Adjunct Faculty Engagement:
Connections in Pursuit of Student Success in Community Colleges

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by

Loreen McRea Keller

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Abstract

United States community colleges continue to increase rates of adjunct, or part-time faculty hires. Adjunct instructors currently teach between sixty and seventy percent of community college courses nationwide. Traditionally they have few institutional obligations, campus connections, or input to the academic process, and fewer opportunities to connect with students. At the same time, community colleges are under increased local, state, and national pressure to increase student success, defined as achievement of a degree, certificate, or educational goals. A qualitative study sought adjunct faculty perceptions of their role in student success. Fifteen faculty members participated from a large Midwestern community college. A bounded case study methodology was utilized for data collection. Grid and group analysis, an anthropological mechanism for categorizing human relationships and affiliations within organizations, was applied to findings. Four conclusions emerged: faculty care about the academic and life skills of their students and recognize gaps in basic education that must be remedied; adjunct instructors bring “real-life” experience and lessons to their classrooms; they concur that student engagement on campus and in education promotes completion; and their own professional efficacy requires cultural and structural connections with the college. Community college students and part-time faculty are fluid populations. In order to increase student success, colleges must make adjunct instructors an integral and enthusiastic part of that mission. Future research is recommended on a larger scale, with consideration of long-term structural and policy changes in higher education.

Key Terms: Adjunct instructor, part-time, contingent faculty, student success, community college
Dedication

In memory of Dr. George N. Aagaard, who encouraged me to become an expert, and in honor of

Gregory D. Keller, LTC, USAF(Ret.), who set a great example to follow.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Part-time, or adjunct instructors teach between sixty and seventy percent of community college courses in the United States (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2014; Liu, 2007). This is problematic because adjunct instructors often have few institutional obligations, campus connections, or support structures that promote excellence in teaching (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2006; Adamowicz, 2007). It is possible that the absence of meaningful connections between students and instructors and between faculty and their institutions creates an academic and professional gap and fails to optimally serve students in public community colleges across the nation (AAUP, 2006; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008).

Only recently has research turned towards the adjunct faculty members themselves, to understand perceptions and experiences of academic and institutional engagement (CCCSE, 2014). Adjunct instructor observations of their role in community college student success could lead to better support and positive impact for students in higher education. This dissertation presents qualitative research regarding adjunct faculty and institutional connectivity including professional development, institutional culture, and the impact of student-faculty interaction at community colleges.

Student Success and Community Colleges

Student success, defined as completion, graduation, transfer, or achievement of educational goals, is a relatively recent area of focus by political leaders seeking increased community college completion rates (Jacoby, 2006). College completion is not only important to individual students. Several factors have turned attention towards student success, including
increased scrutiny and expectations of institutional accountability in times of high U.S. unemployment. Government, business, and taxpayer groups have turned to community colleges to “demonstrate” student success, all while economic pressures from state budget cuts and reluctant taxpayers force administrators to keep labor costs as low as possible (Levin, 2007; Rhoades, 2013; Smith, 2007).

The cost of adjunct instruction is dramatically lower than that of full-time faculty. An average full-time community college instructor earns $54,000 with benefits on a nine-month salary, while an average part-time instructor (university and community college salary rates combined) has an average nine-month salary of $14,900 from a single institution, with no benefits (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012; College & University Professional Association for Human Resources [CUPA-HR], 2008). When colleges face budget shortfalls, a salary difference of twenty-eight percent encourages part-time hiring practices. Also saved in the process of hiring part-time instructors is the often-lengthy search committee process for tenure-track full-time instructors.

Expectations vary for adjunct faculty members from college-to-college as widely as the fields in which they teach. Some institutions encourage office hours and the use of learning management systems, while others assume attendance at department meetings or weekend availability for teaching. However, research reveals that overall, adjunct faculty members interact less with students, offer fewer collaborative and active learning environments in the classroom, and have less preparation time for classes (CCCSE, 2014; Christensen, 2008; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Kezar & Gehrke, 2013; Umbach, 2007).

At issue is whether adjunct instructors know enough about the institutions where they teach to offer a value-added experience to student learning and success (Benjamin, 2002; Cox,
McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Quaye, 2010; Wallin, 2004). Colleges are held accountable by accreditation bodies for ensuring student learning takes place, yet it is unknown whether most part-time faculty are acculturated with institutional goals and objectives to deliver for their students (Benjamin, 2002; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Elman, 2002). Moreover, student success cannot be transactional, as education is not something to “buy” or “sell.” In the same way, part-time faculty hiring practices should not center on transactions of “showing up, teaching a class, and turning in a grade” (CCSSE, 2014, p.3). Research is important to determine whether adjunct faculty members consider their impact on student success, transfer, and graduation rates, and when they do, how community colleges might support a positive influence. This research explored whether increased faculty-institution engagement and better connectivity might increase the self-efficacy and value of adjunct instructors in pursuit of student success, above and beyond the grades awarded in a course.

