

SDCE STUDENT ENROLLMENT JOURNEY

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PURPOSE

San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE) commissioned a qualitative research study among SDCE career education students in March 2020. The overall aim of the research was to refine enrollment processes, improve the student experience overall, and understand SDCE's position within the broader educational landscape in San Diego. The research addressed the following objectives:

- Understand the stages that students go through prior to matriculating to SDCE, including awareness, discovery, and action. We intend to learn about students' actions, experiences, feelings, and thoughts while they pass through these stages.
- Gain insight into pain points throughout the initial stages of the student journey while identifying touchpoints with SDCE that could be improved.
- Understand barriers limiting student retention after enrollment.

METHODOLOGY

Sample breakdown: A total of 32 career education students were interviewed. (See Appendix A for detailed demographics)*

Campuses: Research was conducted at 4 campuses within the SDCE system, ECC, César Chávez, West City and North City.

Programs: Students were enrolled in Skilled and Technical Trades, Automotive, Fashion, Healthcare, and Business and Accounting.

Sessions: The team conducted 9 focus groups.

Length of Interviews: Focus groups were 2 hours in length.

*Initial planning specified the execution of 31 focus groups. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and campus closures, the number of focus groups were reduced.

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Research findings are considered within an analytic framework that breaks the student journey into three distinct stages determined by stakeholders at SDCE—Awareness, Discovery, and Action. This framework was determined in advance of the research and informed the discussion flow of each session. (See Appendix B for the qualitative discussion guide).

