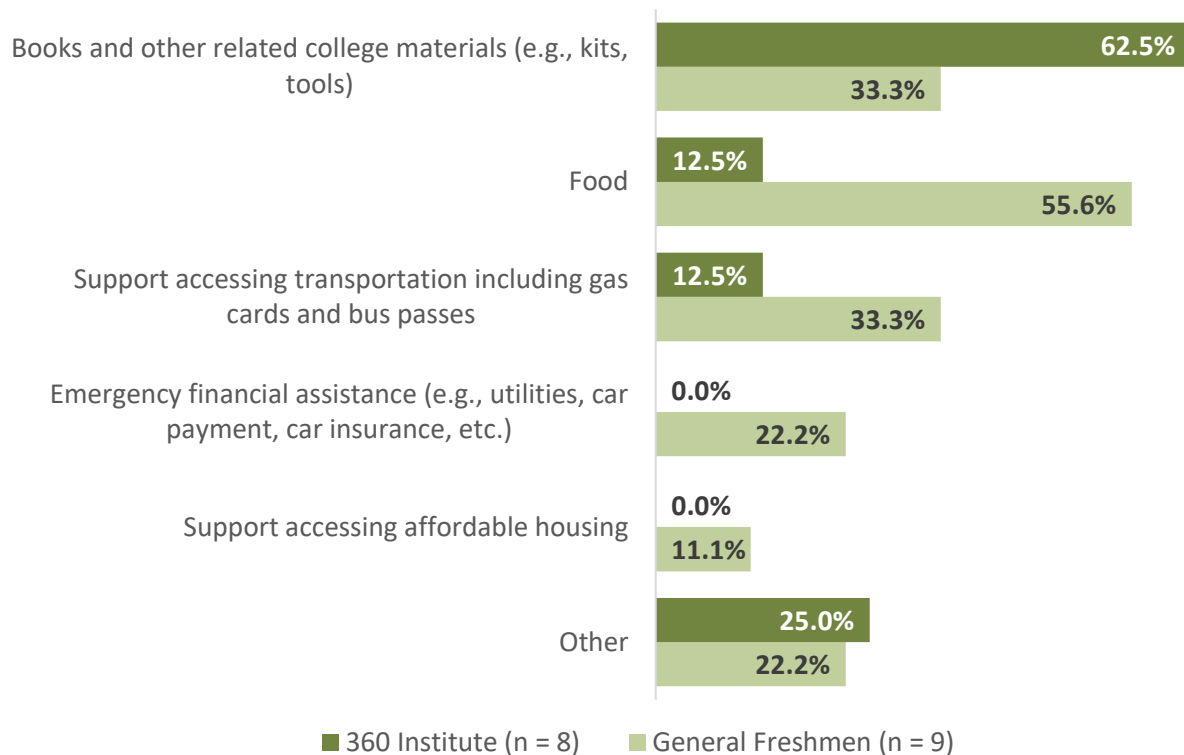
Of the Cohort 3 360 Institute students who responded to the student survey, 12.1% (n = 8) reported accessing resources at the STAR Center, while 9.2% (n = 9) of general freshmen student survey respondents reported that they accessed resources at the STAR Center (see Figure 7).

*Figure 7. Percent of Students Who Accessed Resources at the STAR Center*



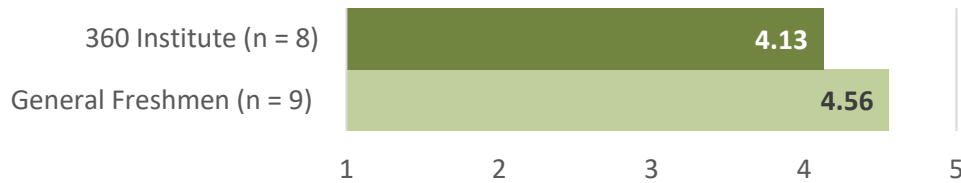
According to survey responses from students who had accessed resources at the STAR Center, the most commonly accessed resource varied between general freshmen and 360 Institute students. General freshmen most commonly accessed food resources, while Cohort 3 360 Institute students most commonly accessed books and other related college materials. The second most accessed resources for general freshmen included transportation support and books or other related college materials, while 360 Institute students cited transportation support and food resources. Students who reported “other” wrote in the following responses: tutoring, college transfer support, and general information about the STAR Center (see Figure 8).

*Figure 8. Percent of STAR Center Resources Accessed by Students (Select all that apply)*



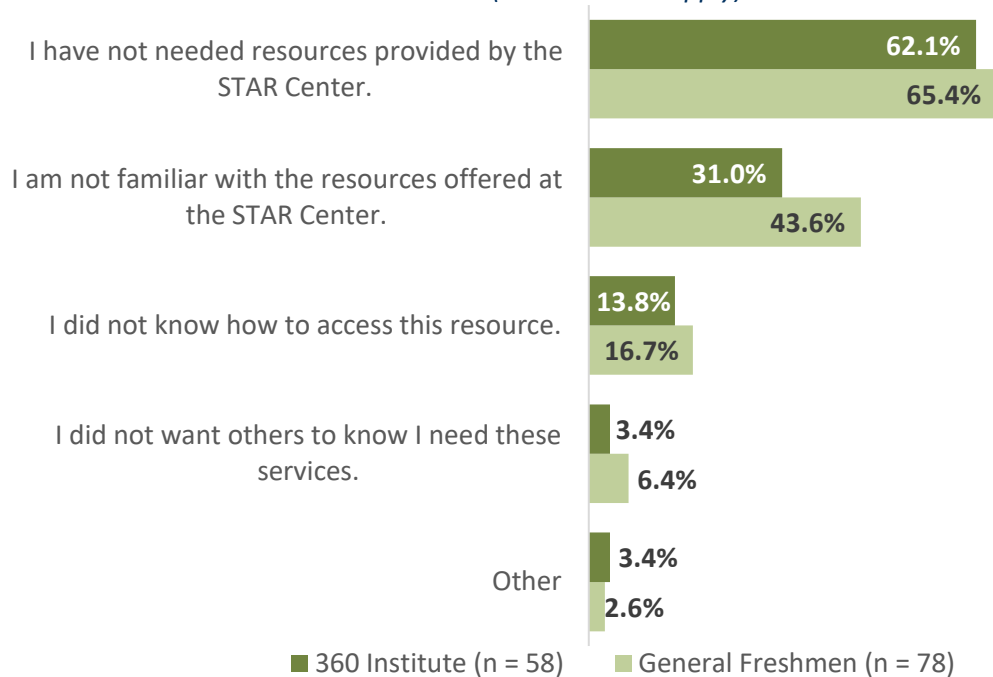
Students who accessed support through the STAR Center rated the degree to which they received the support they needed from the STAR Center based on a 5-point scale. Findings indicate that 360 Institute students agreed that they received the support they needed from the STAR Center with an average rating of 4.13, while general freshmen agreed to strongly agree that they received the support they needed from the STAR Center with an average rating of 4.56 (see Figure 9).

*Figure 9. Students' Average Rating Related to the STAR Center Providing the Support They Needed (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



Of the students who did not access the STAR Center, 62.1% (n = 36) of 360 Institute students and 65.4% (n = 51) of general freshmen reported that they did not visit the STAR Center because they did not need resources provided by the STAR Center (see Figure 10). Forty-four percent (43.6%, n = 34) of general freshmen indicated they were not familiar with the resources offered at the STAR Center, which was 12.6 percentage points higher than Cohort 3 360 Institute students. Of the students who selected “other,” one respondent elaborated by sharing that they did not have the time to visit the STAR Center due to work and school.

*Figure 10. Reasons Why Students Have Not Visited the STAR Center (Select all that apply)*





## ACADEMIC ADVISING

Academic advisors support students with academic planning, goal setting, and career selection.

### Key Findings

- Cohort 1 and 2 students reported that 360 Institute advisors were easily accessible, very responsive, always willing to help, and cared how they were doing in school and in life more generally.
- A large majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen have met with an academic advisor.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshman agreed or strongly agreed that they have received the necessary information from their academic advisors.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshman typically preferred meeting with an advisor in person.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshman found academic planning to be the most useful academic advising activity.

360 Institute students from Cohort 1 and 2 shared through focus group discussions that they were grateful to have the support of the 360 Institute advisors in helping them succeed at GTC. Students felt that the 360 Institute advisors cared about getting to know them and cared how they were doing in school and in life more generally. Students reported that the 360 Institute advisors were easily accessible, very responsive, and always willing to help. Many students reported that the 360 advisors helped to keep them on track, meet deadlines, complete paperwork, pursue financial aid opportunities, and foster confidence in themselves, all of which played a big role in their ability to continue at GTC. Below are some examples of thoughts students had to share about their 360 Institute academic advisors:

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*“Monthly check-ins were really helpful. They asked how I was doing. They were able to see whether or not I signed up for scholarships or if I needed to fill out paperwork. They make sure that we’re doing okay, especially with our mental health. They always asked me how I was doing mentally and if I was able to live a life outside of coursework. They were very interested and concerned with that.”*

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*“For me, I think it really just was building a relationship with them. They checked on my schoolwork, but they were also interested in my life outside of school, outside of work. I feel like they were people that I can confide in. It’s not only about your grades. It’s about you as a person as well.”*

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*“They’re really on track with us being able to keep us on task and making sure that we signed up for what we needed to, reminding us for a lot of things because I know I was overwhelmed with my classes. Once I signed up, it’s nice to have that frequent conversation, communication with them to keep us on track.”*

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*“Them setting up our classes and asking us what we need, asking us what’s going on in our lives. To be honest, it’s hard to do that. If I didn’t have the 360 program, I would have quit because you can’t get in touch with my general advisor.”*

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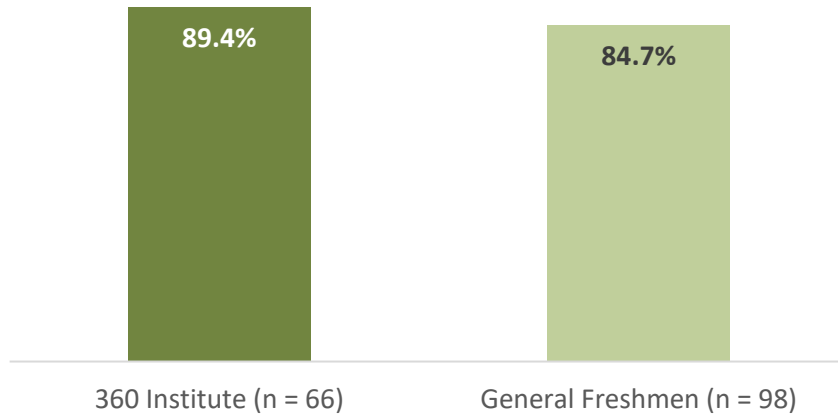
*“They gave us monthly appointments for check-ins, but on top of that, you could just stop in if I have a question or even if it’s just to say hi. They’re always willing to help.”*

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Cohort 3 students agreed, via open-ended responses on the student survey, that their 360 Institute advisors provided them with helpful support and guidance. Many of the students’ comments could be broadly classified as mental and emotional support provided by advisors. Examples of such responses include “They ensure that you will be successful, and will have faith in you even when you don’t have the most faith in yourself,” “They work with each student individually in a judgment-free way and encourage a lot,” “360 has helped me when no one else would by offering me guidance and encouragement down the right career path” and “They prioritize each student and what is best for that student. As a 360 student I feel so valued and cared for.”

