PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS: APPLYING SITUATED EXPECTANCY-VALUE THEORY TO THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR PEERS

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Abstract

The number of Canadians beginning post-secondary education (PSE) each fall continues to grow. One group in particular that is seeing an increase in numbers is students with disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder). The purpose of this study was to examine how students broadly, and students with disabilities specifically, can be supported in their PSE journey. Utilizing situated expectancy-value theory (SEVT) as our guiding theory, we examined how the components of expectancy, value, and cost, alongside the attendance of a transition program, supported various student outcomes (i.e., emotions, acquisition of knowledge and skills, GPA, and satisfaction). Our findings highlight the role of both psychosocial factors and institutional support in promoting successful student transitions to PSE. Limitations and future research directions are also discussed.

***Keywords**:* undergraduates, post-secondary education, students with disabilities, situated expectancy-value theory, success

Résumé

Le nombre de Canadiens amorçant des études postsecondaires (EPS) chaque automne continue d'augmenter. Un groupe en particulier qui connaît une hausse de ses effectifs est celui des étudiants en situation de handicap (p. ex., troubles d'apprentissage, trouble déficitaire de l'attention avec ou sans hyperactivité). L'objectif de cette étude était d'examiner comment les étudiants en général, et les étudiants en situation de handicap en particulier, peuvent être soutenus dans leur parcours postsecondaire. En nous appuyant sur la Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (théorie des attentes-valeur située) comme cadre théorique, nous avons analysé comment les composantes de l'attente, de la valeur et du coût, ainsi que la participation à un programme de transition, contribuaient à divers résultats pour les étudiants (c.-à-d., émotions, acquisition de connaissances et de compétences, moyenne pondérée cumulative et satisfaction). Nos résultats soulignent le rôle des facteurs psychosociaux et du soutien institutionnel dans la réussite de la transition vers les EPS. Les limites de l'étude et les pistes de recherche futures sont également discutées.

***Mots clés** :* études de premier cycle, études postsecondaires, étudiants en situation de handicap, théorie des attentes-valeur située, réussite

INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to post-secondary education (PSE) is a stressful time for most students (Parker et al., 2018; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Nevertheless, each year a new group of undergraduate students begins this educational journey. These students come to campuses with diverse backgrounds, including whether they self-identify as students with disabilities. According to the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, "persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006, p. 4). Indeed, these students experience unique challenges and opportunities during their time in PSE. Moreover, students may also leave PSE during their educational journey for various academic, financial, or personal reasons. To support students in achieving positive outcomes, post-secondary institutions provide a variety of services, including general academic advising, counselling services, transition programs, learning centres, and centres where students with disabilities can access disability-specific accommodations. By offering these types of services, institutions aim to support students in completing their post-secondary journeys through to graduation.

Offering supports and services for students requires post-secondary institutions to consider which programming will serve students' needs; to carefully select the duration of services, setting, and delivery format (Lindsay et al., 2019); and to consider the skills to be emphasized (e.g., transition skills, social skills; Nachman, 2020). As institutions assess these factors, students with disabilities are growing in numbers on campuses. However, even with such supports, these students are still less likely to complete PSE than their peers (Rußmann et al., 2024). Dropout rates among post-secondary students have been suggested at 23%, with the highest rates for leaving programs early found among first-year students (Finnie et al., n.d.), which means that the supports and services offered at the beginning of their programs is critical. Therefore, this article aims to examine student experiences broadly, and the experiences of students with disabilities specifically, to understand how all students can be better supported within their first year of studies.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities is a broad term used to identify students who require additional support during their schooling (Specht & Hutchinson, 2024). Recently, Statistics Canada released a report, *A Demographic, Employment and Income Profile of Persons with Disabilities Aged 15 Years and Over in Canada, 2022* (Hébert et al., 2024), which states that one in four Canadians aged 15 and over identifies as having a disability—approximately eight million people based on the current population of Canada. According to a report published by the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (Furrie, 2017), 10 areas were identified in which individuals can indicate as having a disability: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain, learning, development, memory, mental health, or an unspecified condition. Furthermore, of students with disabilities, only one in three reports having just one type of disability from this list, with the remainder of individuals reporting two or more. As such, we consider students with disabilities as a broad group of individuals for the purposes of this article. The report also highlights that one in four students with disabilities requires additional supports in PSE, including assistive devices, access to services, curriculum modifications, and accommodations (e.g., extended time on exams; Furrie, 2017). Therefore, for this article, we focus on understanding the transition to PSE, looking at students broadly while paying particular attention to the experiences of students with disabilities.

