Research article

Paving the Road to Success: A Framework for Implementing the *Success Tutoring* Approach

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Abstract

The exponential growth of higher education enrolment in South Africa has resulted in increased diversity of the student body, leading to a proliferation of factors that affect student performance and success. Various initiatives have been adopted by tertiary institutions to mitigate the negative impact these factors may have on student success, and it is suggested that interventions that include aspects of social integration are the most successful. This paper outlines an approach called Success Tutoring (a non-academic tutorial approach used as part of a student success and support programme in the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand), which is underscored by empirical evidence drawn from evaluation data collected during Success Tutor symposia. The authors draw conclusions and make recommendations based on a thematic analysis of the dataset, and ultimately provide readers with a framework for implementing Success Tutoring at their tertiary institutions.

Keywords

higher education; non-academic support; student success; student support; tutorial approach; tutorial framework

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Introduction

The massification of higher education both locally and abroad (Bai, 2006; Hornsby & Osman, 2014; Luckett & Sutherland, 2000) has led to an influx of diverse, non-traditional[1] student populations (e.g. minorities and those whose access has been hampered by socio-economic circumstances in the past) to universities. Many of them are underprepared (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011; Loots, 2009) first-generation students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Rendon, 1994; Jacklin & Robinson, 2007; Loots, 2009; Wilmer, 2008). Their expectations of university are frequently determined by their experience at school (Hill, 1995; Jacklin & Robinson, 2007), which usually sees them underestimate the demands and workload of university studies (Loots, 2009). Consequently students have high expectations for themselves based on their perceived academic competence in Grade 12 (Loots, 2009). They may thus enter university with a false sense of security and ability that makes them vulnerable to the pressures and expectations of university studies. For this reason, those passionate about the student success agenda often aim to establish structures, interventions, and/or programmes to enhance student success (Engelbrecht, Harding & Potgieter, 2014; Hatch, 2016; Perez & Ceja, 2010).

This article proposes a framework for an approach called *Success Tutoring* and could be read in conjunction with a preceding article (De Klerk, Spark, Jones & Maleswena, 2017), which outlines the student success programme the approach emanates from. For purposes of this study, student success in the South African context is defined as a university student's ability to: cope with the transition from high school to university (McGhie & Du Preez, 2015); progress through the first year of study (Andrews & Osman, 2015; Manik, 2015); graduate from their degree of choice (Andrews & Osman, 2015; McGhie & Du Preez, 2015) within five years of first registration (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007); manage the psychosocial, socio-economic, cultural (McGhie & Du Preez, 2015), and academic demands (Potgieter, Harding, Kritzinger, Somo & Engelbrecht, 2015) posed by university studies; and access relevant academic and non-academic support structures on university campuses (McGhie & Du Preez, 2015). As an additional point of clarification, this study focuses on the provision of non-academic support by concentrating on the non-academic factors that may influence a student's academic performance and success, and excludes any form of academic tutoring. Non-academic factors may include (but are not limited to) excellence skills, psychosocial factors, mental health challenges, and emotional well-being. What follows is an overview of prominent dimensions linked to tutorial approaches, as outlined in the literature.

[1] Moscati (2004) and Jacklin and Robinson (2007) highlight changes in higher education student demographics over the last twenty years, speaking of a shift from "…more traditional student cohorts […] to a more diverse student body…" (Moscati, 2004, p. 380). Here diversity denotes things like experience, student background and education, age, and motivation for studying, to name a few (Moscati, 2004; Jacklin & Robinson, 2007). As such, increased diversity means the student body we have today is different from what it was in the past (i.e. the tradition has changed).

Literature and Context

While intelligence and motivation may have been the *major* predictors of student success in the past, the diversity of present-day student populations brings into play a far greater number of factors. These include, but are not limited to, students' personal, social and academic circumstances, as well as the university staff and processes that determine whether students perform and progress at university (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009; Karp, 2011; Maitland & Lemmer, 2011). While some consider it the responsibility of the student to adapt, others believe universities have an obligation to accommodate students (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009; Rendon, 1994; Jacklin & Robinson, 2007; Loots, 2009), particularly those who are unable to integrate into university independently and require active intervention by lecturers, tutors, and/or other university staff to help them participate in activities and ultimately succeed (Karp, 2011; Rendon, 1994).