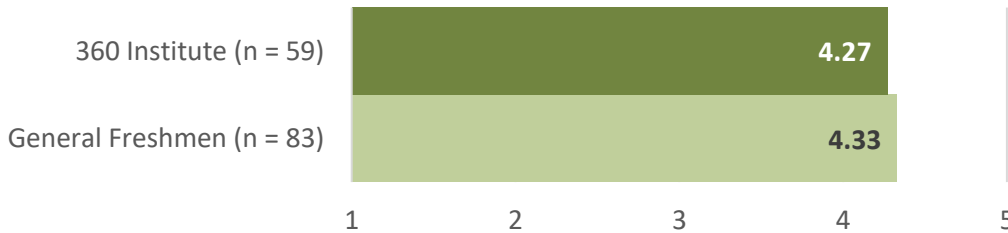
A large majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute students (89.4%, n = 59) and general freshmen students (84.7%, n = 83) have met with an academic advisor at GTC (see Figure 11 on following page).

Figure 11. Percent of Students Who Have Met with an Academic Advisor at GTC



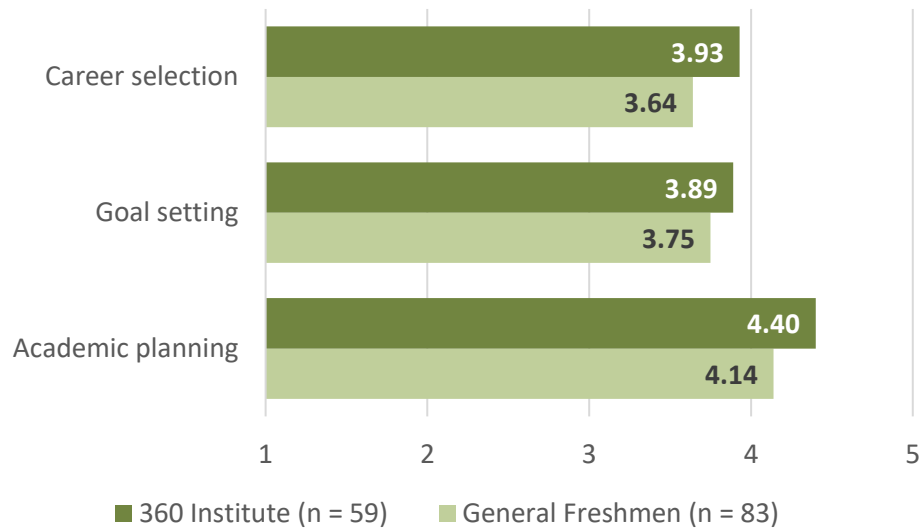
Students rated the degree to which they received the information they needed from academic advisors to successfully plan and register for the next semester on a 5-point scale. Both 360 Institute students and general freshman agreed to strongly agreed that they received the information they needed from academic advisors to successfully plan and register for the next semester (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Students' Average Rating Related to Receiving the Information they Needed from an Academic Advisor (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)



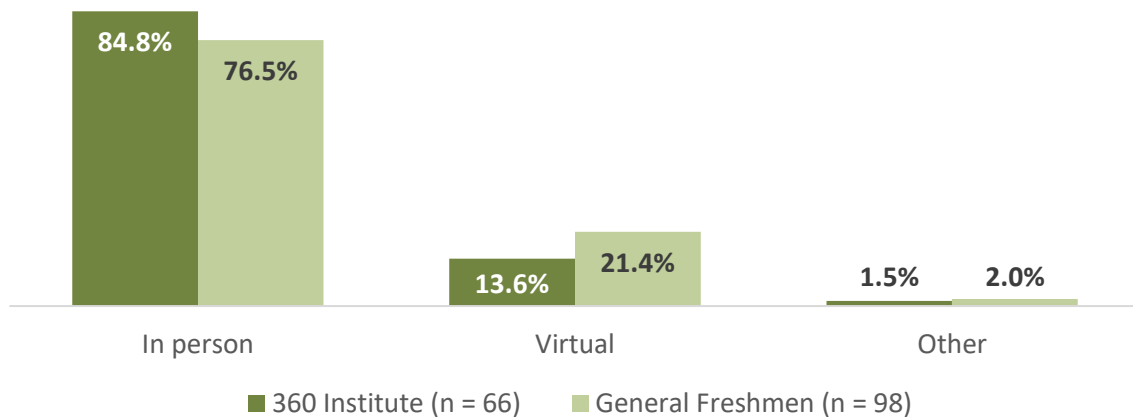
Students rated the usefulness of each type of support they received through academic advising on a 5-point scale. Both the Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen rated academic advising as very to extremely useful for academic planning. Further, 360 Institute students and general freshmen reported academic advising as moderately to very useful for goal setting and career selection. Overall, 360 Institute students rated each category at a higher level of usefulness than general freshmen (see Figure 13 on following page).

Figure 13. Students' Average Rating on the Usefulness of Academic Advising Activities (1 = Not at all Useful; 5 = Extremely Useful)



A majority of students prefer meeting with an academic advisor in person, with 84.8% (n = 56) of Cohort 3 360 Institute students and 76.5% (n = 75) of general freshmen selecting this option (see Figure 14). One 360 Institute student and one general freshman who reported “other” as their preferred meeting format shared that they had no preference for meeting modality.

Figure 14. Student Preference for Meeting Format with an Academic Advisor

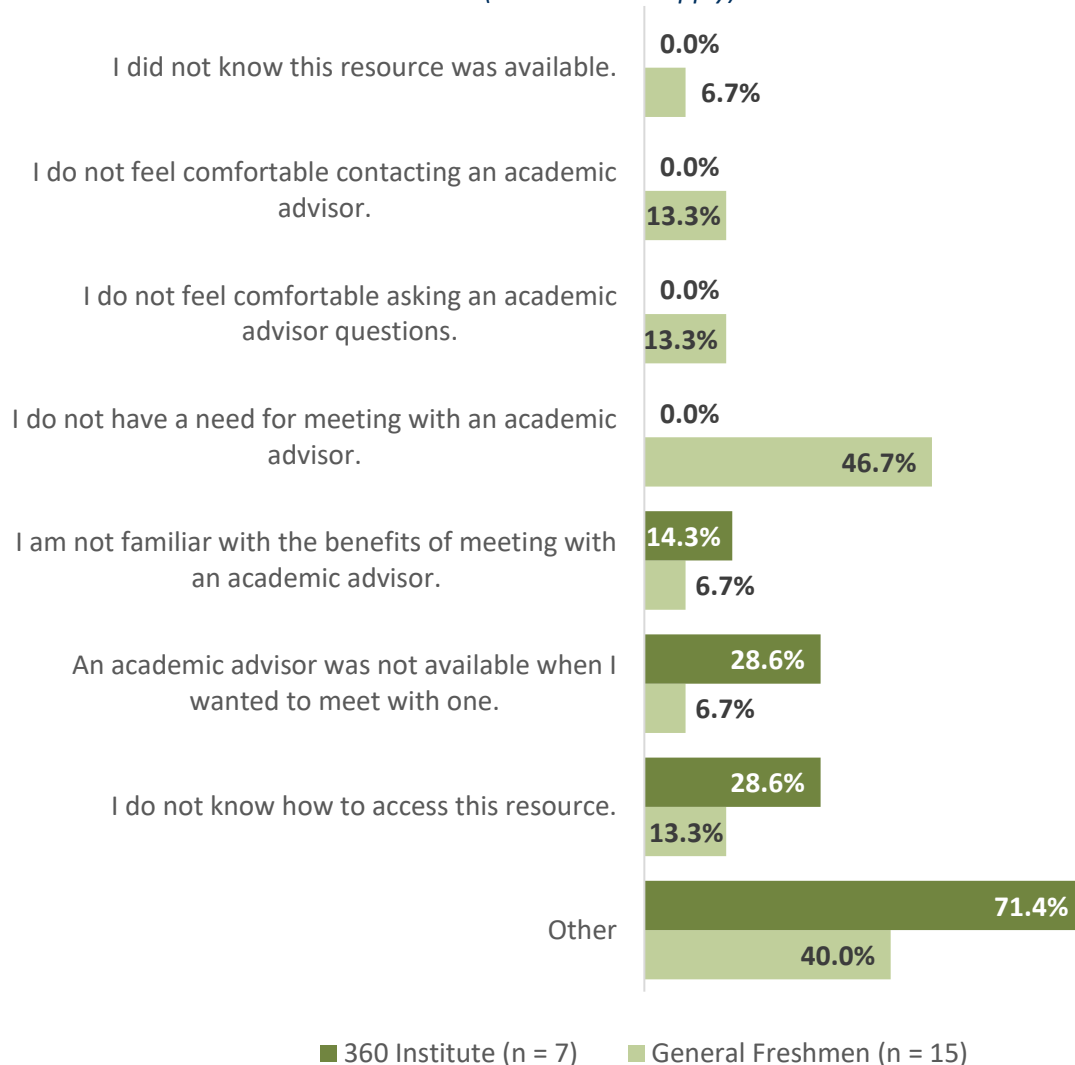


Of the seven 360 Institute students (n = 7) who had not met with an academic advisor, over a quarter (28.6%, n = 2) shared that they did not know how to access this resource or that an academic advisor was not available when they wanted to meet with one. Nearly three-quarters



of 360 Institute respondents (71.4%, n = 5) selected “other,” in which two students expressed that they have an upcoming advisor meeting, and the remaining students shared that they were having difficulty accessing contact or meeting information from their advisors. Of the fifteen general freshmen (n = 15) who had not met with an academic advisor, a little under half (46.7%, n = 7) shared that they did not have a need for meeting with an academic advisor. This may indicate a need to communicate with general freshmen the benefits of meeting with an academic advisor. General freshman who selected “other” listed the following reasons as to why they have not met with an advisor: not needing to meet with an advisor due to being a high school student, lack of time to meet with an advisor, difficulty reaching their academic advisor, and having an upcoming advising meeting (see Figure 15).

*Figure 15. Reasons Students Have Not Met with an Academic Advisor  
(Select all that Apply)*





## FINANCIAL LITERACY

*There are various opportunities for GTC to receive financial literacy and other financial resources including coaching from Greenville's Financial Empowerment Center, freshman seminar curriculum, BudgetCon, and financial aid.*

---

### Key Findings

- As a result of the 360 Institute financial literacy workshops, Cohort 1 and 2 students reported an increased understanding of budgeting, saving, credit cards, credit scores, scholarship opportunities, and financial planning.
- 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshman to have met with a coach from the Financial Empowerment Center.
- 360 Institute students were more likely than general freshman to be aware of the Financial Empowerment Center as a resource.
- General freshmen and 360 Institute students found financial aid services to be the most useful type of financial support.

Cohort 1 and 2 students from the 360 Institute shared via focus group discussions that as a result of the financial literacy workshops, their understanding and knowledge has grown around budgeting, saving, credit cards, credit scores, scholarship opportunities, and financial planning. Students in both focus groups reported utilizing one-on-one finance coaching as a result of being connected through the 360 Institute. For example, one student reported that they were able to open up a savings account and begin saving an emergency fund and another student reported that their credit score went up 90 points as a result of applying what they had learned. Many students found the budget simulator activity to be very beneficial and eye-opening, with one student sharing, "I liked the budget simulator. It was really helpful to see that, and I feel like a lot of people graduate not knowing really how much they're going to make and how they're going to sustain their living. It was a really good eye-opener."