Theoretical Framework

To examine students' experiences as they transition to PSE, we used expectancy-value theory (EVT) as our theoretical framework. According

to this theory, student motivation to complete a task is driven by two main subjective beliefs: expectancy and value (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). *Expectancy* refers to a student's belief that they will succeed in a task; that is, their expectancy for success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). How students perceive their ability to complete a task is essential to determine the amount of effort that they are willing to expend.

Value is considered the overall importance that a student places on the task. Students who see value in a task are more likely to engage with it and apply greater effort (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Value is often categorized into three components: intrinsic value (i.e., interest in the task for its own sake), utility value (i.e., the perceived usefulness of the task for achieving one's goals), and attainment value (i.e., the importance of the task for the student's identity; Barron & Hulleman, 2015; Perez et al., 2019). Although distinctions are often made between these components, the impact on outcomes is generally subtle (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). As such, we consider value as a general construct in the current research study and do not distinguish between the various components.

Another important component of EVT is cost. In earlier iterations of the theory, cost was considered an additional aspect of value (Perez et al., 2019) and represented the trade-off that students face when completing a task—that is, weighing what they must sacrifice (e.g., time, effort) against the perceived value of the completed task. In more recent years, cost has been further explored (e.g., Flake et al., 2015), with Barron and Hulleman (2015) proposing the promotion of cost to a third component within the theory and relabelling it expectancy-value cost theory (EVCT). Cost itself can also be categorized into different components, including effort cost (i.e., the time and energy required), opportunity cost (i.e., the resources spent on one task that could have been used for another one), and psychological cost (i.e., the emotional toll associated with potential failure and its social consequences; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Barron & Hulleman, 2015; Perez et al., 2019). Ultimately, the balance between expectancy, value, and cost influences students' decisions to engage with tasks. In more recent years, Eccles and Wigfield (2020, 2023) have expanded the theory from EVT to Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (SEVT) to take into consideration the specific contexts and environments that impact student motivation. As such, we utilize SEVT moving forward to examine the specific context of transitioning to PSE for students.

Undergraduate Students and Situated Expectancy-Value Theory

Previous research has explored the components of SEVT from the perspectives of undergraduate students in various contexts. For example, Goldman et al. (2022) examined first-generation college students and their experiences during an introductory psychology class. They found that first-generation students reported higher levels of cost, and that the rate of change in cost across the semester was at a steeper incline for first-generation students as well. Goegan et al. (2021) found that in a mandatory undergraduate course, students' perceptions of success were positively predicted by expectancy while negatively predicted by cost. Value was not a significant predictor. Man et al. (2024) also found that participants' expectancy beliefs directly predicted their achievement, whereas value and cost only indirectly affected achievement in an undergraduate population. Lastly, Robinson et al. (2019) explored engineering students' perceptions during their first two years of college and, based on latent growth curve models, they found declines in expectancy and value as well as increase in cost over time.

While less is known about the experiences of students with disabilities from a SEVT perspective, inferences can be made based on research into their experiences at the post-secondary level. It is well-documented that the post-secondary environment is markedly different from high school for students (Gartland & Strosnider, 2023). In addition to the common challenges all students face during this transition, students with disabilities must decide whether to disclose their disability status, either informally or through formal processes. Although disclosure is ultimately the student's choice, accessing accommodations at the post-secondary level

requires the formal submission of appropriate documentation, which involves additional time, effort, and often financial costs. Furthermore, students with certain learning disabilities report greater difficulty in managing increased academic expectations and express less satisfaction with their post-secondary experiences (McGregor et al., 2016; Southward & Davis, 2020).

Partner Post-Secondary Institution

Our research was done through a partnership between the first author (Lauren Goegan) and members of the Student Transitions and Success Centre (STSC; authors Stephanie Young, Justin Bouchard, and Ali Wood-Warren) at a mid-sized university in western Canada. The university consists of two main campuses, with multiple satellite campuses in the province. It offers the largest selection of degree programs, including professional and graduate programs, of any university in the province, with most academic units offering graduate programs leading to master's or doctoral degrees. The average total undergraduate enrolment is approximately 26,000, with approximately 94% of students living off campus, indicative of a commuter campus.