**Significance**

Over the next five years, U.S. labor needs are anticipated to be high, with over 26 million new jobs by 2018 requiring college degrees or certificates (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2010). President Obama, in his 2012 State of the Union Address, challenged community college leaders to graduate five million students in the next five years (White House, 2012). If adjunct instructors make up over half of community college faculty, they ought not be “invisible” to institutions attempting to meet the challenge (AAUP, 2006; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Gehrke, 2013; Smith, 2007; Yakoboski, 2014).

Across the United States, over 1,100 public, private, and tribal community colleges manage enrollment of 44 percent of total college students (AACC, 2010; CCCSE, 2014). Unpredictable enrollment trends at community colleges and changing program needs over the
past decades have justified the increased use of adjunct instructors in order to staff flexibly between terms. Career fields require expertise in the classroom from working professionals. At the same time as state and national education budgets have been reduced, the prospects of lower labor costs have become attractive to administrators (Christensen, 2008; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013).

Increased attention has been given to the concerns of adjunct faculty since the passage of the Affordable Care Act (AAUP, 2006; Jacoby, 2012; Keller, 2014; Ruiz, 2007). While the ACA was designed to make health insurance more affordable for Americans nationwide, it also exposed the substantial dependency on part-time labor across the country, particularly in higher education. Some colleges have modified hiring practices in order to maintain part-time status for faculty and avoid the law’s requirements, as employers with more than fifty employees must now make health benefits available to any employee working more than twenty nine hours per week (Keller, 2014).

Mainstream media have also recognized imbalances in the employment of adjunct faculty (Hoff, 2014; Huskey, 2014). Instructors have described inequitable treatment by their institutions on websites and television (Solman, 2014; Swarns, 2014). Best practices for connections and purpose with community college adjunct faculty are timely and urgent in higher education - and likely will be relevant over the next decade.

The scholarly contribution of this research aims to add weight to the body of evidence in favor of increased adjunct faculty engagement as a key to student success. From an organizational standpoint, the results of the research may prove valuable for community college administrators and full-time faculty, as well as offer direction to external organizations and unions. Institutional impacts of the research include recommendations for professional
development, leadership training for chairs and administrators, physical space improvements, and recognition of the value of faculty-student interaction. At a higher level, policymakers and accrediting bodies soon may require institutional changes such as these.

**Positionality**

The researcher is a former adjunct instructor who now serves as a community college associate dean supervising unionized adjunct faculty members. In a traditional research environment, a researcher’s personal voice and experience are discouraged from being included in the discussion (Maxwell, 2005). This is to say, in quantitative research, the scholar tries to remove herself or himself as a variable that might impact research outcomes. However, the need for a positionality statement in qualitative research acknowledges that the individual conducting the research has a perspective. The researcher’s perspective includes cultural, gender, environmental, and economic background (Carlton Parsons, 2008). Bias and privilege (being “inside” or “outside” a subject group) inevitably impacts the research process from topic choice to research objectives and data interpretation (Briscoe, 2005). If not acknowledged, researcher bias may lead to loss of credibility and undermine conclusions (Maxwell, 2005).

The researcher attempted to maintain neutrality through the process. Part of this was aided by conducting interviews at a community college other than the researcher’s own, where her title was “student researcher.” From her role as administrator and former part-time faculty member, separation was intended to generate objective implications and recommendations that would improve student success in community colleges. Qualitative research in the positivist tradition challenges researchers to “bracket” their own values, experiences, and assumptions about their topic, so as not to color the data collection (Mantzoukas, 2005). The inquiry followed
this tradition in order to better understand the adjunct faculty perspective at a Midwestern community college.

**Research Question**

Over the course of the literature review a central question emerged. The question was qualitative in design, and pursued understanding of adjunct faculty experiences and engagement in a community college culture. It was clearly articulated to participants, and pursued for emergent themes (Meadows, 2003):

What is the experience of community college adjunct instructors with respect to institutional and organizational culture, and, beyond teaching, what value-added components do adjunct instructors recognize as impactful for student engagement and success?