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*"I think they definitely helped me understand credit and how to use it and just knowing the intricate details and how to increase your credit score."*

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*“I feel like it really stressed financial literacy to us several times. Also bringing up scholarship opportunities was really helpful because even though it's a technical college, it's expensive for nursing books, but after having all of those resources brought to me, I felt more confident in finances and not afraid of it.”*

---

*“I felt like they give a literal picture of what living on your own is going to be like. Just the way that they had us budget how much we're going to make when we are finished and gave literal numbers because they pulled from local sources. It gives logistics, numbers, and how you're going to have to cultivate your spending to ensure that you're within those limits. I think that not only is it a wake-up call, but it also helps you understand this is what life might look like.”*

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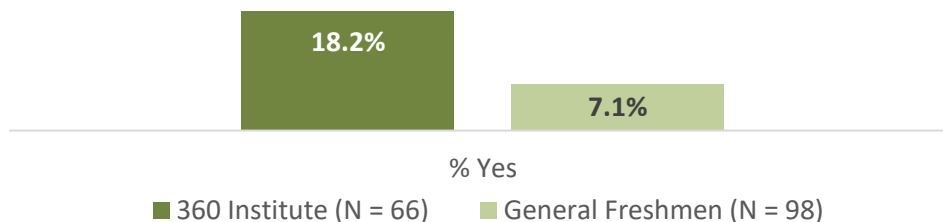
*“I've been grateful that they can help me with financial literacy because my parents are not really hands on and they don't really know a lot. For example, 360 Institute helped me with groceries. Not really a financial problem, but just a cheaper option and that was very helpful.”*

---

A few Cohort 3 students also shared via open-ended responses on the student survey that one of the overall strengths of the 360 Institute was helping them to achieve financial literacy.

Fewer than 20% of Cohort 3 360 Institute students (18.2%, n = 12) had met with a coach from the Financial Empowerment Center and less than ten percent of general freshmen (7.1%, n = 7) had met with a coach from Financial Empowerment Center (see Figure 16).

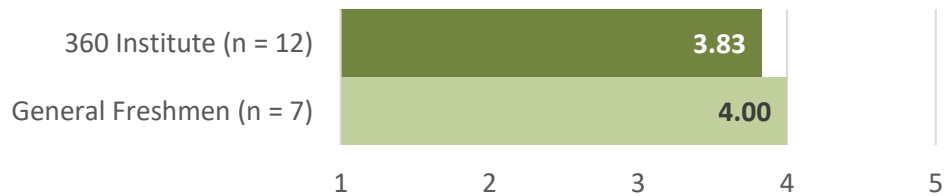
*Figure 16. Percent of Students Who Have Met with a Coach at the Financial Empowerment Center*



The twelve 360 Institute students (n = 12) who met with a coach from the financial Empowerment Center most commonly agreed that they received the support they needed,

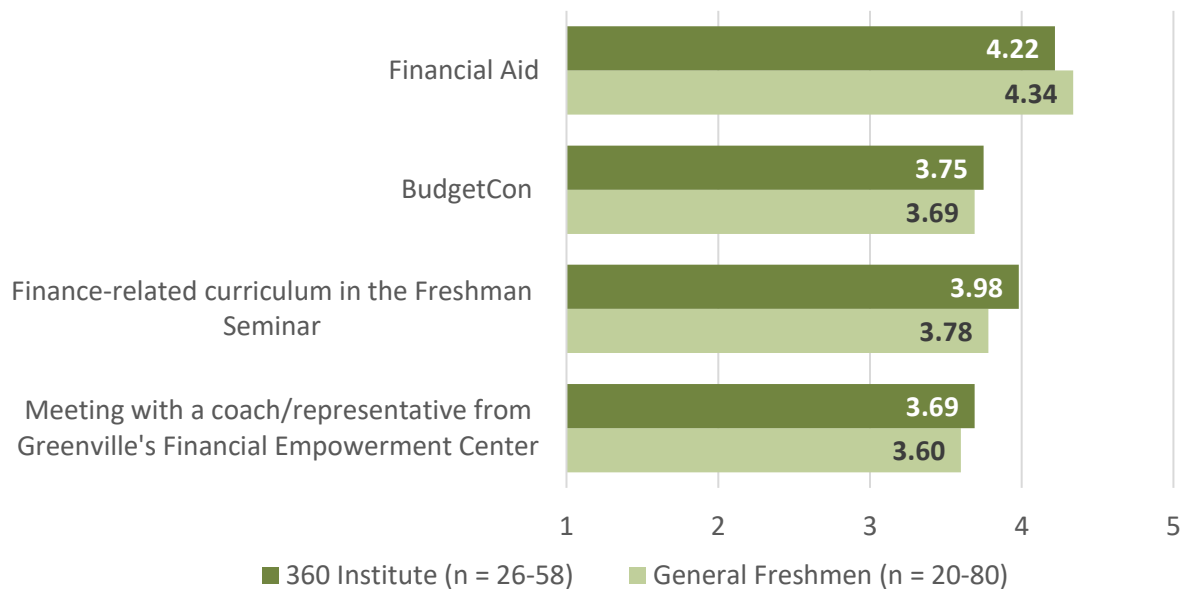
with an average rating of 3.83 on a 5-point scale. Similarly, of the seven general freshmen (n = 7) who met with a coach or representative, the majority agreed that they received the support the needed from the Financial Empowerment Center with an average rating of 4.0 on a 5-point scale (see Figure 17).

*Figure 17. Students' Average Rating Related to Receiving the Support they Needed from Greenville's Financial Empowerment Center (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



**The 360 Institute students and general freshmen rated financial aid as a useful resource.** Further, 360 Institute students and general freshmen rated all other types of financial support to be moderately or very useful (see Figure 18).

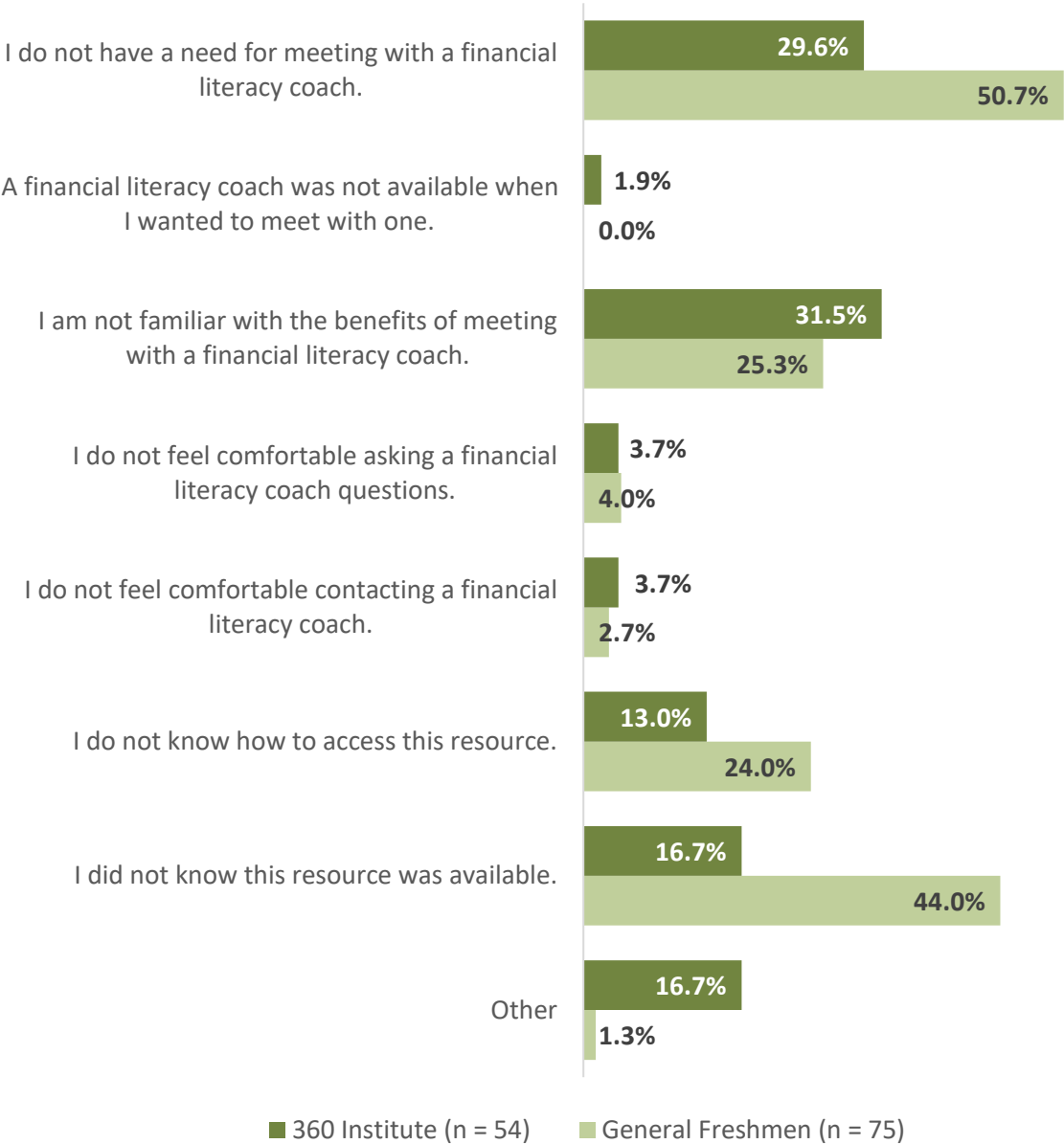
*Figure 18. Students' Average Usefulness Rating for the Type of Financial Support Received (1 = Not at all Useful; 5 = Extremely Useful)*



Among the students who did not meet with a coach from Greenville's Financial Empowerment Center, almost half of general freshman (44.0%, n = 33) reported they did not know this resource was available as compared to 16.7% (n = 9) of Cohort 3 360 Institute students who reported being unaware of this resource (see Figure 19). **This finding suggests that 360**

**Institute students are more likely to be aware of the Financial Empowerment Center on campus than general freshman.** Additionally, 50.7% of general freshmen (n = 38) and 29.6% of 360 institute students cited not needing to meet with a financial literacy coach as their reason for not meeting with a coach at the Financial Empowerment Center. A little over a quarter of 360 Institute students (31.5%, n = 17) and a quarter of general freshman (15.3%, n = 19) indicated that they did not meet with a financial literacy coach as they were not familiar with the benefits of meeting with one.

*Figure 19. Reasons Students Have Not Met with a Coach from the Financial Empowerment Center (Select all that apply)*





## CAREER READINESS

*GTC offers students various supports related to career readiness including opportunities to meet with a career counselor who helps students explore career fields and hands-on training opportunities.*

### Key Findings

- Cohort 1 and 2 students reported an increased understanding of possible career paths that would align with their strengths and desired salary/lifestyle because of career counseling and the budget simulator.
- All Cohort 1 and 2 students who participated in an internship found it to be a valuable experience and developed skills in communication, professionalism, and networking as well as increased confidence.
- A large majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen have selected a career field that they would like to pursue.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen most commonly agreed that they are confident in their chosen career paths and in their ability to obtain a career in their chosen paths, and that they know what it takes to do so.
- Students in the 360 Institute were more likely to have met with a career counselor than general freshmen. Of the students who met with a career counselor, they most commonly agreed that they received the support they needed.

360 Institute Cohort 1 and 2 students shared via focus group discussions that through career counseling, the career assessment, and the budget simulator, they grew their understanding of possible career paths that would align with their strengths and desired salary and lifestyle. One student noted, “When I looked at my career assessment results I thought, wow, these are all jobs I really like. Some I had never seen before. It helped me narrow my path of classes that I could take to reach my goals.” Another student shared, “I also feel with my career, I realized after we did the ABCs in the survey that it doesn’t have to be a passion because there’s no money in that. That really helped me a lot because otherwise I wouldn’t have known that. I would’ve been looking forward to something and been very disappointed.”