Transitions Programming

One of the key programs offered by STSC is the Continuing Academic Pathways[1] (CAP) program. This program is facilitated by trained peer mentors, who work with students one-on-one via in-person consultations, virtual consultations, and official email channels. They also interact with students through group sessions, workshops, and outreach events. This peer-facilitated program aims to promote academic persistence amongst students who have demonstrated academic performance that puts them at risk for withdrawal from university studies, or who otherwise potentially face barriers to academic success. Indeed, CAP mentors aid students in learning concrete strategies for (a) developing a growth mindset to foster academic resiliency, (b) building self-efficacy and self-advocacy skills, (c) coping with student transitions, and (d) navigating the university's campuses, support resources, policies, and procedures.

The Current Study

Using SEVT as our theoretical framework, the purpose of the current study was to explore students' experiences with the transition to PSE. We had three guiding research questions. First, are there differences between students with disabilities and their peers with respect to measures of expectancy, value, and cost, as well as various student outcome measures when considering their PSE experiences? Second, do students' perceptions of expectancy, value, and cost change from the beginning of their first term of PSE to the end of the term? Third, do students' perceptions of expectancy, value, and cost predict student outcomes (including measures of emotions, acquisition of skills and knowledge, GPA, and satisfaction)?

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

In total, 1,101 students completed one or more of our surveys. The first survey (Time 1, or T1 for short) was administered at the beginning of their first term of their first year at university to gauge how students were feeling and was completed by 941 students. The second survey (Time 2, or T2 for short) was administered at the end of the first term. This second survey was completed by 432 students. Moreover, 272 students completed both versions of the survey. Students who completed both surveys were utilized as the sample of interest for this project. Moreover, it should be noted that there were no group differences in responses at Time 1 for students who completed the Time 2 survey compared to those who did not, with respect to the measures of expectancy, value, and cost ($p > 0.05$).

Of the students who completed both surveys, 192 identified as female, 64 as male, eight as non-binary, one as two-spirit, and seven pre-

1 This is not the actual name of the program; it has been altered so as not to directly identify the post-secondary institution.

ferred not to identify their gender. Participants also ranged in age from 17 to 42, with 68% of participants being between the ages of 17–18, which is consistent with attending post-secondary education directly after high school. With regard to disability identification, 170 students did not identify as a student with a disability, while 102 students identified with one or more disabilities. Eight students identified with autism, 38 with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), one with a hearing impairment, four with learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), 15 with medical/chronic illness, 75 with a mental health disorder, five with mobility/physical needs, 14 with visual impairments, and seven indicated "other." Moreover, 14% of students who did not identify with any disabilities attended the CAP program, while only 6% of students with disabilities attended. Attendance was indicated by self-report data.

Measures

Situated Expectancy-Value Theory

On our survey, we utilized 10 items developed by Kosovich et al. (2015). These items were originally developed to assess middle school students' perceptions in math or science courses but were modified here to assess participants' post-secondary experiences. For example, one item's original wording was, "I know I can learn the material in my [math or science] class," but for the purposes of this study the wording was adjusted to "I know I can learn the material in my classes." As per the intent of the original items, there were three items to assess expectancy (e.g., "I believe that I can be successful in my classes"), three items to assess value (e.g., "I think my classes are important"), and four items to assess cost (e.g., "My classwork requires too much time"). For each item, participants responded using a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Participants completed these items once at the beginning of their first term and again at the end.

Student Outcomes

While grades or grade point average (GPA) tend to be the most common indicators of success in PSE (York et al., 2015), there are many ways that students define academic success for themselves (Goegan et al., 2020; Jennings et al., 2013; Yazedjian et al., 2008; Zepke & Leach, 2010). As such, for the purposes of this research study, we elected to use four different student outcomes as indicators of success at PSE: emotions, GPA, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and satisfaction. Participants responded to items related to these student outcome measures only at T2.

Emotions. We utilized emotion items identified by Goegan and colleagues (2024) in their work examining the transition from high school to post-secondary for students with learning disabilities. During this transition, students identified eight positive emotions (confident, excited, glad, good, happy, hopeful, interested, and optimistic) and eight negative emotions (anxious, frustrated, nervous, overwhelmed, sad, scared, stressed, and worried). For each emotion, participants responded on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The items for positive and negative emotions were summed and averaged separately, with higher scores indicating stronger emotions.

GPA. We were granted access to student administrative records to assess GPAs. As per university policy, GPA is calculated on a 4.5 scale, with higher scores indicating higher grades (e.g., a 4.5 reflects an A+).