The question invited participants to reflect on their experiences from multiple levels, from the personal to the professional, as well as their understanding of student success. The term “student success” was defined in the interview process. Participants were also asked about opportunities and obstacles at the college. Suggestions were made regarding links between faculty-institution, and faculty-student connections, such as shared governance, professional development, recognition, communication, and access to information, workspace, and other resources. Another direction of inquiry was the perceived level of autonomy for teachers at the institution. Questions of independence, bureaucracy, and organizational culture arose. Participants were also asked what they would do, if they were in charge, to impact student success, particularly as it related to adjunct instructors.
Purpose of Study

The goals of this research were fourfold: to increase understanding of community college adjunct faculty perceptions of student success; determine an understanding of organizational culture; magnify understanding of professional opportunities; and consider adjunct faculty perceptions of additional resources and connections needed to promote student success. Results offer recommendations for better support practices. This may lead to greater adjunct faculty engagement with students and increase their ability to further students’ educational goals.

Key Terms

Key terms in this paper include “adjunct” faculty members, also known as part-time instructors, or contingent faculty members. The three terms are interchangeable. Adjunct instructors are defined as faculty members hired on a term-by-term basis for a fixed compensation amount (AAUP, 2006). “Student success” is defined as achieving a degree, certificate, or meeting an educational goal. “Community college” is defined as an accredited public, two-year institution of higher education in the United States that awards degrees and certificates, as well as providing community education and workforce training (AACC, 2010).

Organization and Content

Following this introduction is a presentation of the literature review in Chapter Two. This includes an evaluation of the problem of practice - how to increase student success in light of increased adjunct faculty employment in community colleges across the United States. A review of the current and foundational literature about adjunct instructors and their impact in higher education illustrates limitations addressed by the following research. The research design is explained in Chapter Three, including a philosophy of qualitative inquiry and theoretical framework. Methodology, practice, and site and participant components are described, as well as
details about data collection, analysis, and protection of human subjects. The framework provides a context in which to set the data collection results, as the research question focused on the perspective of individuals within their organizations. Chapter Four presents the findings, where data is categorized and organized by participant and by theme. Chapter Five offers a discussion of the research, the theoretical framework, implications for future research, and some concluding observations.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Scholarly literature and media sources acknowledge the high numbers of adjunct faculty in higher education: roughly 280,000 out of 400,000 community college faculty members are hired part-time each academic year (CCCSE, 2014; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Overstreet, 2014; Sawyer, Kata, & Armstrong, 2014). This points to the concerns by students, community members, and policy makers that nearly 70 percent of the academic teaching workforce in U.S. community colleges (up from 20% in the 1960’s) is comprised of faculty members who receive few benefits and no guarantee of continuing or future employment (Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Rhoades, 2013, Yakoboski, 2014). Adjunct faculty members generally work on a contract basis and are paid between one third and two thirds of full-time faculty hourly rates (Akroyd & Caison, 2005; Christensen, 2008).

This review examines four aspects of adjunct faculty employment in community colleges. First, institutional and faculty characteristics are presented. Second, research regarding adjunct faculty members’ impact on student perception, educational effectiveness, and completion/transfer/success is considered. Third, institutional culture and context of adjunct faculty employment is examined, as administrators, union organizers, and full-time faculty influence the adjunct experience. Finally, literature is presented on current best practices for adjunct faculty integration.

The pace of research on adjunct faculty in community colleges has greatly increased. Nearly 170 dissertations have been published since 1974 on the topic, as noted in a recent annotated bibliography (Weiss & Pankin, 2011). Over half were awarded between 2000 and 2010. Although the amount of community college-focused literature has increased and continues
to increase, it is important to note that the perspective of adjunct instructors has not always been sought in community college research. Earlier research on adjunct faculty focused on the perceptions of administrators and full-time faculty rather than adjuncts themselves. While recent research over the past five years more regularly involves the population under consideration, there remains room for more (Caivet, 2005; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Dolan, 2011; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010; Washington, 2010; Zeas, 2013).

**Adjunct Faculty and Institutional Characteristics**

Professional profiles and ambitions of adjunct instructors in community colleges are varied. They include instructors who teach in pursuit of full-time teaching positions, often serving as adjunct faculty at multiple colleges (Akroyd & Caison, 2005). Contrary to assumptions, however, in one national study over half of surveyed instructors (51%) preferred part-time teaching (Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Some choose part-time work as a supplement, others teach in retirement or semi-retirement, and many teach on the side of a full-time career, often in a specialty field such as nursing, criminal justice, or fire science (Bogert, 2004; CCCSE, 2014; Cain, 1998; Gappa & Leslie, 1993, Lyons, 2007; Wallin, 2004).