This may be particularly true for non-traditional university students whose family and friends are at times sceptical of them attending university or may even discourage it (Rendon, 1994). Despite many support interventions at universities to prevent student failure, dropout rates remain high (Karp, 2011; Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009) and may be attributed to: interventions that are only academic in nature (e.g. academic support tutorials or extended degree programmes); passive interventions (e.g. referral by a lecturer to a non-academic unit for advice or guidance) when students need someone to actively provide assistance (Karp, 2011; Rendon, 1994); and/or failure to meet the needs of students (Karp, 2011). As a result various other initiatives have been introduced, such as financial workshops, student support groups, "big brothers/sisters", academic advisers or advising programmes, counselling facilities, staff-student mentoring, and peer tutoring (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004). Regardless of what it may be, it is suggested that initiatives that provide holistic support, including social, psycho-emotional, and academic help, are the most successful (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011). Moreover, non-academic support initiatives are often geared towards addressing students' academic success and may focus on a number of non-academic issues and challenges faced by university students (Karp, 2011).

One of the most important factors in student success is social integration. Students who feel isolated or lack the requisite social support may drop out (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009), with first-generation students and those studying at tertiary institutions far from home most likely to fall into this trap (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004). The literature shows that learning is a social activity (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011; Wilmer, 2008) and, despite poor academic performance, many students persevere because they have managed to realise successful social integration at their tertiary institution (Karp, 2011; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004). Correspondingly, students' interaction with someone who shows concern or takes an interest in them (particularly in the first year of study) is of great significance (Hill, 1995; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Rendon, 1994). The literature shows that informal (i.e. non-academic) contact between a student and lecturer outside the classroom positively affects the student's personal development, academic performance, social integration into the university, and satisfaction with the university experience (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Rendon, 1994; Karp, 2011), which aligns with Jacklin

and Robinson's (2007) assertion that (inter)personal support is the most important type of assistance for university students.

However, the literature shows that students remain reluctant to speak to lecturers (Cleland, Arnold & Chesser, 2005; Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009), as they often consider them unapproachable, unfriendly, or unavailable (Rendon, 1994; Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009). Correspondingly, lecturers may feel they do not have the time (owing to large student numbers) nor the ability (they lack formal training) to address and/or diagnose student problems (Hill, 1995; Tait & Entwistle, 1996; Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009). As such, lecturers may either be unwilling to provide non-academic support, unaware of non-academic support services on campus, or may not consider it their responsibility to refer students to those qualified to assist (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009). Still others may feel students should have the skills to cope, as they managed to gain admission to university (Cleland, Arnold & Chesser, 2005; Karp, 2011; Tait & Entwistle, 1996). Whatever the case may be, it is vital that students are treated with the necessary sensitivity and helped where possible. This may simply require a lecturer to listen or refer appropriately (Hill, 1995), rather than blaming students for their shortcomings, which is often the case (Loots, 2009; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004).

Of importance then is a need to take cognisance of students' preference to talk to tutors (i.e. senior students). The term 'tutor' has several connotations that are predominantly scholarly or relate to academia (Schmidt & Moust, 1995), denoting a person who typically gives academic guidance and instruction to a small group of people or an individual (Barrows, 2002). Barrows (2002) emphasises the auxiliary nature of a tutor's teaching responsibilities (i.e. supplementary to the lecturer in a tertiary institution), while Maitland and Lemmer (2011) underscore how holistic student support by tutors consistently yields far better outcomes for students. Consequently, students tend to gravitate to tutors because they are likely to possess the following attributes: approachability, relatability with a marginal age difference (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011), contextual insight and understanding, an awareness of what it means to be in the student's shoes (Loots, 2009; Maitland & Lemmer, 2011; Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009), experience succeeding at university (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011), and an appreciation for the value of student support (Loots, 2009). Subsequently, students can establish meaningful supportive relationships with individuals who influence them positively (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Maitland & Lemmer, 2011), while tutors can offer solutions to the challenges students face based on personal experience, help with academic work, and assist with finding help for both academic and non-academic concerns (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004).

The supportive role played by the tutor is particularly significant, as students are usually reluctant to admit to having personal, physical, mental health and/or financial problems (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009), which they feel are private, may have negative consequences when shared, or show weakness or an inability to cope. By forming a meaningful relationship with a tutor, students are more likely to speak out about their challenges and concerns, thus addressing Cleland, Arnold and Chesser's (2005) findings about students not knowing who to talk to regarding personal problems, or not feeling comfortable speaking

about matters of this nature. Tutors are also likely to adequately refer students to relevant counselling and support services, which makes students less likely to withdraw from their studies and has a positive effect on student achievement and retention (Walsh, Larsen & Parry, 2009).