Acquisition of knowledge and skills. We utilized four items from the Your First College Year Survey, which was developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI; https://heri.ucla.edu/). To provide context for how participants were to consider the items, we provided the following stem at the beginning of each item: "The [university name] has contributed to my…" Then, we provided the following four items: (a) intellectual and practical skills (including inquiry and analysis, critical thinking, and information literacy), (b) knowledge of a particular field or discipline, (c) critical thinking skills, and (d)

problem-solving skills. For each item, participants responded on a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating more knowledge and skills were acquired.

Satisfaction. Satisfaction was measured with a single item. Participants were asked, "Please rate your satisfaction with your overall post-secondary experience on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied)," with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction.

Plan for Data Analysis

We conducted our analyses in four stages. First, we created two groups of first-year students who completed our surveys: participants who are students with disabilities (SWD) and students who did not identify as having a disability (SND). Within these two groups, we performed preliminary analyses by examining descriptive statistics, including reliabilities (see Table 1) and correlations (see Table 2) of all subscales separately for each group. Second, we performed independent samples *t*-tests to compare group differences on all study variables. Third, we conducted paired-samples *t*-tests utilizing expectancy, value, and cost measured at T1 and T2 to determine change from the beginning of the term to the end. Fourth, we conducted a series of regression analyses separately for the SWD and SND groups with our five outcome measures: positive emotions, negative emotions, GPA, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and satisfaction.

RESULTS

Group Differences

To answer our first research question (Are there differences between students with disabilities and their peers on measures of expectancy, value, and cost, as well as various student outcome measures when considering their PSE experiences?), we performed a series of independent samples *t*-tests, which utilized all study variables as the dependent variables. To account for the increased risk of Type 1 error due to the multiple comparisons being conducted, a more conservative $p < 0.01$ was required to indicate statistical significance. With that in mind, three comparisons were statistically significant: The SWD group identified higher cost at Time 1, $t(271) = -2.65$, as well as higher negative emotions, $t(271) = -3.62$, and lower positive emotions, $t(271) = 2.60$, than the SND group.

Time Differences

To answer our second research question (Do students' perceptions of expectancy, value, and cost change from the beginning of their first term of PSE to the end?), we ran a series of paired samples *t*-tests. Indeed, paired samples *t*-tests were conducted utilizing expectancy, value, and cost as the dependent variables, comparing participants' scores at T1 and T2 separately for each group. Students with disabilities identified less value, $t(101) = 2.69$, $p = .008$, and more cost, $t(101) = -5.92$, $p < .001$, when comparing their scores at T1 compared to T2. Students' perceptions about expectancy did not shift significantly. Students from the SND group had similar experiences as they also identified less value, $t(169) = 3.81$, $p < .001$, and higher cost, $t(168) = -4.02$, $p < .001$, when comparing T1 to T2.

Regression Analysis

To answer our third research question (Do students' perceptions of expectancy, value, and cost predict student outcomes [emotions, acquisition of skills and knowledge, GPA, and satisfaction]?), we ran a series of regression analyses. Each section below highlights a different student outcome and will first present the findings for the SWD group, followed by the findings for the SND group.

Positive Emotions

The results from the regression analyses with the dependent variables of positive and negative emotions are presented below in Table 3. First, the analyses were conducted for the SWD group, followed by the SND group.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Students with Disabilities (SWD)						Students Who Did Not Identify a Disability (SND)					
Variable	Mean	*SD*	α	Range	Skew	Kurtosis	Mean	*SD*	α	Range	Skew	Kurtosis
Expectancy (T1)	4.37	1.02	.89	1–6	-.47	.16	4.59	1.02	.86	1–6	-.53	-.13
Value (T1)	4.94	.92	.83	1–6	-1.36	2.87	5.07	.89	.84	1–6	-.80	-.14
Cost (T1)	3.05	1.07	.82	1–6	.14	-.54	3.02	1.07	.79	1–6	.31	-.12
Expectancy (T2)	4.22	1.08	.85	1–6	-.46	-.06	4.39	1.07	.89	1–6	-.36	-.51
Value (T2)	4.71	1.00	.85	1–6	-1.12	1.53	4.81	.91	.84	1–6	-.64	.02
Cost (T2)	3.75	1.12	.82	1–6	-.01	-.72	3.37	1.11	.81	1–6	.20	-.37
Positive Emotions	3.13	.84	.90	1–5	.12	-.35	3.41	.88	.93	1–5	-.13	-.42
Negative Emotions	3.78	.83	.89	1–5	-.82	.70	3.39	.93	.89	1–5	-.25	-.82
GPA	3.35	.74	–	0–4.5	-.65	.48	3.29	.88	–	0–4.5	-1.30	2.17
Skills	3.52	.78	.83	1–5	-.54	.66	3.60	.78	.86	1–5	-.62	.91
Satisfaction	6.42	1.86	–	1–10	-.68	.66	6.82	1.76	–	1–10	-.62	.66

