

Challenges, Resources, & the MATC Student Experience

A Local 212 MATC FAST FUDN & BLEST
Hub Research Collaboration

Fall 2022

Compiled by BLEST Hub
Center for Urban Research, Teaching, and Outreach
Marquette University

Overview of The Research

The collaboration between the Black and Latino/a Ecosystem and Support Transition (BLEST) Hub and Local 212 MATC FAST Fund began in 2022 to systematically investigate MATC students' needs and experiences.

MATC serves a diverse student body, with 55% identifying as students of color and a goal of becoming an Hispanic Serving Institution. Many students have marked academic and financial needs given historical and structural inequities in Milwaukee.

The FAST Fund is an initiative of the MATC faculty union to provide emergency financial support to these students. The work has been serving many MATC students for years, and this impact report is partly intended to capture the fruits of their work.

The work also aligns with the BLEST Hub's mission to build better understandings of the resources and trajectories of Milwaukee area Black and Latino/a students and to harness our research expertise to support synergies and development of this work.

LOGISTICS

The collaboration started with a survey in the spring of 2022. Based on this, we developed a second iteration for the fall of 2022. Questions were jointly developed among the partners.

Overall, the survey was slated to take approximately 20 minutes and was sent out to all applicants for FAST Fund support over the last year.

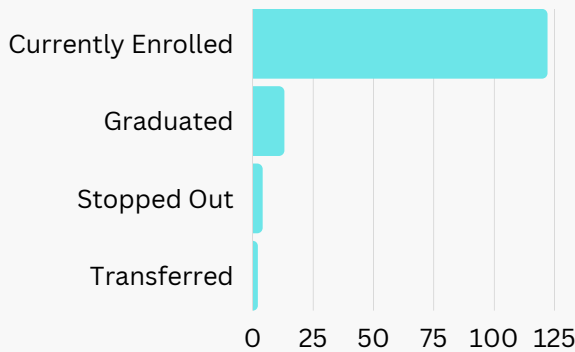
Participants



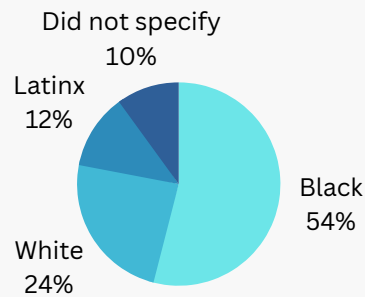
149

Completed the majority of the survey (208 started it)

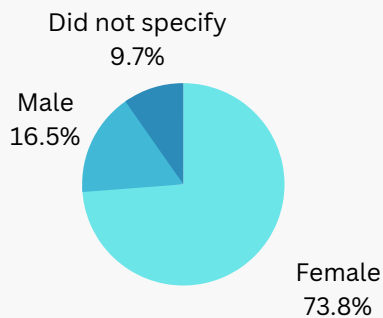
01 Degree Progress (Total Number)



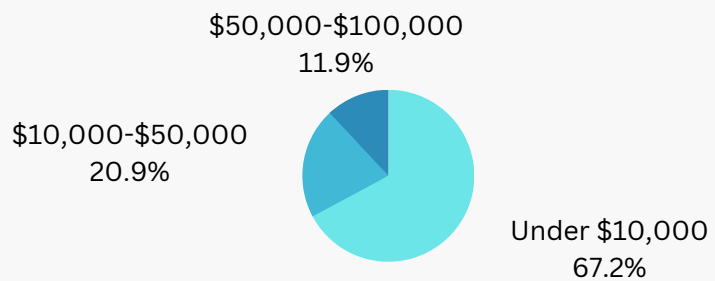
02 Race/Ethnicity



03 Gender



04 Income



Categorical Questions



8.37 Average Rating of MATC Experience

Participants generally rated highly their experience at MATC. The average was only slightly lower than that from the survey we conducted in the spring of 2022 (when it was 8.57, a non-significant difference). To add further depth, 71 participants marked 10 out of 10 and 20 said 9 out of 10, meaning that many had markedly positive experiences. It also means that there were some who gave a much lower rating.

Challenges

Financial challenges loomed largest in participants' minds, with a particular focus on costs for housing and schooling. Academics and mental health were also common responses, though less prevalent than in the Spring 2022 survey.