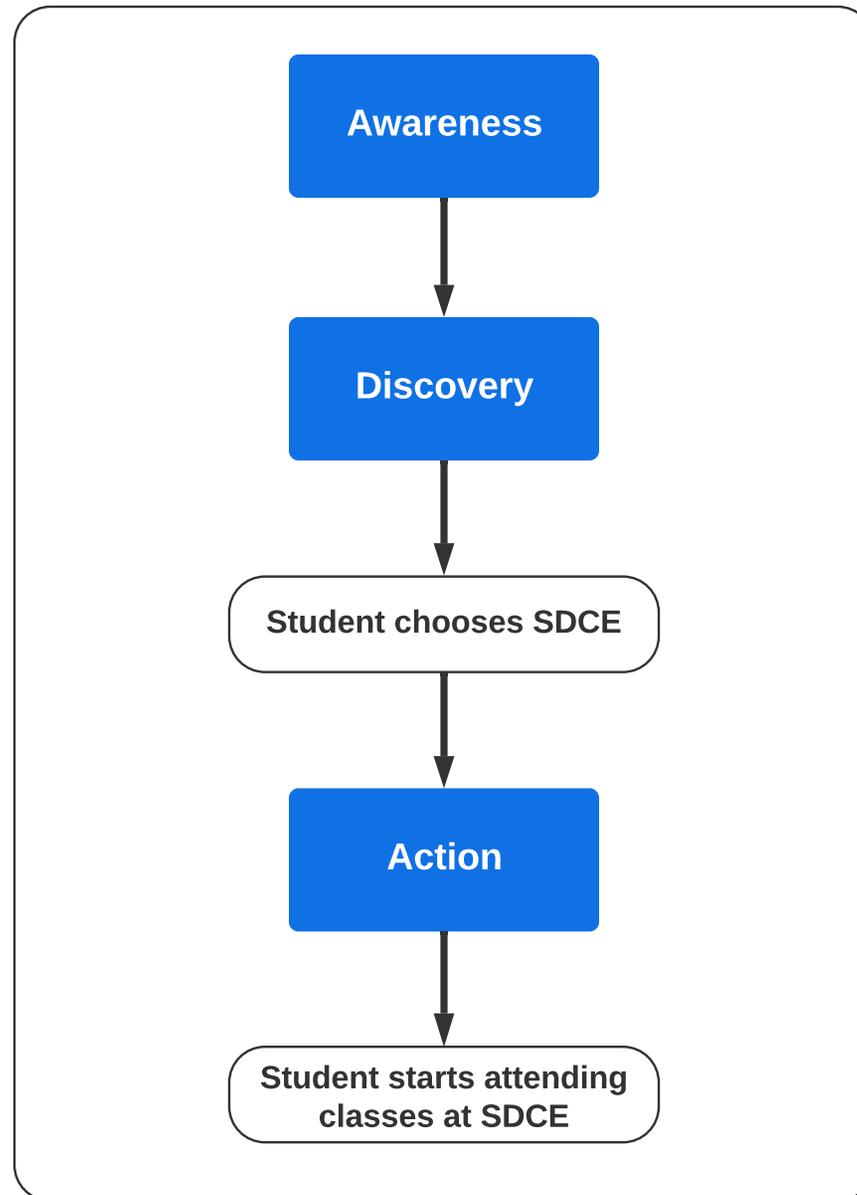
RECRUITING

SDCE recruited current career education students to participate in the focus groups and in-depth interviews.

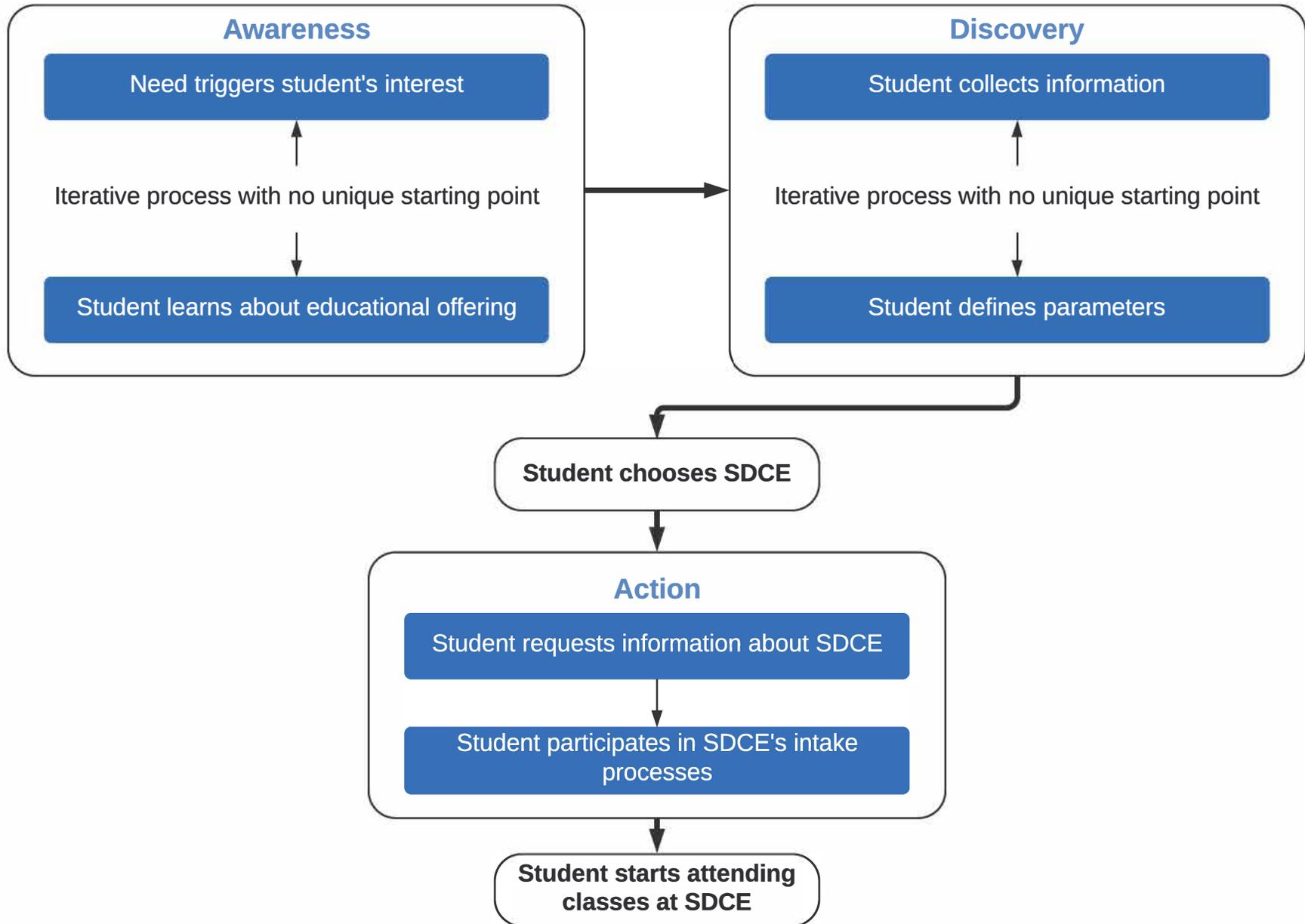
Qualifications to participate in the research project were: 1) student must be over age 18, and 2) student must be currently enrolled in a career training program at SDCE. Students received a \$20 gift card to the bookstore as an incentive for participation. Students were also asked to sign Informed Consent forms before the focus groups began. Each session was audio recorded with student permission.