Table 2
Correlation Analyses for All Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Expectancy (T1)	1	.59***	-.30***	.52***	.38***	-.16*	-.04	.43***	-.28***	-.03	.28***	.29***
Value (T1)	.49***	1	-.25**	.28**	.54***	-.12	.11	.30***	-.11	-.19	.37***	.24**
Cost (T1)	-.43***	-.38***	1	-.20**	-.23**	.48***	-.11	-.12	.24**	-.03	-.13	-.11
Expectancy (T2)	.59***	.33***	-.27**	1	.58***	-.30***	-.01	.72***	-.35***	.39***	.43***	.40***
Value (T2)	.30**	.59***	-.26**	.42***	1	-.21**	.06	.58***	-.16*	.12	.45***	.41***
Cost (T2)	-.10	-.11	.43***	-.28**	-.14	1	.05	-.22**	.46***	-.16	-.15*	-.20**
CAP	-.03	-.01	.02	-.10	-.10	-.04	1	-.14	.06	-.12	-.10	-.19*
Pos. Emo.	.42***	.46***	-.33***	.57***	.53***	-.41***	-.19	1	-.37***	.36***	.54***	.61***
Neg. Emo.	-.25*	-.11	.19	-.32***	-.12	.50***	.07	-.40***	1	-.15	-.03	-.22**
GPA	.11	.22	.04	.42***	.34***	-.02	-.01	.27*	-.23	1	.31**	.28**
Skills	.09	.12	-.02	.41***	.40***	-.08	-.14	.47***	-.10	.31*	1	.66***
Satisfaction	.17	.32***	-.21*	.41***	.38***	-.37***	-.19	.64***	-.29**	0.22	.42***	1

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; SND = students who did not identify a disability. Also, SWD below the diagonal, SND above the diagonal.
*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .00$

Table 3
Positive and Negative Emotions

	Positive Emotions				Negative Emotions			
	SWD		SND		SWD		SND	
Variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Expectancy (Time 1)	.21*	.07	.39***	.04	-.22	-.22	-.29**	-.16
Value (Time 1)	.30**	.16	.07	.04	.04	.02	.10	.03
Cost (Time 1)	-.13	.02	.01	.05	.11	-.14	.18*	-.02
Expectancy (Time 2)		.29**		.59***		-.08		-.21*
Value (Time 2)		.24*		.19*		.01		.08
Cost (Time 2)		-.28***		-.01		.52***		.40***
CAP Attendance		-.14		-.15**		.08		.03
Adjusted R^2	.25	.49	.17	.55	.04	.27	.10	.25

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; SND = students who did not identify a disability.
*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .00$

In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. For the SWD group, expectancy and value were both significant positive predictors of positive emotions, $F(3, 98) = 12.09$, $p < .001$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered, along with whether the student accessed the CAP program. At this stage, the T1 measures were no longer significant predictors. Instead, expectancy, value, and cost at T2 were all significant predictors of positive emotions, $F(7, 94) = 14.88$, $p < .001$. Specifically, expectancy and value were positive predictors, while cost was a negative predictor. No other variables significantly predicted positive emotions. Altogether, the variables accounted for 49% of the variance in SWD participants' scores on the positive emotions measure.

The analyses were then performed for the SND group. In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. This regression was significant, $F(3, 164) = 12.29$, $p < .001$, with expectancy being the only significant positive predictor. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were added to the model, along with whether the participant accessed the CAP program. This regression was also significant, $F(7, 160) = 30.25$, $p < .001$. With the inclusion of the additional variables, expectancy at T1 was no longer a significant predictor. Instead, expectancy and value at T2 were both significant positive predictors. Additionally, students who accessed the CAP program were likely to report higher positive emotions than those students who did not. No other variables were significant. Overall, the variables accounted for 55% of the variance in SND participants' scores on the positive emotions measure.

Negative Emotions

Following the same structure, the analyses were conducted for the SWD group first, followed by the SND group. In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. For the SWD group, the regression was not significant, $F(3, 98) = 2.45$, $p = .07$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered, along with whether the student accessed the CAP program. Here, cost at T2 was a significant positive predictor of negative emotions, $F(7, 94) = 6.21$, $p < .001$. No other variables significantly predicted students' negative emotions. Overall, the variables accounted for 27% of SWD participants' scores on the negative emotions measure.