Little difference was revealed between the educational achievements of full- and part-time instructors over a four-year survey of over 71,000 full and part-time community college instructors (CCCSE, 2014). Sixty-seven percent of adjunct instructors claim Master’s degrees and eleven percent hold doctoral degrees. In comparison, sixty-six percent of full-time instructors hold Master’s degrees and eighteen percent hold doctoral degrees (CCCSE, 2014).

Significant salary disparity exists between adjunct and full-time faculty, including the fact that on average, part-time faculty are paid thirty-five percent less than full-time faculty (Benjamin, 2002; Christensen, 2008; Wallin, 2004). Within academic and career subjects,
however, additional discrepancies exist. Because the annual income of career and technical part-time faculty regularly includes a primary or secondary job in the area of specialization, these adjunct faculty members have a total income significantly higher than that of liberal arts, humanities, and general education instructors who do not work in business or health care (Benjamin, 2002; Levin, 2007).

A more significant difference is found between the number of years taught by full and part-time faculty. Adjunct faculty are most likely to be new to the profession, as thirty-seven percent nationwide have fewer than five years of experience in the classroom, while only thirteen percent of full-time faculty surveyed from 2009-2013 are in their first five years (CCCSE, 2014). Over time, however, a surprisingly high number of adjunct instructors teach multiple years at a single institution: full-time faculty teach an average of twelve years, and part-time faculty teach an average of seven years (Akroyd & Caison, 2005; Eagan, 2007).

In the late twentieth century, over half of adjunct faculty members reported a preference for part-time teaching because of the autonomy and flexibility it afforded (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Leslie & Gappa, 2002). As economic and academic shifts occurred, however, this has changed. Now, less than one-third of adjunct faculty report satisfaction with part-time teaching (CCCSE, 2014). The term ‘invisible faculty’ was coined to reflect an academic workforce rarely seen on campus, because adjunct instructors leave for other teaching jobs, a full-time position, or have no space in which to work and collaborate with others. The lack of improvement in salaries, job security, and working conditions has further eroded enthusiasm and job satisfaction (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Other areas of frustration for adjuncts included lack of resources, training, benefits, and communication (Burgess & Samuels, 1999; Bogert, 2004; Christensen, 2008; Eagan, 2007; Jacoby, 2006; Smith, 2007; Umbach, 2007; Wallin, 2004).
Community colleges share a high proportion of responsibility for higher education. Over 1,100 public, private, and tribal community colleges enroll 44 percent of all college students in the United States (AACC, 2010). U.S. labor needs over the next five years are anticipated to be high, with over 26 million new jobs by 2018 requiring college degrees or certificates (White House, 2012). Full-time instructors require high institutional expenditures in terms of salary and benefits (AAUP, 2006).

Varied enrollment levels at community colleges and changing career and industry training needs over the past twenty five years have warranted the increased use of adjunct instructors, although adjunct instructors have been part of higher education since the turn of the 20th century (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1996). Part-time teachers are generally easy to hire and re-hire if necessary, and if class sizes decrease or programs shift, college administrators adjust accordingly with adjunct faculty (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008). Business models have been applied to the community college arena, as vocational training emphasizes employment-ready skills (Levin, 2007). In career and technical fields, currency and practice are often required, and always preferred, for program accreditation (Akroyd & Caison, 2002; CCCSE, 2014). However, all of these practices have also justified the use of “just-in-time” employment, taken from an inventory management method, wherein classes are not staffed with instructors until the last weeks or month before a term begins (Rhoades, 2013).

Once hired, colleges don’t necessarily support the critical role of adjunct faculty members on their campuses (Bogert, 2004; Burgess & Samuels, 1999; James & Binder, 2012; Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Wallin, 2004; Yakoboski, 2014). Expectations are lower for adjunct instructors. Some classes require only a single lecture per week, administration of a midterm and final exam, and submission of student grades (CCCSE, 2014).
Adjunct Faculty Engagement and Student Success

Quantitative studies on the impact of adjunct faculty members and college graduation rates, university transfer rates, and grading patterns have brought attention to the area of professional development and engagement (Christensen, 2008; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Umbach, 2007). For example, academic advising is part of the teaching role for fifty-five percent of full-time instructors, compared to only seven percent of part-time instructors (CCCSE, 2014).

Learning outcomes have been a concern addressed in community college research for years, although instructional quality has rarely been a criticism aimed at part-time faculty (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Quaye, 2010; Eagan, & Jaeger, 2008, 2009). One quantitative study involved sequential English courses when adjunct faculty taught the first course of the sequence and full-time faculty taught the second course of the sequence (Burgess & Samuels, 1999). Data demonstrated that students were less prepared for the second course after adjunct instruction in the first course. Full-time instructors who taught the first course tended to prepare students more fully for the second course in the sequence. Factors that were attributed to this discrepancy included fewer physical and institutional supports and expectations for adjunct instructors, such as lack of office space and time to meet with students (Burgess & Samuels, 1999).