Besides a lack of social support and integration, other factors that cause students to fail or drop out are a lack of time management, inadequate study or exam-writing skills, no/unrealistic goals, family/financial/workload pressures, and/or a fear of failure (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Loots, 2009). Not surprisingly then, programmes that bring students together help create social and learning groups where these students are taught to cope with and address these challenges. Additionally, in instances where mentoring and support are included in the support programme, student motivation, self-confidence, and engagement are improved and increased (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Rendon, 1994). Similarly, Fulk and King (2001) have found that class-wide peer-to-peer tutoring techniques make it possible to actively involve all students in the learning process, which has the added advantage of improving self-esteem and social skills among participants. Subsequently, a flexible peer-mediated strategy where students serve as tutors and tutees known as 'peer tutoring' (Hott, Walker & Sahni, 2012) allows an older or higher performing student to be paired with students in need of support, to work on academic and/or behavioural concepts they find challenging. Peer tutoring (Hott, Walker & Sahni, 2012) is common in institutions of higher learning and most syllabi are dependent on peer tutors to supplement contact time (Clarence, 2016; Hobson, 2002). The technique has a strong evidence base (Hott, Walker & Sahni, 2012; Vasquez & Slocum, 2012) and is said to aid in four ways, outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Merits of peer tutoring

1. Creates social connections	Students can get information, form study groups, become part of a community where they feel welcome and are supported, know who and where to go to, receive advice, are motivated, are helped to acclimatise, and form relationships (Karp, 2011; Loots, 2009; Wilmer, 2008).
2. Increases commitment and clarifies goals	Students may not know why university is important or understand why they are learning. Guidance by senior students is a positive interaction that suggests the relevance of the degree, provides concrete reasoning, and allows the student to visualise their future selves (Karp, 2011; Loots, 2009; Wilmer, 2008).
3. Develops know-how	Students learn what they are expected to know and do, learn about context and culture, how to navigate the system, when and where to ask for help, how to make use of services, how to manage time and participate in class, and how to study and write tests (Karp, 2011; Loots, 2009; Wilmer, 2008).
4. Makes life feasible	Students learn how to deal with other day-to-day challenges such as transport, accommodation, and food (Karp, 2011; Wilmer, 2008).

Consequently, holistic experiences that assist with psychosocial problems and that are run by well-trained, enthusiastic, and committed tutors (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011) will lead to satisfied students. If students are satisfied with a support programme it will create goodwill for future implementation (Maitland & Lemmer, 2011) and assist students by "… mak[ing] life more manageable [which] can improve student outcomes" (Karp, 2011, p. 19). Similarly, students who are involved in one intervention will likely participate in others (Loots, 2009), thus increasing their chances of succeeding at university. What follows is a framework for implementing *Success Tutoring* – an approach conceptualised and adopted by the Road to Success Programme (RSP), a non-academic student success and support programme (see De Klerk et al., 2017) in the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management (CLM) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Success Tutoring

In 2014 Teaching Development Grant funding was applied for by CLM, as part of a university-wide grant application to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Funding was awarded for four projects, one of which had to focus on supporting *students at risk* (a term used by DHET). However, the RSP (De Klerk et al., 2017) wanted to move away from the *at-risk* label and adopted a more positive, success-orientated approach for the programme. The initial target groups were first-year students and particular cohorts of struggling students, which have since grown to include all of the approximately 5 500 undergraduate students in the faculty. The initial premise for employing between 20 and 30 non-academic tutors as part of the programme was to ensure requisite capacity to service the needs of all the students who could engage with its support initiatives. But in time RSP Grant Holders and Coordinators (see De Klerk et al., 2017) learned the value (through research and practice) of involving the student experience and voice in a programme that serves the needs of students. As a result, an approach called *Success Tutoring* was conceptualised and adopted.

The concept of *Success Tutoring* refers to the support, help, and guidance provided to a student by a *Success Tutor*. *Success Tutoring* excludes any form of academic tutoring and does not relate to any one subject in particular. The emphasis here is on the non-academic factors that may influence a student's academic performance and success. Focus areas include, but are not limited to, excellence skills (e.g. time management, study skills for university, note taking, and reflective practice), strategic planning, advice and guidance on matters pertaining to personal and university life, and referral to relevant campus support services. In turn, a *Success Tutor* is a student tutor who has been trained to occupy this position. The *Success Tutor* serves as a link between the student and the university. (S)he provides advice, support, and guidance to students in relation to particular focus areas (see definition of *Success Tutoring*), drawing on personal experience and training. Accordingly, *Success Tutors* have a variety of roles and responsibilities.