For the SND group, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered in the first block. This regression was significant, $F(3, 163) = 6.75$, $p < .001$, with expectancy and cost being significant predictors (negative and positive, respectively). In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were added, along with whether the participant accessed the CAP program. This regression was also significant, $F(7, 159) = 9.01$, $p < .001$. With the inclusion of additional variables in the second block, expectancy and value at T1 were no longer significant predictors. Instead, expectancy and cost at T2 were both significant predictors. No other variables were significant. Taken together, the variables accounted for 25% of the variance in SND participants' scores on the negative emotions measure.

Student GPA

The results from the regression analyses with the outcomes of student GPA and acquisition of skills and satisfaction as the dependent variables are presented below in Table 4. As above, the analyses were conducted for the SWD group first, followed by the SND group.

In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. For the SWD group, the regression was not significant, $F(3, 98) = 1.32$, $p = .27$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered, along with whether the student accessed the CAP program. At this point, expectancy at T2 was a significant predictor of GPA, $F(7, 94) = 2.56$, $p = .02$. No other variables were significant predictors. Overall, the variables accounted for 16% of the variance in students' GPA.

For the SND group, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered in the first block. This regression was not significant, $F(3, 163) = 1.83$, $p = .15$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were added, along with whether the participant ac-

cessed the CAP program. This regression was significant, $F(7, 159) = 4.25$, $p < .001$. With the inclusion of the additional variables, expectancy at T2 was a significant positive predictor. No other variables were significant. Taken together, the variables accounted for 19% of the variance in participants' GPA.

Skill Acquisition

In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. For the SWD group, the regression was not significant, $F(3, 98) = .58$, $p = .63$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered, along with whether the student accessed the CAP program. At this point, expectancy and value at T2 were significant positive predictors, $F(7, 94) = 5.58$, $p < .001$. No other variables were significant predictors. Overall, the variables accounted for 24% of students' scores on the acquisition of knowledge and skills measure.

For the SND group, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered in the first block. Here, only value was a significant, positive predictor, $F(3, 163) = 8.81$, $p < .001$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were added, along with whether the participant accessed the CAP program. This regression was significant, $F(7, 159) = 9.59$, $p < .001$. With the inclusion of additional variables, value at T1 was still a significant positive predictor, as well as expectancy at T2 and CAP attendance. No other variables were significant. Taken together, the variables accounted for 26% of the variance in participants' scores.

Satisfaction

In the first block, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered. For the SWD group, only value was a significant, positive predictor, $F(3, 98) = 4.21$, $p = .008$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered, along with whether the student accessed the CAP program. This regression was significant, $F(7, 94) = 6.79$, $p < .001$. Here, value at T1 was no longer a significant positive predictor of satisfaction. Instead, expectancy at T2 was a significant positive predictor, while cost at T2 was a significant negative predictor. No other variables were significant predictors. Overall, the variables accounted for 29% of students' scores on satisfaction.

For the SND group, T1 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were entered in the first block. Here, only expectancy was a significant, positive predictor of satisfaction, $F(3, 163) = 5.30$, $p < .002$. In the second block, T2 scores for expectancy, value, and cost were added, along with whether the participant accessed the CAP program. This regression was significant, $F(7, 159) = 7.86$, $p < .001$. With the inclusion of additional variables, expectancy at T1 was no longer a significant positive predictor, but value at T2 was a positive predictor, and if students attended CAP. No other variables were significant. Taken together, the variables accounted for 22% of the variance in SND participants' scores on satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Our research explores the transition to PSE for students in general and for students with disabilities specifically. We examined how the components of SEVT—expectancy, value, and cost—predict key educational outcomes, including emotions, GPA, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and satisfaction. From our analyses, we offer insights regarding how to support a successful transition to PSE, noting differences in the experiences of these two groups of students. In particular, we discuss (a) the role of SEVT in interpreting the experiences of first-year students and, in particular, predicting various outcomes by the end of a student's first term of PSE; and (b) the importance of attending transition-specific programing for students in the SND group, but not students in the SWD group. Throughout this discussion, we also provide recommendations for campus service providers for supporting new students transitioning to PSE. Finally, we address the study's limitations and suggest directions for future research.