Students who participated in an internship all agreed that it was valuable in helping to improve their

*“A thousand times yes, my internship was a valuable experience. I learned a lot of skills I didn’t have before.”*

*- Cohort 1 Student*

confidence in a work setting, increased their understanding of what career path to take, improved their communication skills, and helped to develop their professional relationships and networking skills. Students who participated in informational interviews also found them to be very informative and valuable. Examples of student feedback regarding the internship and informational interviews are shared below:

---

*“I think the internship was a really great opportunity to be able to not necessarily work with your major directly, but something in that same field. It really helped having all of those resources around me. I also was motivated to work on myself and work on my work as well as help other people.”*

---

*“Through my internship, I learned that I did not want to do that kind of work. That was a good thing though. They got me thinking about what I should actually be working towards and got me researching, so I was able to find the right path.”*

---

*“I feel like the internship helped me be able to ask questions and connect with people because if I was meeting somebody outside of this, it would be harder for me to ask questions with them. Since I was working with her in a close environment and it was easy to communicate with her, it was easier for me to ask questions.”*

---

*“For me, talking to someone who works in the field that I'm interested in showed me how much passion I have for that field. It was really helpful because it made me more interested and helped me know more what I want to do with my future career.”*

---

*“The informational interview was very helpful. Personally, it was really nice talking to somebody rather than just googling career paths.”*

---

Students in both cohorts agreed that the internship experience helped them with their professionalism and connected them to additional opportunities they would not have known about had they not participated in the internship.

---

*“It helped me make connections here with my networking. I'm on the student cabinet now. That's something I would've never even known about if I hadn't had my position and met the right people.”*

---

---

*“Just being in the environment of the internship itself was a huge learning experience for a career because you're in this place where you're shaking hands and you're doing interviews. You're participating. You're seeing yourself in that environment and if you can fit in there. You just get to learn.”*

---

A few students experienced barriers to starting or continuing their internship. One student reported that their internship start was delayed from a summer start to a spring start and wished there had been better communication that could have prevented this delay. Multiple Cohort 1 students who completed their internships the previous year expressed the desire to continue their internship, however many were unable to do so due to not qualifying for work-study.

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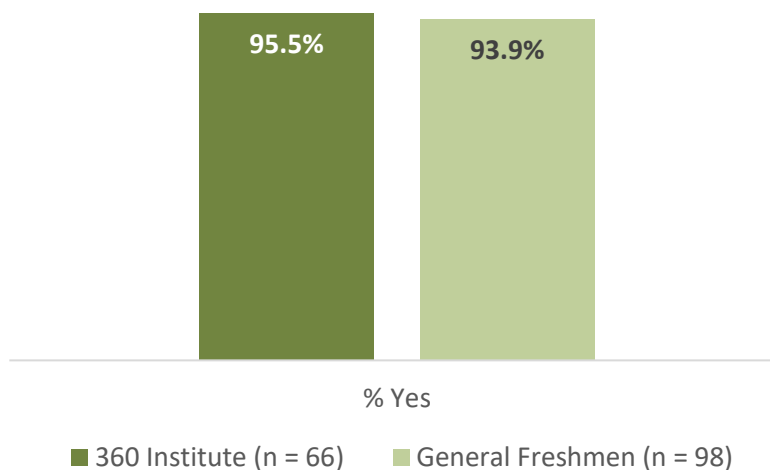
*“I did my internship last spring, I believe, and I wanted to do it again because I really enjoyed it, but I didn't know the steps for being able to do it again. I asked, and I wasn't eligible.”*

---

Cohort 3 students shared via open-ended responses on the student survey that receiving support related to choosing a career path and career preparation were among the top overall strengths of the 360 Institute.

A large majority of general freshmen (93.9%, n = 98) and Cohort 3 360 Institute students (95.5%, n = 63) reported that they have selected a career field to pursue (see Figure 20).

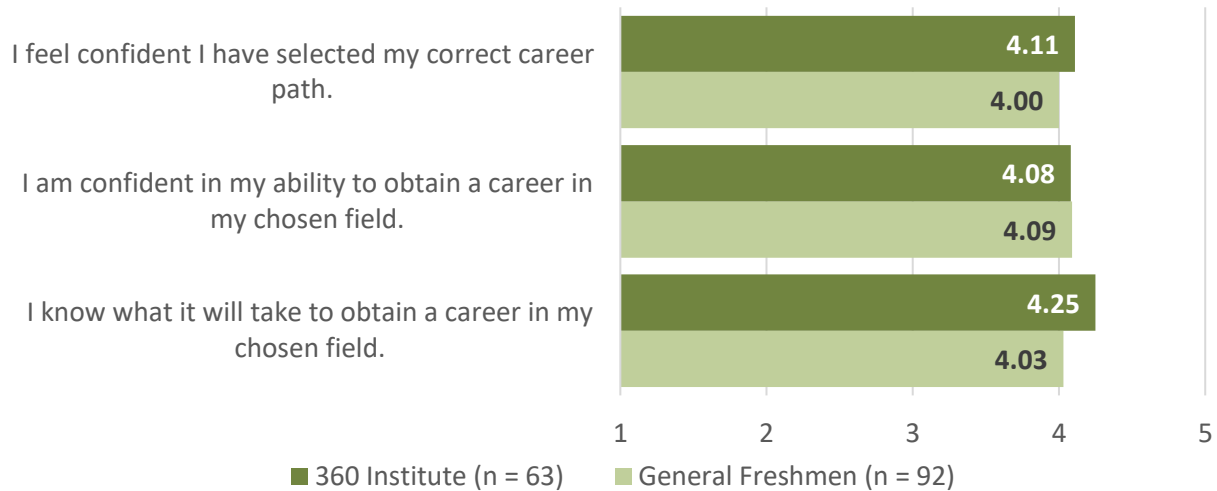
*Figure 20. Percent of Students Who Have Selected a Career Field to Pursue*





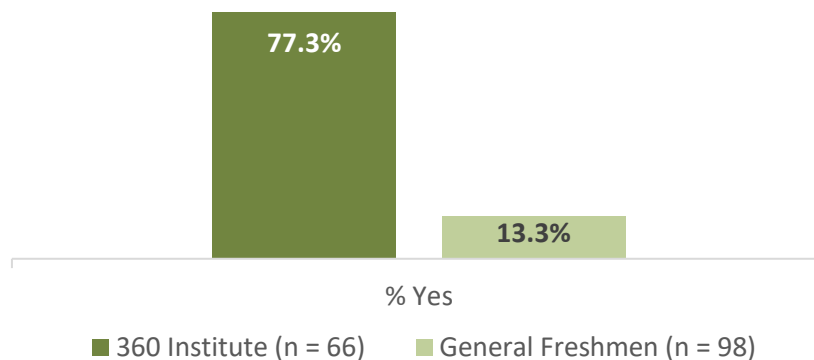
**Both general freshmen and 360 Institute students reported that they are confident in their ability to obtain a career in their chosen field.** Similarly, both general freshmen and Cohort 3 360 Institute students reported that they know what it will take to obtain a career in their chosen field and that they have selected the correct career path (see Figure 21).

*Figure 21. Students' Average Rating Related to Career Readiness (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



Over three-quarters of the 360 Institute student survey respondents (77.3%, n = 51) reported meeting with a career counselor at GTC. A much smaller percentage of general freshmen (13.3%, n = 13) survey respondents reported meeting with a career counselor (see Figure 22). **This finding shows that 360 Institute students were far more likely to have met with a career counselor at GTC than general freshman.**

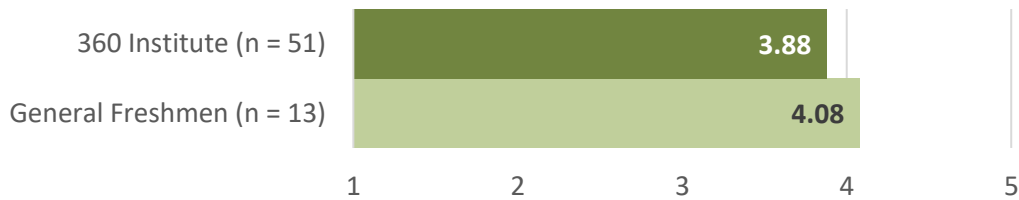
*Figure 22. Percent of Students Who Have Met with a Career Counselor at GTC*



Of the thirteen general freshmen who have met with a career counselor at GTC, they most commonly agreed that they received the support they needed from meeting with a career

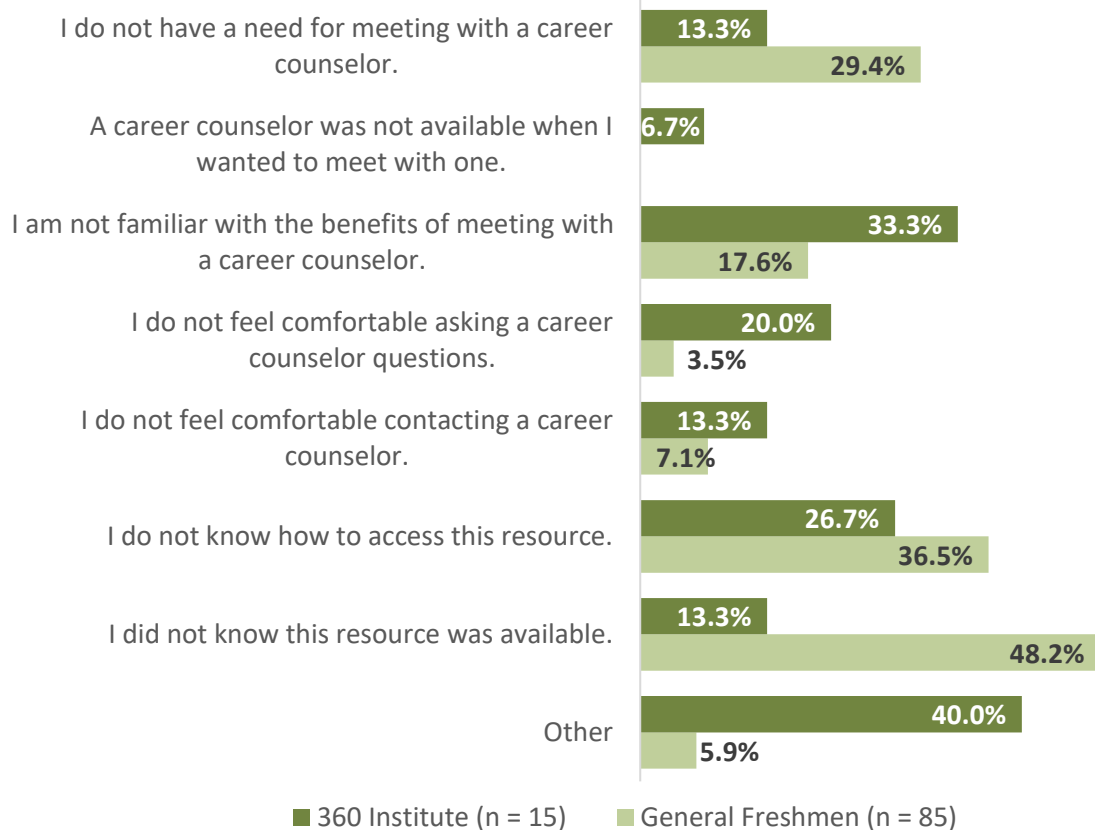
counselor. The Cohort 3 360 Institute students who had met with a career counselor (n = 51) were slightly less likely to report they received the support needed from meeting with a career counselor (see Figure 23).