Firstly, they interact with undergraduate students in group and one-on-one settings to address excellence skills. Secondly, *Success Tutors* engage with students around personal, social, and emotional challenges, usually on a one-on-one basis. Here tutors may draw on

personal experience and what they were taught during training, or they could refer the case to one of the RSP Coordinators (De Klerk et al., 2017), should it go beyond the scope of what they are able to assist with. Finally, *Success Tutors* get involved in RSP symposia, orientation week activities, the faculty's pre-university school, awareness drives, pay-it-forward campaigns, and a number of other RSP initiatives (see De Klerk et al., 2017). Consequently, a *Success Tutor* is an individual who should be able to provide non-academic support (that supplements and complements students' academic success) to undergraduate students. These tutors play an integral role in improving and evolving the RSP, thus ensuring relevance, nuance, and an element of student voice in the programme.

Recruitment

Recruitment starts towards the end of an academic year with the submission of applications by senior students (i.e. third and fourth years) in response to a call for tutors. Candidates have to be willing to: assist undergraduates with a variety of personal, social, and emotional challenges; guide undergraduates on the path to personal growth and academic success; motivate undergraduates to unlock and realise their potential; and provide undergraduates with emotional and social support. Interviews are geared at identifying individuals who possess attributes and characteristics that align with the RSP's mandate (see De Klerk et al., 2017) and occur early in the new academic year to allow adequate time for tutor training prior to the commencement of the academic year. Although *Success Tutors* do not have to possess an exceptional academic record, they should at least be averaging in the 60s, as the programme would not want to put its own tutors at risk of not succeeding. Once all interviews have been conducted, the team deliberates and then informs new *Success Tutors* of their appointment and training dates.

Training

As *Success Tutors* provide non-academic support, their training needs are different. Recruitment is followed by a two-day tutor training programme, where day one focuses on RSP in-house training and day two on Student in Distress training (conducted by the university's counselling unit). On day one newly appointed *Success Tutors* are orientated, gain a sense of their role and responsibility, and explore the mandate of the programme. Day two focuses solely on the process of assisting students in distress, counselling, and referring students if and when necessary. The two-day training session serves to ensure that *Success Tutors* gain insight into the student success and support agenda, know what is expected of them, understand when to refer cases, and know whom to refer students to.

Support

The RSP recognises the need to adequately support *Success Tutors*, to ensure they are able to fulfil their mandate. This is achieved through clear and consistent tutorial briefs for running *Success Tutorials*, opportunities to reflect and debrief, library literacy workshops, copyright and plagiarism workshops, regular engagements with the RSP team, and an annual team-

building event. Also worth mentioning is the role played by *Success Tutors* who have been part of the programme for more than one year, as they are involved in tutor training sessions and regularly share their experience and insight with new tutors.

Methodology

The evaluation of *Success Tutoring* has proven critical in terms of programme enhancement and draws on the input of *Success Tutors* through their role as students and members of the RSP team. Nygaard and Belluigi (2011) emphasise how some methods of evaluation do not address student learning (and to some extent student needs), which is why the RSP considers contributions by *Success Tutors* (i.e. the student voice) imperative. One method of evaluation used annually since the programme's inauguration in 2015 is the RSP *Success Tutor* Symposium, which provides *Success Tutors* the opportunity to share innovations and address both internal and external factors they feel could enhance the programme as a whole and/or impact on its growth or success. During this symposium each tutor has the opportunity to conduct a five-minute presentation on a key topic (usually quite broad to allow room for personal interpretation and nuance). These topics are predetermined by RSP coordinator and sent to *Success Tutors* a few weeks before the symposium (there are usually between three and five topics). The purpose is to observe the programme through a different lens (i.e. that of the student tutor), as they engage with students and experience interventions differently from staff who occupy administrative or academic positions in the university. Consequently, this approach to evaluation has proven beneficial to the RSP, while at the same time providing *Success Tutors* the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of the programme.