Each student provided demographic information including gender, age, race/ethnicity, income, program enrolled, and campus attended. In general, student demographics of the focus groups aligned with student demographics of SDCE's CTE programs. The data from this survey is included in Appendix A.

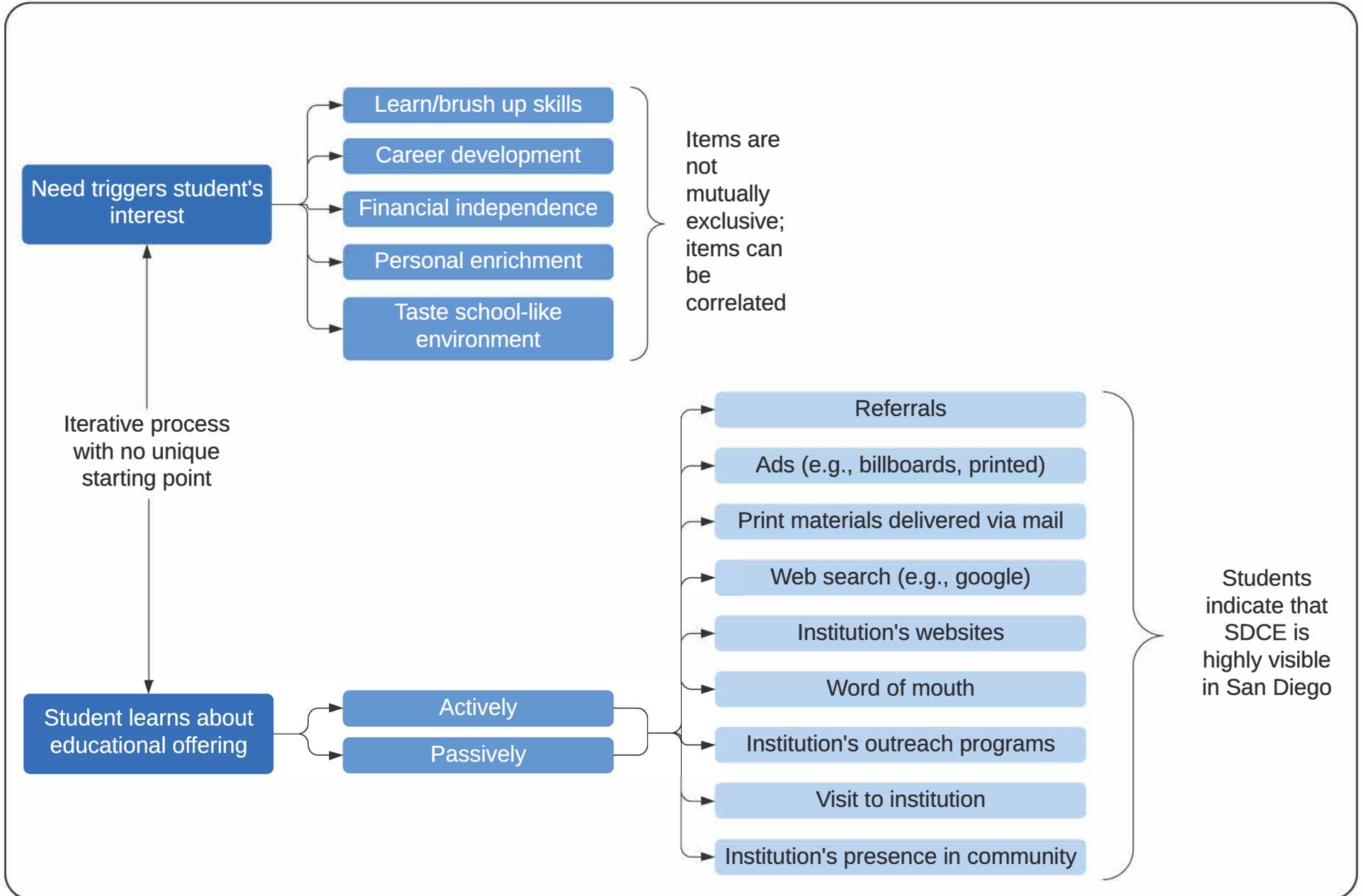
STAGES OF THE SDCE STUDENT ENROLLMENT JOURNEY