Table 4
Outcomes of GPA, Acquisition of Skills, and Satisfaction

	GPA				Acquisition of Skills				Satisfaction			
	SWD		SND		SWD		SND		SWD		SND	
Variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Expectancy (Time 1)	.07	-.16	.15	-.12	.05	-.20	.09	-.12	-.02	-.15	.22*	.05
Value (Time 1)	.25	.17	-.31*	-.21	.11	-.12	.31***	.27**	.29*	.21	.11	.04
Cost (Time 1)	.16	.14	-.07	-.10	.04	.04	-.02	-.01	-.11	.04	-.02	.02
Expectancy (Time 2)		.49**		.52***		.43***		.31***		.29*		.19
Value (Time 2)		.11		-.06		.36**		.18		.13		.26**
Cost (Time 2)		.06		.01		.05		-.01		-.29**		-.08
CAP Attendance		.09		-.12		-.06		-.15*		-.16		-.20**
Adjusted R^2	.02	.16	.03	.19	.01	.24	.12	.26	.09	.29	.07	.22

Note. SWD = students with disabilities; SND = students who did not identify a disability.
*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .001$

SEVT: The Transition to Post-Secondary Education

When students begin their PSE journey, students with disabilities generally perceive that the costs involved in their studies are higher than those perceived by their peers. This is consistent with previous research involving PSE students with disabilities (e.g., Hardini et al., 2022). This finding may suggest that students with disabilities could benefit from services at post-secondary institutions that are focused on workload management and/or time management, to balance the perceived costs involved (e.g., time and effort). Indeed, research by Harrington and colleagues (2021) found that, for post-secondary students with disabilities, a coaching intervention had a positive impact on students' ability to improve their time management.

Moreover, regardless of group membership, as students progressed through their first term of PSE, they identified less value and more cost involved in completing their education compared to the beginning of the term. This aligns with findings from Robinson et al. (2019), who examined student experiences in the first two years of college and also identified declines in expectancy and value, as well as increases in cost over time. However, our study observed this trend specifically for value and cost. Why do students perceive less value? One potential explanation may be linked to the first-year course planning requirements of the university involved in this study. Depending on their program trajectories, students are often required to complete several prerequisite courses in their first year before formally applying to their program of study. This requirement to complete more general courses before entering their program-specific courses may lead to a decrease in perceived value if students do not see a clear link between these required courses and their areas of interest or future career goals. To combat this, we recommend instructors look toward incorporating more utility-value assignments into their courses, as these can help students better understand the relevance of course content to their personal and professional aspirations. This approach has proven effective, particularly in STEM disciplines (Akcaoglu et al., 2018; Harackiewicz et al., 2016). Moreover, it would be valuable to examine expectancy, value, and cost across the duration of a student's program to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how these elements evolve over time, thereby offering deeper insight into the situational aspects of the theory. For example, if required courses at the beginning of a program negatively impact a student's sense of value, it stands to reason that this perception may improve later in the program, when the student has the opportunity to take courses more closely aligned with their interests.

All students at T2 identified higher costs, which is consistent with previous research by Lisnyj and colleagues (2021), who conducted semi-structured interviews with Canadian undergraduate students and found that when participants discussed the transition to post-secondary life, they commented on PSE having a higher workload than secondary school environments. We would encourage instructors who teach first-year courses to explore opportunities to support students in navigating these new workload demands. One such strategy for instructors could be to "chunk" assignments; that is, break them down into smaller pieces so that the workload is not overwhelming for students (Schuessler, 2017).

Lastly, in terms of the regressions, in all but one of our regressions, when T1 components of SEVT were significant in the model, they were no longer significant predictors of the outcome when T2 components of SEVT were added. We take this to suggest that students entering PSE perhaps do not have an accurate picture of what to anticipate, and that students have a better understanding of their new environment at T2. As such, it would be important for service providers, who aid students in the transition to PSE, to provide students with a clear picture of the differences between secondary school and PSE. For example, this could be partially accomplished through having second-year students come and speak in classrooms about their experiences, having just made the transition the previous year. Indeed, research has found that peer mentorship has a positive impact on first-year students (e.g., Lane, 2020), and it could be

important to consider making various forms of mentorship available for supporting students' transitioning to PSE. Additionally, this finding highlights the need for the change in SEVT theory to specifically highlight the importance of the situation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020).