For the purpose of this study the authors analysed their 2015 and 2016 symposia notes (11 out of 25 *Success Tutors* participated in the former, while 17 out of 24 participated in the latter), using the principles and processes of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved individuals familiarising themselves with their datasets (i.e. the different sets of symposia notes), identifying codes and themes, comparing themes across datasets, refining themes, and naming themes. The results of this analysis yielded four main themes, one of which has five sub-themes. Theme one was identified as the *social aspect* of the RSP, which is broken down into the sub-themes of *relationship*, *integration/know-how*, *commitments/clarify goals*, *community*, and *why tutors (vs lectures)*. *Support given*, *other (non-academic) initiatives*, and *expectations of students new to the university* emerges as themes two, three, and four respectively. These themes and sub-themes were used to explicate the value of *Success Tutoring* as an approach for addressing student success needs in the faculty, which the authors believe also apply to the greater South African higher education context.

Findings and Discussion

Social aspect

The overriding theme that arose from the thematic analysis was that of *social aspect* in relation to the RSP and the idea that "learning is a social activity". This confirms the work

of Maitland and Lemmer (2011). Within this theme the responses from *Success Tutors* were broken down into five sub-themes, which are explored in more detail below.

Relationships

The analysis showed that *Success Tutors* believed it was important to interact with someone you had a connection with, which was critical for relationship building (Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Maitland & Lemmer, 2011). They felt that students *wanted to belong* and needed emotional support. In tutorials *Success Tutors* would often suggest that students *create buddies*, both with other students (particularly those in that tutorial group), as well as with the tutors. The tutors also believed that it was important for themselves to have relationships with the other *Success Tutors*, as well as with student councils and industry partners. The suggestion that relationships are important for students confirms the findings of Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004), and Maitland and Lemmer (2011), who say that students can establish relationships with tutors that can influence them positively, but also help with the challenges of university. Students are less likely to withdraw if they are assisted or referred to a unit where they can be helped, or even simply have someone to talk to or who takes an interest in them (Hill, 1995; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004; Rendon, 1994).

Integration/know-how

What also emerged from the analysis is that students want to belong and feel the need to fit in. A student may think that it is just her/him who is left out, while others appear to fit in and/or have friends, which is usually not the case. The *Success Tutors* suggest that students want to *become part of a society that talks to success* and that they need to know *how and where to ask for help*. Tutors would ask students if they have any friends to gauge possible feelings of isolation, which then gives the *Success Tutor* an opportunity to facilitate connections with other students. Walsh, Larsen and Parry (2009) found that students who feel isolated are more likely to drop out of university, so being part of a group within the RSP is likely to guard against this. In addition, Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004), and Karp (2011) suggest that students who have successfully integrated socially into university are more likely to persevere. Moreover, the *Success Tutors*' emphasis on the importance of knowing who and where to ask for assistance for both academic and non-academic issues substantiates the findings of Wilmer (2008), Loots (2009), and Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004).

Commitments/clarify goals

Another point that arose from the analysis was *Success Tutors*' perceived responsibility to help *develop the individual* and create a culture of not wasting potential. As such, they assist students with setting goals and discuss how to realise these goals. *Success Tutors* also engage with students, not just to assist with difficulties, but to *speak to them about how to succeed*. They act as motivators and believe they have a responsibility to help with the growth of the

students they interact with. This need for tutors to guide students in terms of their *future selves* is reiterated by Karp (2011), Loots (2009) and Wilmer (2008). The RSP *Success Tutors* see this as a positive duty, so that students can understand why they are at university, and where it will lead them. Additionally, *Success Tutors* see themselves as benefiting from this process, as by assisting others and interacting with other *Success Tutors*, they can also grow and succeed (Loots, 2009).

Community

This sub-theme relates to *Success Tutors*' beliefs that they have *a voice as a community* within the RSP. They see the RSP as having created *a culture of help and support* that builds students' self-esteem, as well as that of the tutors themselves. As senior students, *Success Tutors* feel they can *pass down guidelines* through their interactions and communications within their tutorial groups, which will support the students they engage with. Here the *Success Tutors* and their idea of the RSP community as a support mechanism to make students feel part of a wider group serve to substantiate the work of Karp (2011), Loots (2009) and Wilmer (2008). By involving students in the learning that takes place in tutorials, *Success Tutors* believe they are building their and the students' self-esteem, which can be related to the findings of Fulk and King (2001).