Figure 23. Students' Average Rating Related to Receiving the Support they Needed from a Career Counselor (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)



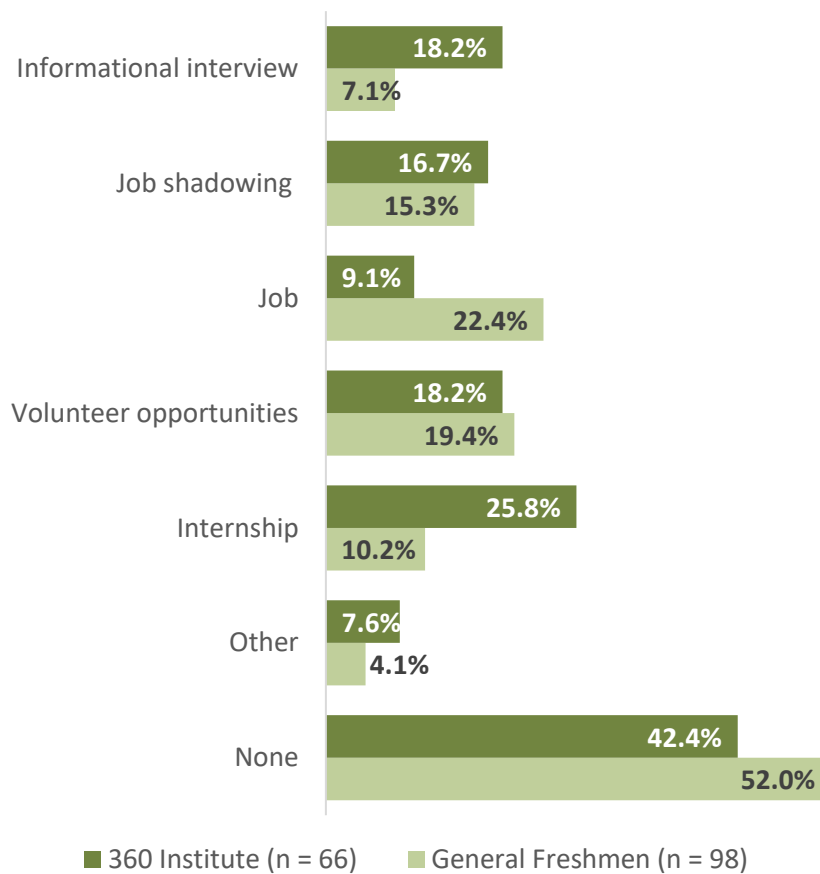
Among the survey respondents who had not met with a career counselor, almost half of general freshman (48.2%, n = 41) reported that they did not know this resource was available as compared to 13.3% (n = 2) of Cohort 3 360 Institute students who reported not knowing this resource was available (see Figure 24). **This finding suggests that students in the 360 Institute are more aware of the career counseling services available at GTC.** Across all students who selected “other,” the most commonly cited reason for not meeting with a career counselor was due to a lack of time.

Figure 24. Reasons Why Students Have Not Met with a Career Counselor at GTC (Select all that apply)



As shown in Figure 25, students shared the types of hands-on learning opportunities they have participated in to help prepare for their chosen career. Cohort 3 360 Institute students were typically involved in internships (25.8%, n = 17), while general freshmen most commonly prepared for their chosen careers through job opportunities (22.4%, n = 22). **This finding suggests that 360 Institute students are more likely to participate in an informational interview and internship to prepare for their career than general freshman.** Approximately 42% (n = 28) of Cohort 3 360 Institute students and 52% (n = 51) of general freshman had not yet participated in any hands-on learning opportunities to prepare for their career.

*Figure 25. Types of Hands-On Learning Opportunities Students Have Participated in to Prepare for Their Career (Select all that apply)*





## 360 INSTITUTE

*The 360 Institute is a cohort of students who receive support services in academic, career, and financial advising. Students prepare for their careers through an internship or other career readiness opportunities.*

### Key Findings

- The majority of Cohort 1 and 2 students learned about the 360 Institute via email and chose to apply due to the high touch advising support, paid internship opportunity, and desire for community.
- The 360 Institute experience exceeded Cohort 1 and 2 students' expectations.
- Cohort 1 and 2 students found the monthly check-ins with their advisor, BudgetCon, the campus scavenger hunt, financial planning workshops, and connection to various resources and services especially helpful.
- Over half (65.4%, n = 64) of general freshman survey respondents indicated that they would have been interested in joining the 360 Institute had they been aware of the opportunity.
- Cohort 1 and 2 students recommended increasing marketing efforts, improving Blackboard content, providing more workshops, expanding job interview practice, increasing efforts to foster community, providing clear structure for second year students in the program, and providing tutoring services as ways for improving the 360 Institute.
- The majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute student survey respondents learned about the 360 Institute through GTC communication outreach and the application process.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute student survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the program to other eligible students.

### Reasons for Joining the 360 Institute

The majority of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students learned about the 360 Institute via email informing them of the opportunity to apply. Overall, students shared that they were compelled to apply to the program for tailored advising support, paid internship opportunities, and to find community. Many students expressed the need for additional advising support beyond what their general academic advisor or parents were able to provide as they became oriented to community college. A few students indicated that they were first-generation college students or non-traditional students and felt they needed more support while pursuing college at GTC to

help them succeed. Examples of students' explanations for joining the 360 Institute are shared below:

---

*"I thought it was great just knowing that I would have a team to work with of advisors and career coaches, financial coaches, and just all the resources; it made it interesting to me."*

---

*"For me, as a non-traditional student, it just helped me transition back to school."*

---

*"It seemed like it would be a good way to have support since nobody else in my family had ever been to college. There were a lot of things I really didn't know about. I felt it would be a great support team so I can understand and ask questions."*

---

*"I felt my advisor that I was assigned to that was not affiliated with the 360 Institute was not really helping in the way I needed them to. I felt like seeking other advisors and this program seemed to really cater to the needs of incoming students that have never been to college before."*

---

*"I saw the internship and it looked like a good experience. I thought I would not be able to do it by myself and this program would probably help me with that."*

---

Both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students shared that they hoped to make friends through the 360 Institute, stating that it can be difficult to meet people and find a sense of community at GTC due to the nature of it being a commuter-only community college. One student noted, "I just wanted to get experience and also gain friendships and meet new people. Because community college is not the college life experience that you get at a four-year school. It was nice to come together and have conversations." Students also hoped to gain valuable career experience and receive guidance for a clear path toward graduating or transferring to a four-year institution.

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*"I was really excited about the internship. I wanted to learn more about professionalism, and that really met my expectations because my advisor was really helpful in keeping me on task with my internship as well as my classes."*

---

*"For me, my expectation was to have someone who was going to be able to help me formulate a plan for me to graduate. Having that structure of someone who is making sure you're taking the correct classes. Because I've had advisors before who would tell me to take this class and this and it didn't lead up to anything. So having that person who went and actually did the paperwork to show exactly where these classes were going and putting it into a process that I understood, that's exactly what I wanted and definitely met it."*

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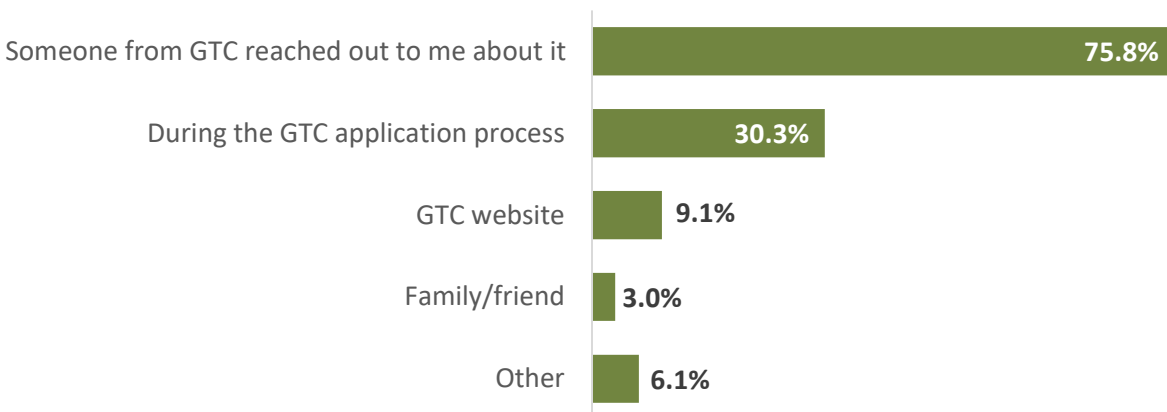
*“Having community. Being able to see familiar faces is something you don't get a lot in community colleges because you just come in and you take the class and leave usually. That's just the dynamic of a community college, unfortunately. Having those contacts really did make it worth it.”*

---

Students in Cohort 3 shared their reasons for participating in the 360 Institute via the student survey. Cohort 3 students joined the program primarily because they believed that it would fulfill their college support needs and they wanted access to the range of benefits that the program offers, particularly the guidance provided by the 360 Institute staff. Like students from Cohorts 1 and 2, a few Cohort 3 students felt that the added support the program offers would be particularly beneficial for them as first-year college students. Other reasons that Cohort 3 students provided for joining the 360 Institute included receiving help with career selection, career preparation, managing their finances, and having opportunities to participate in internships and job shadowing, which echoed reasons provided by Cohort 1 and 2 students.

Approximately three-quarters of the Cohort 3 360 Institute students (75.8%, n = 50) learned about the 360 Institute from someone at GTC who reached out about it, while a little under one-third (30.3%, n = 20) learned about it during the application process. Six students learned about the 360 Institute via the GTC website, while two learned about it through family or friends. Four 360 Institute students who selected “other” cited learning about the program through email, new student orientation, and a freshmen seminar class (see Figure 26).

*Figure 26. How Students Learned About the 360 Institute (n = 66)*



During the focus groups, when asked if the program met student expectations, multiple Cohort 1 and 2 students responded by stating, “the program exceeded my expectations,” and all additional students commented or nodded in agreement. Students cited the unwavering

support from advisors, internship opportunities, informational interviews, and connection to resources at GTC and in the community as all ways in which the 360 Institute exceeded their expectations.

*“I’ll definitely say they [360 Institute] exceeded the expectations I had.”*

- Cohort 1 Student

Students reported that all activities and resources provided by the 360 Institute were valuable to them. Of the activities that were most helpful, students mentioned monthly check-ins with their advisor, BudgetCon, the campus scavenger hunt, cooking on a budget workshop, and financial planning workshops. Students also reported benefiting from learning about the various resources including free mental health counseling, emergency financial assistance, and financial advising.