Challenge	N of Responses
Finances (Housing)	80
Finances (Paying for School)	78
Academics	38
Mental Health	34
Physical Health	20

Supports

Participants noted accessing a wide array of resources, which included both formalized ones and informal social supports. Many participants also noted relying on multiple resources to support them,

Support	N of Responses
FAST Fund	121
Family	53
MATC Staff	52
Dreamkeepers	49
Friends	44
MATC Food Pantry	23

How They Accessed FAST Fund

The majority of participants described being connected to FAST Fund through an MATC staff member (54 participants). Other key social actors also played a role for many, with 19 noting peers and 18 instructors. Websites and formalized connections were less prevalent, with 21 mentioning the MATC website and 5 the FAST Fund website.

Open-Ended Responses



General Experience (p. 6)

Responses to: What generally has your experience as an MATC student been like or was it like when you were a student?

Needed Supports (p. 7)

Responses to: What could help you or could have helped you be more successful as an MATC student?

Important Sources of Support (p. 8)

Responses to: Can you tell us more about which of these sources was important and why?

Obstacles (p. 9)

Responses to: What obstacles or barriers have you faced, or did you face in accessing resources?

General Experience

Overall Takeaways

- Generally positive experiences
- Many mentions of faculty or staff support
- Some noted communications issues in trying to access resources or troubles with financial aid office
- Some, but not many, described learning during pandemic as hard

Example Responses

It has been a great experience being a student at MATC. Everyone is very helpful.

I have had great experiences I have had a lot of downs in my life and MATC as an organization was there for me to continue my education.

Overall, it's been good except for the few bad encounters I've had with financial aid messing up my documents and ending up with a balance which happened before the Restart program became well known and self service was updated from info online.

Needed Supports

Overall Takeaways

- More resources (often just as a general comment)
- For academics, more tutors, earlier connection to tutors, or better communication with tutors
 - Also, need greater instructor flexibility
- Some life events or other circumstances outside of the school context as getting in the way and so school supports not enough

Example Responses

Teachers should have connection with tutors for their classes and share that information with their students...I have been struggling with one of my courses, but its difficult to get help.

More funding, help with transportation and housing for students.

Nothing, life happened that put a halt on things for me.

Important Sources Of Support

Overall Takeaways

- Family and friends fostered motivation and provided support
- FAST Fund not only helped with school, but more broadly with financial issues that arose in life (e.g., rent payments so family wouldn't be evicted, bills so children had utilities)
- There were also mentions of FAST Fund covering academic costs that would have prevented persisting or graduating
- Relationships with staff/faculty and building sense of belonging were key, especially as these folks connected them to resources

Example Responses

Support from MATC Faculty, because advise and guide more important in student life.

Friends and family because they will always be there to help.

Fast Fund and Dream Keepers help me with rent payments allowing me to stay in my home and keep attending school.

All were important. I am a single mother that sometimes fall[s] short and the programs...have helped me...provide for myself and my daughter.

Obstacles

Overall Takeaways

- None or nothing mentioned often
- Some mention of awareness of resources. Instructors and staff were integral for providing this information
- Some mention of qualifying for resources as a hurdle to accessing them
- A few did mention communication, including it taking a while for a response or the schedule of when they had to contact resources not fitting with their work hours

Example Responses

None. With just a phone call, I got everything I needed. [One staff member] was amazing kept tabs on me helping me every step of the way. Truly thankful for her and her team.

Information and qualification is key. If I know about it I can apply.

Being qualified and being informed.

Learning about some of these scholarships because I had the opportunity to talk to my instructors about them.

Takeaways

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Students generally described having positive experiences at MATC, despite facing significant challenges related to finances, mental health, and academics.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS CRITICAL

Students consistently spoke to the importance of faculty and staff supporting them and connecting them to resources.

REVERBERATIONS OF SUPPORT

There were many stories in which students described how financial or academic supports from FAST Fund and other sources positively impacted their lives beyond school.

RAISING AWARENESS AND RESOURCES

While these participants had by and large received supports, some described struggles in accessing these resources, communicating with the offices providing them, or needing more.

Students overall appreciate the resources available, and these resources (both financial and social) have been critical to their academic success and personal resilience to difficult circumstances. Still, improved communication, clarity in accessing resources, and more resources are key points they raised.

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