Why tutors (vs lecturers)

The analysis shows that *Success Tutors* believe they are in the extraordinary position of being able *to make university a better place for students*. Due to their age and experiences, they consider themselves more likely to: relate to students' issues; understand students' positions; and/or refer students when necessary. The tutors say *we have been there*. They understand that personality attributes like empathy, being encouraging, and being open and positive are vital, while also encouraging *the students to gain these attributes*. *Success Tutors* also feel they can draw on their own experiences (not just from an academic point of view) and *provide practical solutions* to particular challenges. What is more, as a big brother/sister they also get informal anecdotal feedback from students, which in turn helps them improve their own practice. The work of Maitland and Lemmer (2011), Loots (2009), and Walsh, Larsen and Parry (2009) are supported by the *Success Tutors*' experiences. The tutors find that students in RSP tutorial groups are more likely to talk to them owing to their closer age, and because the *Success Tutors* are more easily able to relate to the challenges students face, which they may have experienced themselves.

Support given

The second theme to emerge from the thematic analysis relates to the type of support provided to students. *Success Tutors* emphasised that students require support that does not focus on academics alone. Moreover, they make it clear that not only underprepared students gain from engaging with *Success Tutors*. Therefore the support provided by *Success Tutors* through the RSP addresses the fact that students' support needs are not necessarily

linked to academics. Consequently, *Success Tutors* provide interpersonal support geared at emotional, personal, and social challenges. This addresses Karp's (2011) comments about the failure to meet the needs of students and corroborates the findings of Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004) about the use of both academic and non-academic support interventions. It also links to the work of Maitland and Lemmer (2011), who emphasise the need for support structures that are not only academic in nature.

Other (non-academic) initiatives

The third theme revolves around other (non-academic) initiatives to support students and address student success needs. *Success Tutors* are involved in initiatives of this nature through the RSP (i.e. awareness drives and soup/hot beverage stations). However, they also expressed a need to influence undergraduate schools within the faculty to provide additional support that blends tutoring of both an academic and non-academic nature. Here the work of Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004) about the value of academic and non-academic support initiatives rings true once more. Additionally, Maitland and Lemmer's (2011) suggestion that those who provide support that covers social, psycho-emotional, and academic help are the most successful, cannot be discounted.

Expectations of students new to the university

The final theme to emerge from the analysis of symposia data relates to the expectations of students who are new to the university. *Success Tutors* highlighted that different students have different needs. Students entering the system may therefore be underprepared first-generation students who are far from home and vulnerable/overwhelmed. Additionally, *Success Tutors* often engage with introverted students who may not realise they need help coping with the demands of university. As a result, the *Success Tutors* emphasise the value of word-of-mouth to aid students in realising they need help, particularly when it seems that others are coping and they are not. The fact that students are willing to engage with *Success Tutors* regarding matters of a personal nature addresses Walsh, Larsen and Parry's (2009) findings about student reluctance to discuss matters of this nature. Moreover, *Success Tutors*' observations about first-generation students who live far from home reiterates Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth's (2004) findings, in addition to corroborating what Loots (2009) says about managing student expectations in light of *Success Tutors* having *been there*. What is reassuring then is that RSP *Success Tutors* are engaging with students new to the university, which Walsh, Larsen and Parry (2009) claim has a positive effect on student achievement and retention.

Conclusion

South African higher education has seen an exponential growth in student numbers, placing severe pressure on the resources of universities and directly impacting on student success. The subsequent necessity for student support initiatives that supplement and complement the academic and non-academic student experience have become non-negotiable. In this

paper the authors shared a framework for implementing *Success Tutoring*, a tutorial approach that forms part of the student success and support programme they run. Those looking to implement *Success Tutoring* should remember that the recruitment and adequate training of suitable candidates to occupy *Success Tutor* positions is imperative to providing students with the support they feel they need and to assist with their socialisation at university. This requires individuals who are passionate about student success and support, motivated, driven, and who understand the challenges faced by South African students. Senior undergraduate or honours-level students are most likely to fit this profile, as students are likely to find them approachable and relate to them better. The approach also captures the student voice, which is essential for addressing student needs and to evaluate and enhance the student success and support programme the *Success Tutors* are affiliated with (if any). Ultimately, *Success Tutors* perform an intermediate function between academic support (which is discipline and/or subject specific) and non-academic support (which is geared at factors influencing academic success). *Success Tutors* are therefore knowledgeable about the content of their specific fields of study, can provide insight on excellence skills that are tailored to supplement academic activities, and also play a non-academic role in terms of being empathetic/sympathetic by providing support for students who are struggling with a range of issues that can adversely affect student success.[2]

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[2] Future research initiatives will explore the experience of students who have engaged with the Road to Success Programme (De Klerk, et al., 2017) and with *Success Tutors*, to better understand the needs, expectations, and challenges students face.

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