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*“We did a scavenger hunt to familiarize ourselves with the campus, and it was really good because you had to take pictures around the school.”*

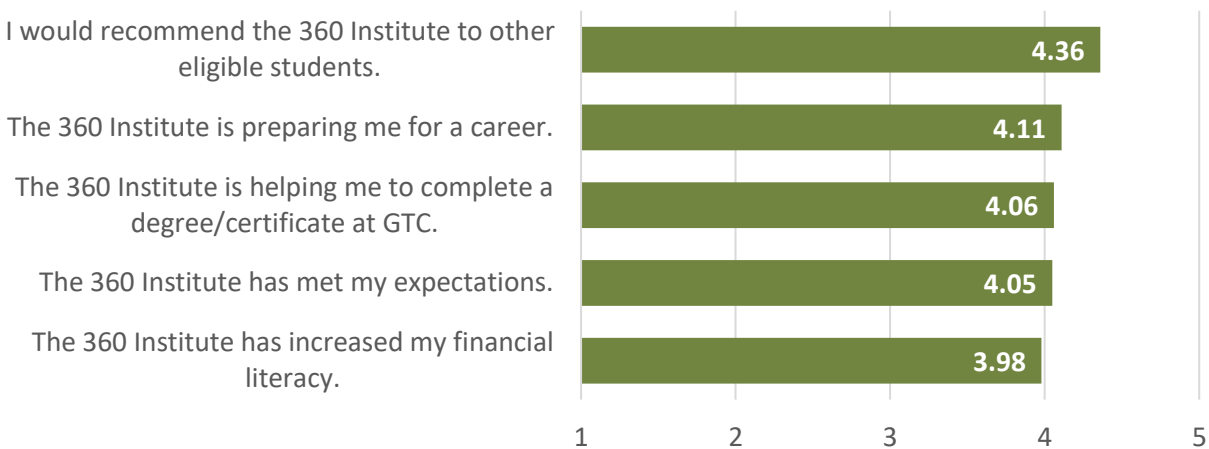
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*“A lot of financial planning and managing our money. Of course, it was optional but it’s a skillset that a lot of people don’t have and we’re all people who are starting to develop life on our own, so it helped to gain those skills.”*

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**Cohort 3 360 Institute students agreed or strongly agreed on the survey that they would recommend the program to other eligible students with an average rating of 4.36 on a 5-point scale.** Further, 360 Institute students agreed or strongly agreed that the 360 Institute is preparing them for a career, is helping them to complete a degree or certificate at GTC, and that the program has met their expectations (see Figure 27).

*Figure 27. Students’ Average Rating Related to their Experience in the 360 Institute (n = 66)  
(1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)*



## General Freshman Interest in the 360 Institute

General freshmen (not enrolled in the 360 Institute) who completed the student survey were provided with an explanation of the 360 Institute on the survey and were asked whether they would have been interested in participating in the program had they been aware of the opportunity. Ninety-eight general freshman students (N = 98) responded and 65.3% (n = 64) indicated that they would have been interested in joining the program. Of these students, 38 elaborated on their response.

Overall, the general freshmen students who would have been interested in participating in the program would have appreciated having more opportunities to gain knowledge of and experience with the career paths they had chosen or were exploring, and to participate in the internships offered through the program. Further reasons students provided for their interest in participating in the program included learning about college and GTC in general and receiving one-on-one guidance and advising. Examples of students' comments are provided below.

*"I feel like that program would help me and others to make sure the career we choose is right for us."*

*"It would be very helpful to me if I was able to participate in a program that offers internships and a seminar class so it can strengthen my portfolio and admissions application."*

*"If I had an internship for becoming an animator, I would take it so I could see if this career is a good fit for me."*

Approximately 34.7% of students (n = 34) indicated that they would not have been interested in participating in the program and 19 of these students explained their response. The general freshman students who indicated that they would not have been interested in participating in the program mainly explained that they did not need or want to be in the program, it was not necessary, or they felt content with their student experience. A few students specifically expressed that they were content with their Freshman seminar class and did not feel they needed anything further, and a few more students would have been interested in the program but did not believe that their participation in it would have been feasible, for example, due to the program they were in, or their heavy workload at school and work.



## **Student Recommendations for Improvement of the 360 Institute**

### **Improve marketing efforts and navigation to 360 Institute webpage**

Cohort 1 and 2 students agreed that the 360 Institute is not a well-known opportunity among the general student body at GTC. One student commented that they were not sure if there was webpage for the 360 Institute on the GTC website but that there should be. Other students agreed that many of the students who need this type of support are not aware of the opportunity and that many students would be interested if a greater effort was made to market the 360 Institute beyond email. Students indicated that email is not a great form of communication for them because it is not commonly checked or used by students.

### **Improve 360 Institute organization of content on Blackboard**

Cohort 1 and 2 students agreed the 360 Institute Blackboard page was very confusing to navigate and had the potential to be a great resource for students if it was more clearly organized. Students could also benefit from a walk-through of the page to get oriented to how it is organized and what is provided to them through the Blackboard page.

### **Provide more workshops on “everyday life” skills**

Cohort 1 and 2 students really appreciated the workshops like “cooking on a budget” and found them to be very helpful. Students noted that many of them are living on their own for the first time and could benefit from more workshops on basic life skills that would set them up for success such as grocery shopping on a budget, doing taxes, house maintenance, etc.

### **Expand on job interview practice**

Cohort 1 and 2 students shared that they received some interview practice as part of the 360 Institute but that there was a need for more practice with internship or job interviews.

### **Foster more community among students**

Cohort 2 students noted a desire for more community building activities and/or a greater effort to communicate on-campus activities to students. Students wished there were more non-academic activities that provided them with the opportunity to make friends, have fun, and feel a sense of community. One student suggested creating a newsletter to communicate activities and events happening on campus, noting that there are events happening but not all students are aware. Students agreed that a campus-wide improvement around communication of events, opportunities, and resources would benefit students and increase community.

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*“The whole reason I chose Greenville Tech was because they had always advertised that they had a lot going on and things to do, but, if there are activities no one really knows about them.”*

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Cohort 3 students also indicated via the student survey that they wished for more connection with other students, specifically through group activities, both in and outside of class, with perhaps alternate times offered to ensure that students could attend.

### Provide clear structure for the second year in the 360 Institute

Cohort 1 students agreed their second year was not as clearly defined as their first year and suggested providing an outline to students with defined content for what their second year in the program would look like. One student noted, “Our first year we had our internship, but our second year I was not really sure what it would entail.” Another student added, “the second year does feel pretty empty compared to the first year.” However, all Cohort 1 students agreed they were busier in their second year and appreciated having check-ins to stay on track but no additional work for the 360 Institute.

### Provide tutoring services

Cohort 2 students suggested opportunities for tutoring would be beneficial.

### Require less homework for Freshman seminar

Cohort 3 students expressed on the survey that they had been experiencing stress related to their overall course workload and preferred to focus their energy on courses other than the Freshman seminar class.

### More internship opportunities

Cohort 3 student survey respondents shared their desire for more internship opportunities overall and more variety in the opportunities given.

### Additional suggestions

Less prevalent suggestions for how the 360 Institute could be improved that were recommended by Cohort 3 students included more contact with advisors, more information about financial aid and scholarships, more information about minority majors such as EMT/Paramedic, use the Clifton Strength book less often, and offer the COL class at no cost to students.

## Program is great as is

It is worth noting that almost 20.0% of Cohort 3 student survey respondents (n = 13) felt that the program was great and did not think anything needed to be changed or added, for example, one student expressed, **“I have really enjoyed the 360 Institute and wouldn't change a thing. It has changed my experience with GTC, and it has greatly improved it.”**

### **360 Institute Team Insight**

The 360 Institute team agreed that students have gained notable value out of their internship experiences. They explained that due to state funding policy changes, not all students qualified for work-study and were not able to be placed in a paid internship, however, students not placed in internships were provided the opportunity to conduct informational interviews with professionals in their field of interest. Team members reported being pleasantly surprised by the value and insight gained by students from their informational interview experiences. In April, students presented their internship and informational interview experience, insight gained, and professional skills developed through these experiences at an end of year event held on campus. 360 Institute team members suggested that the institute provide unpaid internship-like experiences for students who do not qualify for work-study as a way to gain at least some experience in a certain field.

The 360 Institute team felt that students in the program are eager to receive advising and open to discussing both their academic and personal issues. Meeting with students twice a week in the 105 course helps to keep students engaged and build community amongst students and monthly one-on-one check-ins following 105 course completion allow advisors to get to know students on a personal level to better support their individualized needs. They also acknowledged the great need among students for mental health services that they are untrained in and unable to provide despite their efforts to support their students in all areas of their life. Team members suggested utilizing grant money for mental health support for students due to many students dropping out/stopping out of college due to severe mental health issues often compounded by basic needs insecurities.

The 360 Institute team sees students who would traditionally not excel in college instead engage and blossom at GTC with the support of the 360 Institute. This sentiment was echoed first-hand by 360 Institute students. The biggest hope among the 360 Institute team

is that the high-touch academic advising model of the 360 Institute gets implemented across the entire college. The team also noted that as the program grows to serve more students, they hope the 360 Institute is able to provide the same level of support it currently is able to provide. As the 360 Institute grows to accommodate more students, more staff may be needed to continue to provide students with the same level and quality of personalized advising.

### **Program Leadership Insight**

Program leadership sees the need for increasing awareness of the 360 Institute across campus among faculty, staff, students, and prospective students. They also see the need for additional staff within the 360 Institute to support the expansion of the program model. One program leader stated, “The biggest thing this grant does is the high touch advising. The biggest difference this grant makes is that someone truly cares about the students.” Program leadership hope to sustain the 360 Institute beyond the life of this grant and expand the 360 Institute’s model of high-touch academic advising across all college 105 courses to provide all incoming students with the support needed to start and finish their degree at GTC.



## GENERAL STUDENT FEEDBACK

*Student survey respondents also shared their future plans as students at GTC and their general satisfaction with the institution.*

### Key Findings

- Cohort 1 and 2 students reported that the support they received from the 360 Institute advisors for their academic, financial, and mental/emotional needs was invaluable in increasing their self-confidence and perseverance and played a big part in their ability to continue their education at GTC.
- Cohort 1 and 2 students reported a noticeable difference in preparedness, confidence, and awareness of resources compared to their non-360 Institute peers.
- Nearly all Cohort 3 360 Institute students were registered for Spring 2024 classes and over three-quarters of general freshmen were registered for Spring 2024 classes.
- Among students who have not registered for Spring 2024 classes, the most commonly cited reasons were transferring, not having met with an advisor yet, or financial constraints.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students are more likely than general freshman to anticipate completing their degree or certificate at GTC.
- Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend GTC to others living in the area.

Overall, Cohort 1 and 2 student focus group participants agreed that the 360 Institute played a big part in their ability to continue their education at GTC. Multiple students expressed that they would likely have not continued or completed their certificate or degree program if it were not for the support provided to them through the 360 Institute. One Cohort 1 student shared, “I don't know if I'd be where I am without their support and their encouragement and their monthly checkups and staying in contact with us even though we are technically out of the COL class. They're still as involved with us as they were last year.” Another student shared that without the resources they might have had to take a semester off stating, “Definitely knowing where the resources are has allowed me to

*“Having someone campaigning for your financial health and your education like that, to ensure that you're staying in school, you're staying on top of it is really important. They really advocate for you.”*

*- Cohort 1 Student*

stay because if I didn't know, I'd probably have to take a semester off work, save up, start again. It's just not as productive.”

Students from both Cohort 1 and 2 expressed that the support they received from the academic advisors for not only their academic needs, but also financial and mental/emotional

*“Just really having the academic advisors’ support is important. There are so many days I want to give up, but what keeps me going is knowing that I don't want to let them down. Knowing how much they really believe in me.”*

needs, was invaluable in helping them persevere and develop confidence in themselves as first-time in college or non-traditional students at GTC. One student poignantly shared, “They never doubted any of us for a second. They knew we were all capable even when we didn’t think we were, so I think as far as making sure I continue my education and growth, they played a big role in that. They’ve changed my outlook on how I perform in school and just my confidence overall.” Multiple students noted how academic advisors advocated on their behalf for fair

treatment when faculty or staff were not supportive or accommodating with life circumstances affecting their basic needs and ability to meet course requirements. This allowed a few students to pass classes and continue with their education without which they may have had to retake and repay for courses, further delaying their academic progress at GTC.