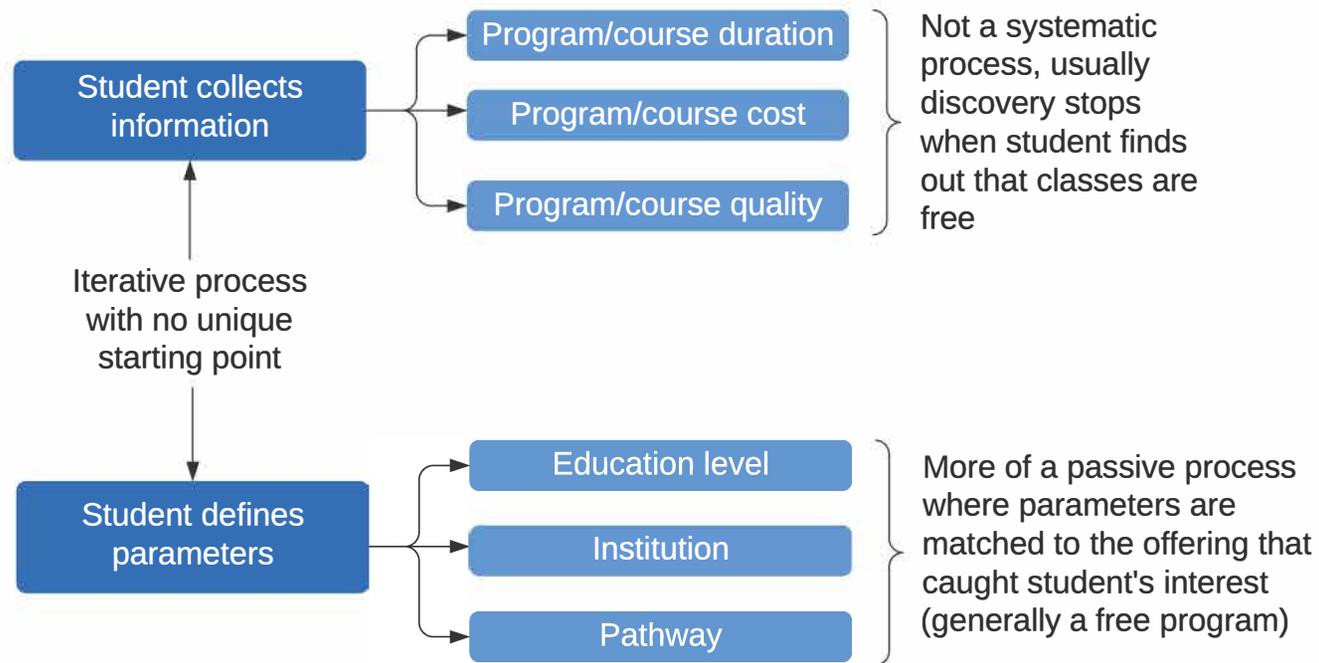
STAGES OF THE SDCE STUDENT ENROLLMENT JOURNEY (DETAILED)



