The perception of a community college education throughout history is viewed as lesser than that of the education at a four-year institution. Community colleges provide opportunities to students of all backgrounds with educational paths in many areas. The purpose of this study was to show that community college transfer students can excel at the same rates of their Buffalo State counterparts who do not have a community college background based on being well-performing. This study also examined the sustainability of a community college education. Additionally, this study sought to examine if/how the history of community colleges in American higher education impacts community college students today.

The outcome from college education directly correlates to socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage. It is important to understand the history behind the community college to fully appreciate it. Community college learning provides opportunities to students that they may otherwise not have access to. Community colleges were initially created under the name of “junior colleges”, otherwise known as a terminal education or not being fully a part of American higher education. Community college is an opportunity for all people to take advantage of, while its perception is that it is for those with lower grades, lack of financial resources, etc. Many students who are the top of their class in high school go to community college (Jacobson, 2011).

No participants felt that their faculty at Buffalo State had a negative connotation surrounding their community college background. In fact, several participants mentioned self-stigma regarding their community college background, as well as stigma from their family members and friends who did not have any higher education experience.

In my research, most participants stated that some or all their reasoning for attending community college was based on the financial aspect, whether that be based on the need or want for lower cost education. Participants noted that without a community college start, they would not be where they are now due to the accessibility of it. Some, but not all aspects mentioned were location, finances, and flexibility.

Many participants felt that COVID had a great impact on their community college experience, due to it being a virtual learning environment. While this was the case, these participants still spoke very highly of their community college experience and are satisfied with their decision to attend. Several participants stated that they were well-performing at their community college and at Buffalo State alike. My research shows a pattern of self-motivation and drive, not based upon institution type.

I am happy to report that participants feel pride in their community college background and can recognize the positive impact it has had on them. Almost all participants mentioned that Buffalo State made their transition from community college to a four-year institution feasible. Buffalo State seems to provide great levels of support for students coming from a community college educational background.

Based on my research, Buffalo State respects its students’ backgrounds and respects all options as equally viable. This is important for students to feel a sense of belonging at Buffalo State, and most participants mentioned this feeling.