360 Institute students were asked if they noticed a difference in their preparedness to continue their education compared to their non-360 Institute peers. Students reported a noticeable difference in their preparedness, confidence, and awareness of resources.

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*“I have a couple of friends who aren’t in the 360 program and I can just tell a big difference overall with not just their performance, but their mental health and their preparedness. I felt like even with my classes, I was more prepared, and I saw a future with it and felt confident because of their [360 advisors] advocacy that my friends didn't have. I can see they're still trying to get through and they're struggling, but I feel like I'm not struggling because of the 360 Institute, because they're helping me and I just wish that everybody could have that.”*

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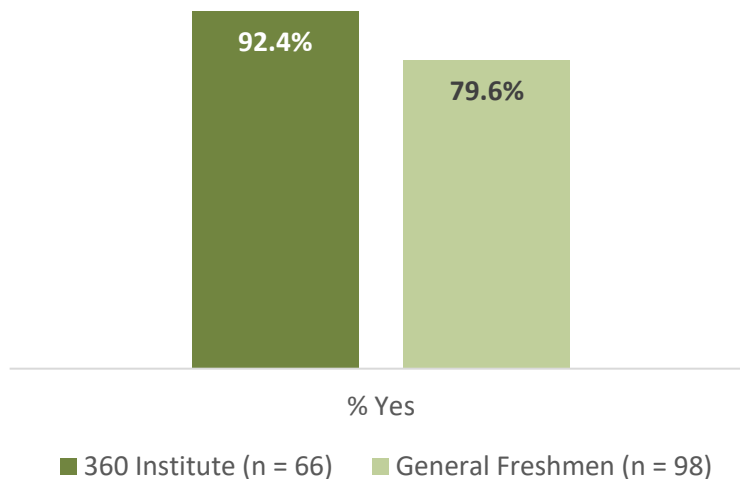
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*“I just feel like it was more personalized to have an advisor that doesn't have a gazillion students under their bracket. I know advisors are probably overwhelmed with how many students they have to respond to but the 360 program really allowed our [360] advisors to spend more time with us and really make sure that we get the best out of it. It was just really helpful to have that support. I hope that goes on for the next cohorts too and not just because we were the first.”*

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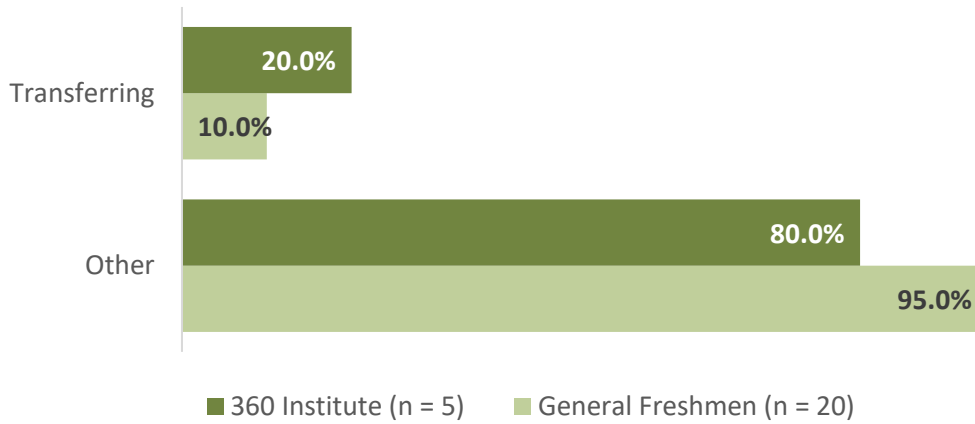
A large majority of Cohort 3 360 Institute students have registered for classes at GTC for the Spring 2024 semester, with 92.4% (n = 61) registered, while over three quarters (79.6%, n = 78) of general freshmen registered (see Figure 28). **Although both are high rates, the registration rate for 360 Institute students was 12.8 percentage points higher than general freshmen.**

*Figure 28. Percent of Students Who Are Registered for Spring 2024 Classes*



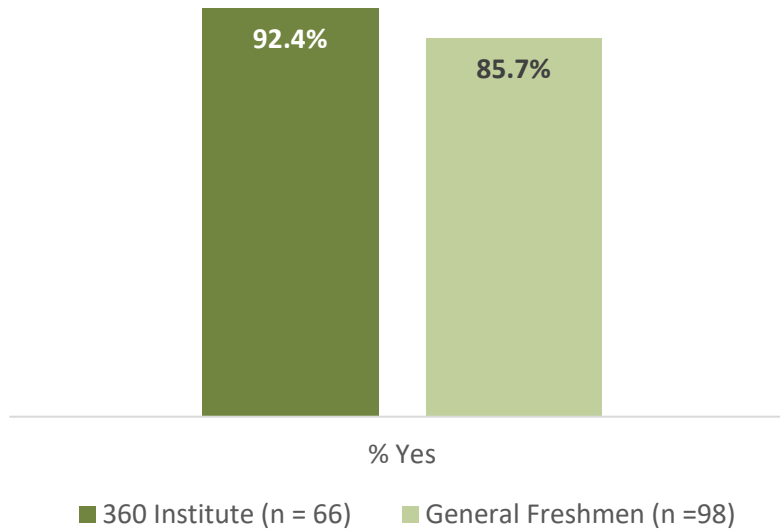
Of the five Cohort 3 360 Institute students who have not registered for Spring 2024 classes, one reported “transferring,” while the remaining cited “other” reasons. Of those who selected “other,” the reasons included: changing academic majors, needing to meet with an advisor, and feeling generally unsure about their continuation at GTC. Of the general freshmen (n = 20) who are not registered for Spring 2024 classes, 10.0% (n = 2) reported transferring, while the remaining (95.0%, n = 19) cited “other” reasons. Other reasons general freshmen shared for not being registered for Spring 2024 classes include: needing to meet with an advisor, not having the time yet to register, and financial concerns. Zero survey respondents (n = 0) selected “graduating” or “I don’t anticipate enrolling at GTC next term and I am not transferring or graduation.”

Figure 29. Unregistered Students' Reasons for Not Being Registered for Spring 2024 Classes (Select all that apply)



Approximately 92.4% (n = 61) of Cohort 3 360 Institute students anticipate completing their degree or certificate program at GTC and 85.7% (n = 98) of general freshmen anticipate completing their degree or certificate program at GTC (see Figure 30).

Figure 30. Percent of Students Who Anticipate Completing a Degree or Certificate Program at GTC



Of the fourteen general freshman who reported that they did not anticipate completing their degree or certificate program at GTC, a strong majority (92.9%, n = 13) reported transferring as their reason (see Figure 31 on following page). Zero survey respondents (n = 0) selected financial obstacles, time constraints/schedule conflicts, academic struggles, or more support services needed.

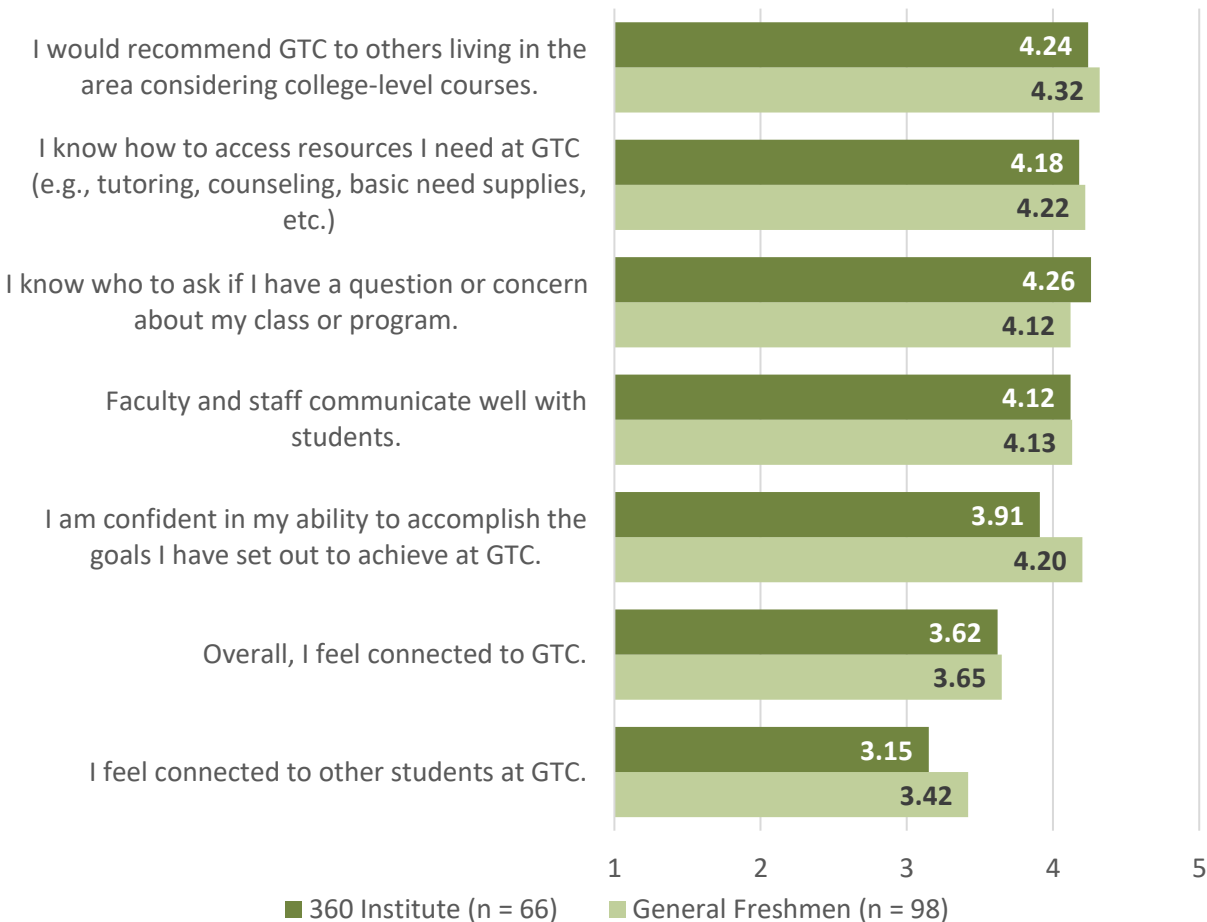


Figure 31. Top Reasons Preventing General Freshmen from Completing a Degree or Certificate Program at GTC (Select all that apply)



Student survey respondents rated their level of agreement with various statements about GTC on a 5-point scale. Cohort 3 360 Institute students and general freshmen provided similar ratings on all statements, indicating that they know how to access resources at GTC, know who to go to if they have questions or concerns about their classes or program, and that faculty and staff communicate well with students. **Further, both groups of students agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend GTC to others living in the area considering college-level courses** (see Figure 32).

Figure 32. Students' Average Rating Related to General Experiences at GTC (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)





## SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

*The grant is focused on increasing persistence, retention, and graduation rates for 360 Institute students, as well as other indicators of student success.*

### Key Findings

- Student outcomes for 360 Institute students in Cohort 2 surpassed all objectives related to advising, and notably exceeded the objective of completing a schedule for the fall semester by August of their first academic year by 29.1 percentage points.
- Cohort 2 students exceeded the fall to spring persistence objective by increasing persistence by 11.8 percentage points. While Cohort 2 students did not yet meet with retention objective, Cohort 2 students saw a 15.8 percentage point higher rate in retention compared to Cohort 1.