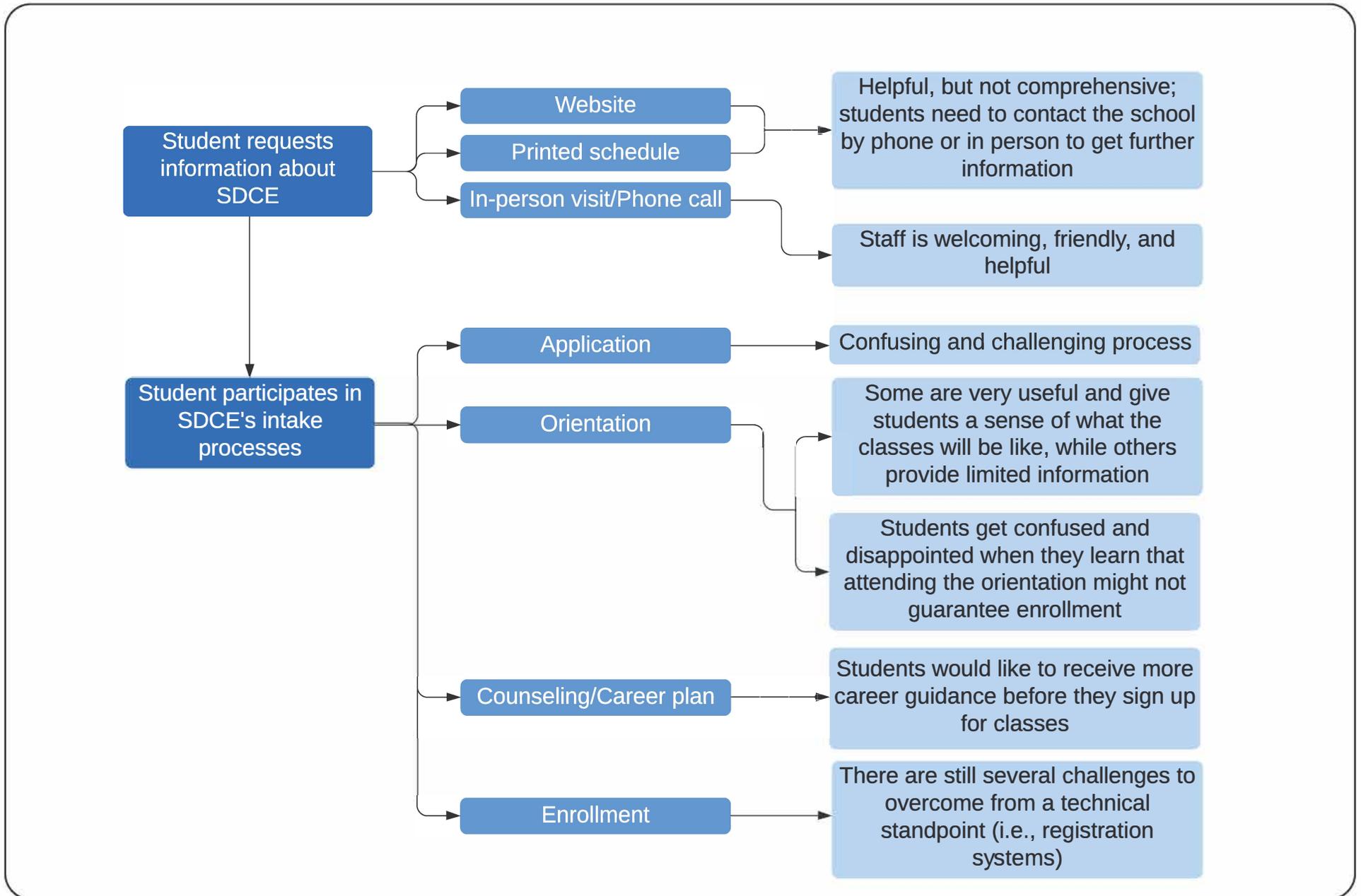
AWARENESS



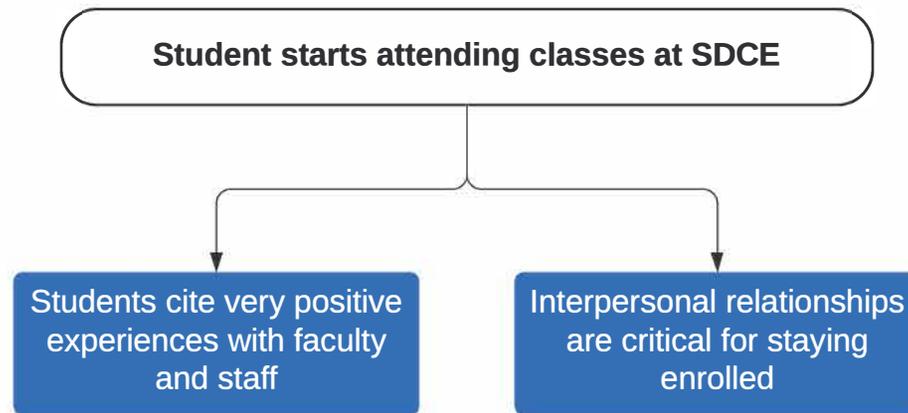
DISCOVERY



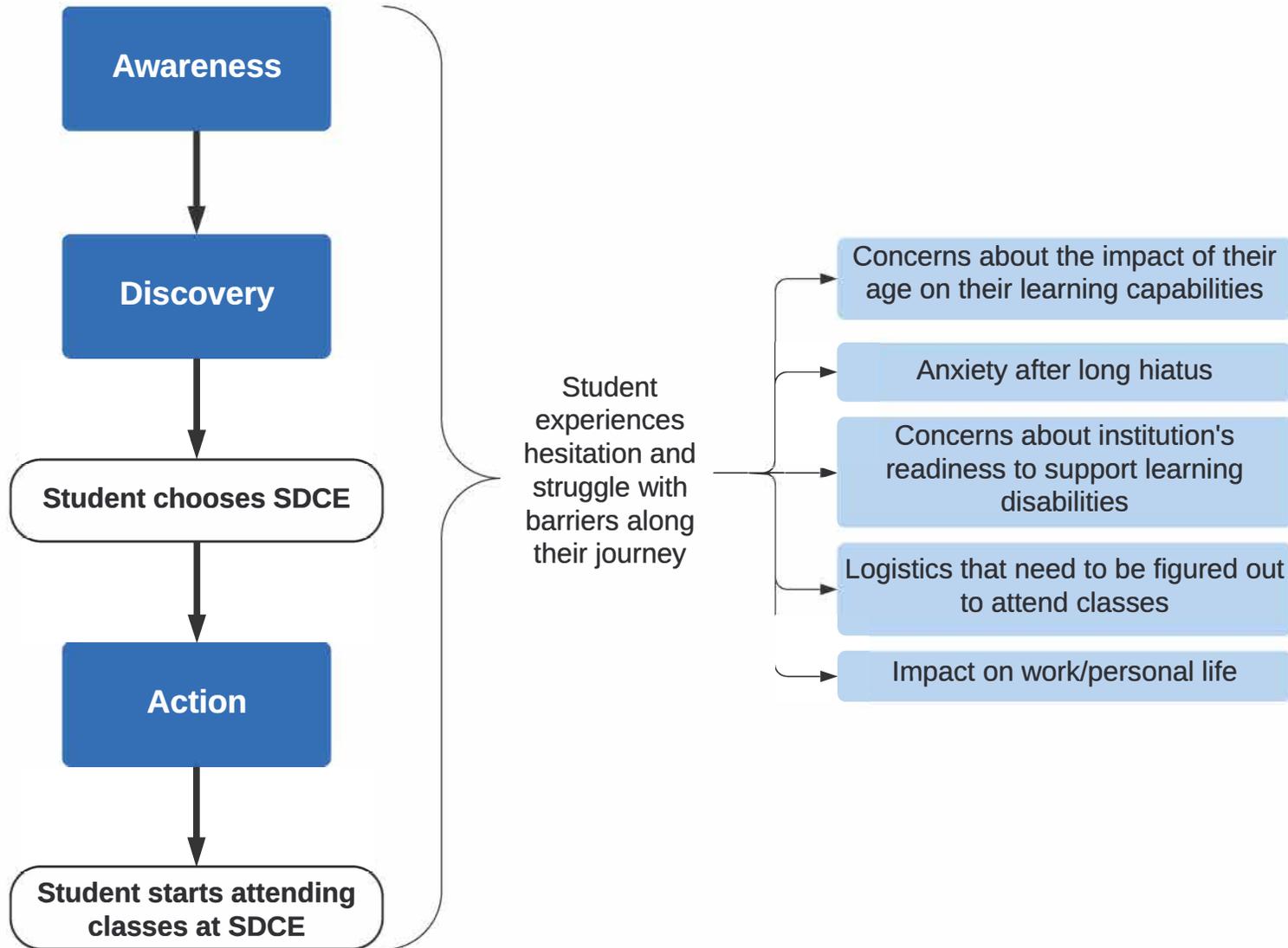
ACTION



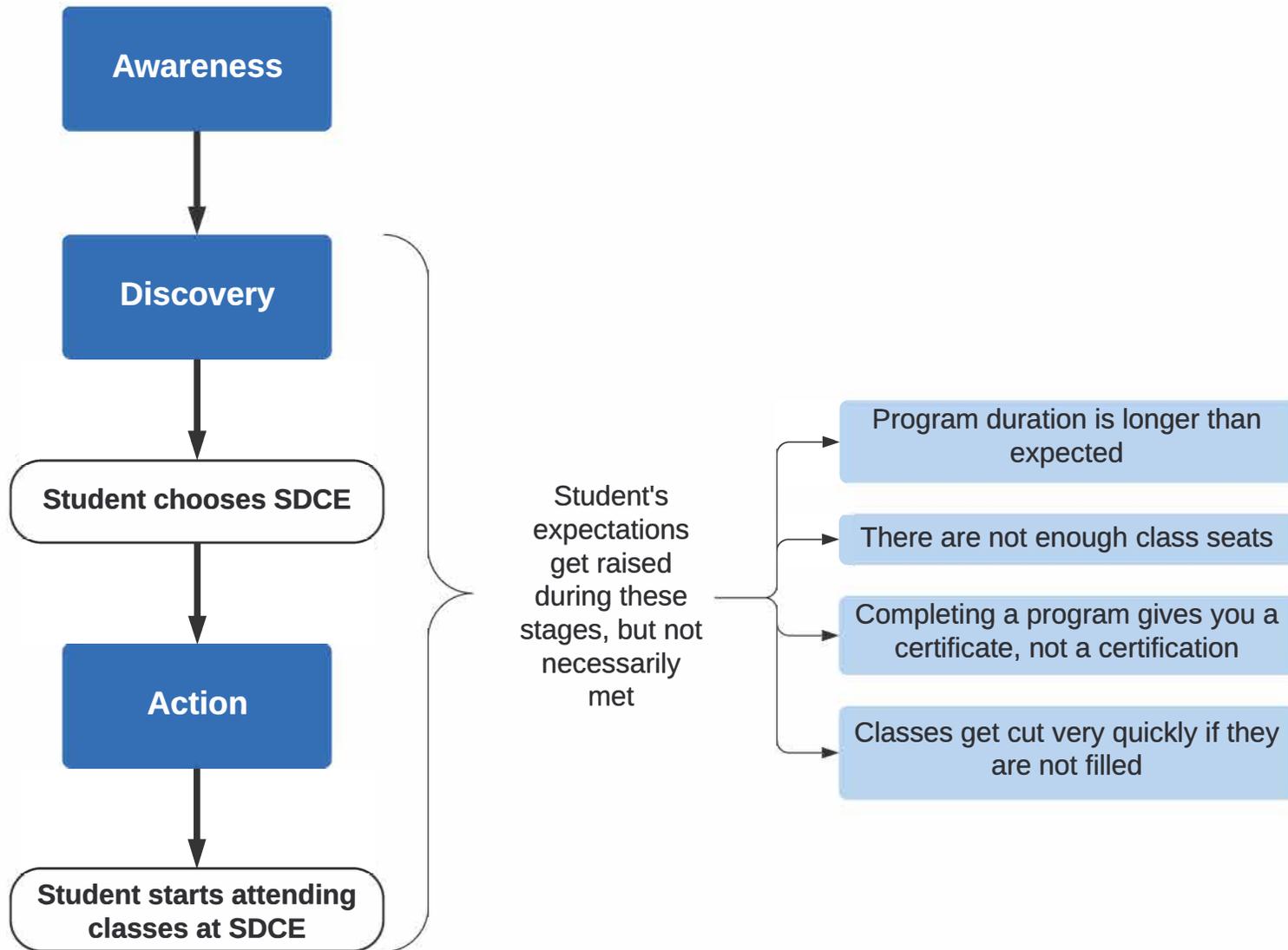
STUDENT STARTS ATTENDING CLASSES AT SDCE



HESITATION AND BARRIERS



UNMET EXPECTATIONS



APPENDIX A. STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Age		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Under 18	0%	0
18-24	9%	3
25-29	6%	2
30-39	16%	5
40-49	22%	7
50+	47%	15
Total	100%	32

Annual Family Income		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Under \$5,000	34%	11
\$5,000 - \$9,999	3%	1
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0%	0
\$15,000 - \$24,999	6%	2
\$25,000 - \$34,999	9%	3
\$35,000 or more	47%	15
Total	100%	32

Race/Ethnicity		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
African American	13%	4
American Indian	0%	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	13%	4
Filipino	9%	3
Hispanic/Latino	19%	6
White	16%	5
Two or more races	16%	5
Other	16%	5
Total	100%	32

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding error.