Attending the CAP Program and Student Outcomes

It is important to note that, for students with disabilities in our study, none of the regressions showed CAP attendance as a significant positive predictor of our outcomes. In contrast, for the students who did not identify as having a disability, attending the CAP program had a significant impact in three of the five regressions. Specifically, those who attended the CAP program reported more positive emotions, greater acquisition of skills and knowledge, and higher overall satisfaction. The lack of a positive impact for students with disabilities is surprising, especially considering research by Lindsay et al. (2019), which involved a systematic review of post-secondary transition programs for youth with disabilities. Their findings concluded that transition programs had the potential to improve elements such as transition skills, as well as post-secondary outcomes for students. However, they also noted that further research was needed to explore various elements of these programs, including duration, setting, and delivery format. Additionally, the authors acknowledged that most of the studies included in their review were based in the United States, which makes generalizing the findings for a Canadian context challenging.

We offer two potential reasons for this finding. First, we only identified whether individuals accessed the CAP program, which may not have been sufficient to determine its impact for students with disabilities. This relates to the earlier points regarding the specifics of the program, especially given that attendance may mean, at minimum, only participating in one peer mentor meeting or attending one workshop. Future research could investigate the use and format of these types of programs in more detail, as well as the level of participation that may provide benefits to students with disabilities. Second, while the skills targeted by the CAP program are broadly important for all students, other skills may require additional emphasis for students with disabilities. For example, a systematic literature review by Nachman (2020) found that most transition programs for college students with autism included social skills training tailored to specific areas related to their diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). This is an important area for future research, as enrolment numbers for the CAP program in this population were low. It would be valuable to follow up with students to better understand their reasons for choosing to attend, or not attend, the program. Given that it is also a relatively new program (i.e., its hard launch was in 2023), it is very likely that many students have not yet heard of the program and/or all its available offerings.

Recommendations for Service Providers

Based on the findings of the current study, we offer the following recommendations. First, as the CAP program was linked with positive outcomes such as higher positive emotions, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and satisfaction for students who did not identify as having a disability, post-secondary institutions should prioritize making similar services visible and accessible to all students. These services could be highlighted during orientation events prior to the start of students' programs to increase access and ensure that students have an accurate understanding of what their first year of studies will be like.

Second, in terms of the specifics of the programing, given that students with disabilities encounter unique challenges related to their specific diagnoses, tailoring supports connected to general programming, like the CAP program, could be advantageous. A centralized "one-stop shop" for support services could help bridge traditional gaps, as these students often receive specialized assistance from disability support centres separate from general student services. Indeed, the importance of tailoring on-campus programs for diverse populations is consistent with recommendations from other researchers (Lisnyj et al., 2021).

Third, the CAP program offers peer mentoring in one-on-one and group session formats, and in programs like these, it may be important to consider who the mentors are and how they are trained when it comes to evaluating their effectiveness. Indeed, Nachman (2020) highlights that studies must take into consideration the qualifications of peer mentors, particularly in terms of how programs train or provide information about students with disabilities and considerations that might be needed to support their learning and transition to PSE in particular.

While demographic similarity with their mentors is often a preference among students, this type of similarity has not been proven to significantly impact educational outcomes (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). Instead, shared beliefs, values, and interests are more predictive of positive mentee outcomes than demographic matches (e.g., Dahlberg et al., 2019). These factors may be important considerations for service providers, especially if it is possible to offer mentor–mentee matching, rather than giving the ability to the mentee to select their mentor.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The results presented here should be considered in light of three limitations. First, we recruited a sample of first-year undergraduate students from one midsized post-secondary institution in western Canada. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing the findings from our samples to the larger population of first-year undergraduate students, which could be different based on location, demographics, or other relevant characteristics. Second, while our research examined students with disabilities as one homogenous group, due to the number of individuals with disabilities who identify with more than one disability (Furrie, 2017), it could be advantageous to consider the specifics around the disability in similar future studies. For example, students with a physical impairment might have different experiences on campus than those who identify as neurodiverse and have difficulties with executive functioning (i.e., memory and planning; Doebel, 2020). Third, while we focused on individuals with disabilities, we would encourage future research to examine the intersectionalities of various equity-deserving groups (e.g., ethnicity or sexual orientation).

IN CONCLUSION

The analyses presented here highlight the importance of expectancy, value, and cost as predictors of key educational outcomes, with perceived expectancy and value generally enhancing positive outcomes and perceived cost often hindering them. Accessing support services like the CAP program was particularly beneficial for the students who did not identify as having a disability, and it influenced positive emotions, skill acquisition, and satisfaction. More information is needed to determine the effectiveness of such support services for students with disabilities. Taken together, these findings highlight the role of both psychosocial factors and institutional supports in promoting successful student transitions to PSE.

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