The Title III grant set objectives regarding student participation and achievement in various grant components related to advising, financial literacy, and career readiness. The Title III project team is tracking 360 Institute student participation in such activities as Freshman seminar, meetings with advisors, internships, informational interviews, and career readiness training to name a few. GTC intends for these high-touch activities to support students in developing well-defined goals and plans to achieve those goals, while also building relationships. As such, the primary objectives of the grant are for 360 Institute students to experience academic success as demonstrated by higher persistence, retention, and graduation rates compared to baseline data. The information below outlines grant objectives and outcome data for Cohort 1 (n = 39) and Cohort 2 (n = 55) students related to these objectives.

#### *360 Institute Freshmen Seminar*

More than 90% (90.9%, n = 50) of the Cohort 2 students completed the 360 Institute freshmen seminar in Fall 2023, showing a 6.3 percentage point improvement compared to Cohort 1 with a course completion rate 84.6% (n = 33). Of the students who completed the course, five Cohort 2 course completers did not pass and six Cohort 1 course completers did not pass. The eight Cohort 2 students and six Cohort 1 students who did not complete the course withdrew due to health concerns and family obligations.

#### *Advising & Planning*

The Title III grant outlined objectives related to advising in the first academic year of the program, which are included in the table below along with related data for Cohorts 1 and 2. Table 1 demonstrates that Cohort 1 students exceeded the first two advising objectives and almost met the third objective during the 2021-22 academic year. **Cohort 2 students exceeded**

**all advising objectives during the 2022-23 academic year.** More specifically, Cohort 2 students exceeded the objective of meeting with an advisor at least once monthly from September to April by 12.7 percentage points and exceeded the objective of being advised for the subsequent semester by November of their first semester by 15.5 percentage points. **Cohort 2 students also exceeded the objective of completing a schedule for the fall semester by August of their first academic year by 29.1 percentage points, which was 30.1 percentage points greater than Cohort 1 of the previous year.**

*Table 2. Advising Objectives*

Objectives	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
60% of Cohort participants will achieve program requirements to meet with an advisor at least once monthly from September to April of their first year.	89.7% (n = 35/39)	72.7% (n = 40/55)
70% of Cohort participants will be advised for the subsequent semester by November of their first semester.	92.3% (n = 36/39)	85.5% (n = 47/55)
60% of Cohort participants will complete a schedule for the fall semester by August following their first year.	59.0% (n = 23/39)	89.1% (n = 49/55)

### *Financial Literacy*

The table below shows grant objectives related to financial literacy in the first academic year for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students. Approximately one-third of Cohort 2 students had met with a representative of the Financial Education Center or a financial literacy coach at least four times during the 2022-23 academic year. While this did fall short of the objective, **Cohort 2 showed improvement with an increase of 7.1 percentage points when compared to Cohort 1.** Similar to Cohort 1, a majority of Cohort 2 students completed more than 60% of the financial literacy modules—an indicator of knowledge of financial literacy concepts—Cohort 2 also fell short on this objective.

*Table 3. Financial Literacy Objectives*

Objectives	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
60% of Cohort participants will meet every other month with a representative of the Financial Education Center from September to April of their first year.	25.6% (n = 10/39)	32.7% (n = 18/55)
70% of Cohort participants will demonstrate knowledge of financial literacy concepts as defined by the National Council for Economic Education.	51.3% (n = 20/39)	52.7% (n = 29/55)

*Career Readiness*

**Cohort 2 students exceeded three objectives related to career readiness**, as noted in Table 3 below. During Year 2 of the grant, GTC learned that there are financial aid obstacles to placing students in internships. As a result, the college determined that future cohorts (starting with Cohort 2) would be eligible to participate in either the internship or other career readiness experiences. While Cohort 2 students saw a decline in the percent of students placed in an on-campus internship, **of the Cohort 2 students who were placed in an internship (n = 16), 100% completed the internship, increasing the completion rate by 12.5 percentage points when compared to Cohort 1.** Six Cohort 2 students participated in informational interviews in place of an internship. Additionally, **all Cohort 2 students (100%, n = 55) had chosen a career field by the end of their first semester, an increase of 12.8 percentage points when compared to Cohort 1.**

*Table 4. Career Readiness Objectives*

Objectives	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
60% of Cohort participants will meet with a career counselor every other month from September to April of their first year in preparation for the on-campus internship program.	89.7% (n = 35/39)	41.8% (n = 23/55)
By the end of December of their first year, 70% of Cohort participants will have chosen a career field.	87.2% (n =34/39)	100% (n = 55/55)
70% of Cohort participants will demonstrate knowledge of Career Readiness Competencies as defined by NACE by January of their first year.	56.4% (n = 22/39)	65.5% (n = 36/55)
60% of Cohort participants will be placed in an on-campus internship program (or other career readiness experience) by December of their first year.	61.5% (n = 24/39)	40.0% (n = 22/55)
60% of Cohort participants will complete the on-campus internship by December of their first year.	53.8% (n = 21/39)	29.0% (n = 16/55)
60% of Cohort participants who were placed in the on-campus internship will complete the internship by December of their first year	87.5% (n = 21/24)	100% (n = 16/16)
70% of on-campus internship supervisors will complete evaluations on Cohort participants by December of their first year.	100% (n = 21/21)	100% (n = 14/14)

When exploring career counseling sessions further, evaluators learned that 89% of Cohort 2 students (n = 49) had met with a career counselor between September 2022 and April 2023.

These students met with a career counselor an average of 3.3 times from September 2022 to April 2023. The decline in the percent of Cohort 2 students that met with a career counselor every other month may have been impacted by the career counselor position experiencing vacancies and medical leave. It is also important to note that students' career meetings often overlapped with advising, which may have contributed to an underestimate of the total number of career-related appointments.

360 Institute students also completed a Knowledge of Career Readiness Competencies self-assessment at two timepoints. The competencies were defined by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Over three-quarters of Cohort 2 students (78.2%, n = 43) completed the self-assessment in November 2022. In April 2023, internship supervisors completed the same assessment about the 14 students who participated in an internship. Among the 14 students who completed an internship by June 30, 2023, 100% demonstrated working knowledge of the career readiness indicators defined by NACE, as reported by their internship supervisors.

*Persistence*

As shown in Table 5, **Cohort 2 students exceeded the fall to spring persistence objective by increasing persistence by 11.8 percentage points, an increase of 0.7 percentage points compared to Cohort 1.** Further, 78.2% (n = 43) of Cohort 2 students persisted in the 360 Institute from fall 2022 to spring 2023, an increase of 3.8 percentage points as compared to the 74.4% (n = 19) of Cohort 1 students who persisted in the 360 Institute from fall 2021 to spring 2022.

*Table 5. Persistence Objective*

<b>Objective:</b> Increase student persistence for Cohort participants 10% over college baseline persistence.			
<b>GTC Baseline</b>	<b>Cohort 1</b>	<b>GTC Baseline</b>	<b>Cohort 2</b>
Persistence rate for first-time freshmen from fall 2021 to spring 2022	Persistence rate (fall 2021 to spring 2022)	Persistence rate for first-time freshmen from fall 2022 to spring 2023	Persistence rate (fall 2022 to spring 2023)
<b>71%</b>	<b>82.1% (n = 32/39)</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>81.8% (n = 45/55)</b>

*Retention*

As shown in Table 6, **Cohort 2 students were retained at GTC from fall 2022 to fall 2023 at a rate of 61.8% (n = 34), an increase of 16.8 percentage points compared to the GTC baseline.** Although the retention rate of Cohort 2 students does not meet the objective of a 20% increase, it has improved since Cohort 1 with an increase of 15.8 percentage points. All 34 students who were retained at GTC in fall 2023 were also retained in the 360 Institute.

*Table 6. Retention Objective*

<b>Objective:</b> Increase student retention for Cohort 1 participants 20% over college baseline retention rate.			
<b>GTC Baseline</b> Retention rate for first-time freshmen from fall 2021 to fall 2022	<b>Cohort 1</b> Retention rate from fall 2021 to fall 2022	<b>GTC Baseline</b> Retention rate for first-time freshmen from fall 2022 to fall 2023	<b>Cohort 2</b> Retention rate from fall 2022 to fall 2023
<b>49%</b>	<b>46.2% (n = 18/39)</b>	<b>45%*</b>	<b>61.8% (n = 34/55)</b>

*\*This is the unofficial estimate as the official percentage will become available in March 2024*

### *Graduation*

Although the project team has shared that some Cohort 1 360 Institute students have graduated or transferred to another college, it is too early to assess graduation rates for students who started at GTC in fall 2021. As of Fall 2023, 13 students from Cohort 1 had graduated from GTC. Data around the three-year graduation rates will be shared in the Year 4 evaluation report.

*Table 7. Cohort 1 Three-Year Graduation Rate Objective*

Graduation Objective	GTC baseline three-year graduation rate for first-time full-time freshmen who enrolled in 2014	360 Institute Cohort 1 three-year graduation rate
Increase the graduation rate of Cohort 1 participants 30% over college baseline graduation rate.	11.8%	N/A

### *Other Academic Outcomes*

On average, the first semester GPA for the Cohort 2 students was 2.60, which is 0.5 percentage points higher than Cohort 1 students. **The average GPA is notably higher at 3.08 when assessing the 34 Cohort 2 students who were retained in the 360 Institute program until fall 2023.**

# Evaluation Insights

- 1.** Almost half of faculty/staff respondents (44.5%, n = 98) completed one or more professional development training. GTC could consider making the poverty simulator and other related professional development trainings mandatory for all faculty moving forward, especially given that those who attended these trainings provided positive feedback.
- 2.** According to faculty, the top three reasons for students dropping out/stopping out of college are 1) childcare issues, 2) working too many hours, and 3) housing insecurity. Efforts to build faculty awareness of the prominence of issues students face like food insecurity, in addition to the top three reasons faculty selected, may be needed to keep faculty accurately informed of the extent to which students are facing these issues.
- 3.** Faculty/staff suggested GTC provide training on student experiences that increases their empathy for students, information sessions on all the services and resources available to students, how to identify mental health issues among students and connect them to services, how to make fair and effective accommodations for struggling students, how to engage in difficult conversations while protecting student privacy and dignity, and how to support students with cognitive differences. A full list of faculty recommendations can be found on page 12.
- 4.** The 360 Institute experience is exceeding students' expectations and the self-reported impact the program has had on students in addition to the observations of advisors and program leadership is compelling evidence in support of the high touch advising model. As GTC begins to scale this program model college-wide, they should remain cautious about maintaining the quality of care and capacity to provide high touch support by keeping manageable caseload sizes for advisors and hiring additional staff, if feasible.
- 5.** 360 Institute students reported greatly benefiting from financial literacy workshops and resources provided to them through the 360 Institute. GTC should consider expanding this financial literacy programming college-wide to benefit all students, which may contribute to increased retention and reduced financial barriers to persistence at GTC.
- 6.** Findings across data collection activities suggest that GTC should increase its marketing efforts of the 360 Institute to build awareness across campus. A full list of student recommendations for improving the 360 Institute can be found on page 21.
- 7.** Students, faculty, and staff also highlighted the need for one easily accessible centralized hub that lists all resources and services available to students on the GTC website.

8. The majority of general freshman survey respondents (65.4%, n = 64) indicated that they would have been interested in joining the 360 Institute had they been aware of the opportunity. This finding suggests a potential need to expand 360 Institute programming to address the notable desire for additional support in navigating academics, career, and finances among GTC freshman. This finding also indicates a potential need to expand or improve upon marketing efforts to build awareness about the opportunity to join the 360 Institute.