Gender		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Female	59%	19
Male	34%	11
Other	0%	0
Prefer not to answer	6%	2
Total	100%	32

Programs		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
Automotive	16%	5
Business & Accounting	19%	6
Child Development	0%	0
Digital Media	3%	1
Fashion	34%	11
Healthcare	3%	1
Hospitality & Culinary Arts	0%	0
Information Technology	0%	0
Skilled Trades	25%	8
Total	100%	32

Campus		
Answer Choice	Percentage	Responses
ECC	41%	13
CE Mesa	0%	0
CE Miramar	0%	0
César Chávez	9%	3
Mid-city	0%	0
North City	9%	3
West City	41%	13
Total	100%	32

APPENDIX B. DISCUSSION GUIDE

Awareness

What I would like to do now is understand how you decided you want to go to school. While many of you may have gone to other colleges or programs, I am most interested in learning how you decided to pursue the programs here at SDCE.

- What made you all decide to pursue a certificate? (Probe: what was on your mind? What were you feeling?)
- What was going on in your life that brought you to the point of wanting to go back to school?
- How did you decide what certificate to pursue?
- How did you know what kind of place you wanted to take classes at?
- How/where did you hear about SDCE?
- Do you remember any specific ads you saw or websites you visited?
- What did you hear about SDCE?

Discovery

I am interested in knowing what happened once you decided to go back school. Let's discuss the process and what it looked like when you were figuring out schools and programs.

- How did you decide on a school?
- How did you decide on a program?
- What fears or trepidations did you have?
- What gave you confidence in your choice?
- How did you know what you chose was right for you?
- What kind of research on SDCE did you do? (Probe: website, counselor meetings, contact faculty)
- Did you contact the campus at all?
- Did they answer your questions?
- Did you feel welcome?
- What were you feeling during this stage? (Probe: confident, worried)
- Was anything confusing?
- What were the difficulties of this Stage? (pain points)

Evaluation

Let's talk about how you ultimately decided to attend SDCE.

- How did you ultimately decide to attend SDCE?
- What kind of help could you have used to decide on a certificate program (probe: online assessments, orientation, faculty meetings, counseling, etc.)
- How could SDCE have made the process of deciding easier for you?
- Did you have any doubts at this stage?
- Once you decided to enroll, did you have any difficulties? What could have made the process smoother?

Enrollment/Registration

Once you had decided on a program, visited a counselor, and attended orientation, I want to know how the rest of the process worked for you.

- What was registration like? (Probe: easy, hard, confusing, etc)
- How was your use of the online portal? (Probe: easy, hard, confusing, etc)
- How did you feel during registration? How could it have been improved?
- What would you improve about registration?
- Did registration feel like it was designed with your needs in mind?

Show of hands, how many of you attended orientation?

- What were your thoughts on orientation?
- Did it give you what you needed?
- What was missing?
- How did you feel during orientation?
- How could orientation be better or more helpful?
- Was there any material you particularly liked? Anything that wasn't useful?
- At the end of orientation how did you feel about your decision to enroll?
- Was anything confusing or difficult to understand?
- What was unresolved after orientation? What questions did you have after it was finished that you still had to find answers to?

- What questions did you have for the counselor?
- Were there any questions they couldn't answer? What were they? Where did you get the answers you needed?

Challenges/barriers

- What challenges in your own life did you have to overcome to enroll in school? This could be anything from balancing family/school/work to scheduling issues, finances, etc.
- How did you get through these challenges?
- What made you decide to enroll despite these barriers?
- How did you feel when you were assessing these questions?

Let's talk a little bit about why you are here.

- How was the first week of classes?
- Was everything organized?
- Was anything confusing?
- What keeps you coming back to school?
- Have you had any temptations or reasons to drop out? Can you tell me what those are?
- Now that you are here, do you feel like you belong?