Innovations in technology and classroom management styles that have been shown to positively impact student learning are less likely to be used by adjunct instructors who have little time for professional development outside their teaching assignments (Kezar & Sam, 2010). Adjunct instructors typically employ lecture-based instruction and traditional format assessments
(such as multiple choice exams), and are less than half as likely to team teach or lead student-centered or experiential learning (Benjamin, 2002; CCCSE, 2014).

As the number of part-time instructors increases, community college graduation rates have been shown to decrease (Jacoby, 2006). Using a multiple variable regression analysis, Jacoby gathered data from over 1,200 community colleges through the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) and demonstrated that “increases in the ratio of part-time faculty at community colleges have a highly significant and negative impact upon graduation rates” (Jacoby, 2006, p.1092). Higher numbers of part-time instructional faculty in community colleges appear to impede student success in higher education. Although the scholarly literature poses questions about adjunct faculty and student success (Harnish & Wild, 1992; Eagan, Jr. & Jaeger, 2008; McArthur, 1999; Wallin, 2004; Umbach, 2007), this was the first nationwide, quantitative response to those questions. A similar study of adjunct instructor exposure to students in the California community college system revealed a “significant yet modest negative effect on completing an associates degree” (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009, p.1).

Institutional policies and expectations impact adjunct faculty both on campus and online, as online college coursework increases the number of part-time instructors in higher education. A quantitative study of student success was conducted of over 6,000 university students across nearly 400 online sections of the same course, half of which were taught by full-time faculty and half of which were taught by part-time faculty (Mueller, Mandernach, & Sanderson, 2013). Results revealed there was no grade inflation by adjunct faculty in contrast to the criticism that “tough” adjunct faculty risk receiving bad student evaluations, and are less likely to be re-hired if good grades aren’t awarded (Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, & White, 2006; Johnson, 2011). In the online study, however, adjunct-led sections demonstrated lower levels of success,
measured by withdrawal rates, student satisfaction, continued enrollment, and average course
grades. Investigation into the nature of the online adjunct instructors’ differences for lower
student success revealed four important factors related to the current research: adjunct instructors
were not “mainstreamed” with their institution, had no access to institutional professional
development, less time to invest in course development, and did not share office or campus space
with other instructors (Mueller, et al., 2013).

There is a need for intentional faculty-student interaction, advising time, and collegial
energy, something that few adjunct instructors have the luxury to take (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley,
Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, Umbach, 2007). Cox et al. (2010) found that full-time instructors spent
more time interacting with students than part-time, both in and out of class, and demonstrated a
positive impact on learning. Increased faculty-student contact has resulted in higher completion
rates, better grades and critical thinking skills, and improved self-confidence for students (Kezar
& Maxey, 2014). This suggests that adjunct faculty and their lack of contact with students fails to
promote student success.

Eagan and Jaeger (2008) suggested also that transfer rates of students with adjunct
instructors were lower because of a “social capital” effect – the fact that adjuncts don’t know
how to advise students about the institutional policies where they teach, offering fewer
opportunities to students for networking. Research with adjunct faculty indicates that a sense of
engagement is more likely to foster student success, particularly when adjuncts have a sense of
connection to their students and loyalty to their institution (Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Dolan,
2011; Washington, 2011). This is to say that faculty members who consider themselves “part of
the team” tend to have a greater interest in the organizational outcomes of the college.
Institutional Culture and Context

Institutional structures may not be set up for adjunct faculty to promote student success, because communication and collaboration around assessment and outcomes regularly occurs in departmental or committee meetings, few of which adjunct faculty are invited (or required) to attend (Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014). Some colleges have certain hours of the week when only adjunct faculty members teach, so full-time faculty members can attend meetings. Further, while many adjunct faculty members indicated an interest in professional development if it benefited their teaching skills, few opportunities were conveniently offered or clearly communicated (Stejskal, 2011). Efforts to invite adjuncts to interact with their full-time counterparts is also critical for the consistency and continuity of academic instruction, yet few studies reflect consistent “invitations to membership” for adjuncts in the academic community (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Phillips & Campbell, 2005; Yakoboski, 2014).

Willingness to participate in some aspects of professional development appears to be connected to institutional culture, membership, and trust felt by adjunct instructors in their community college (Caivet, 2005; Peterson, 2007). Loyalties, driven by inclusion in any form of faculty integration, impacts willingness to volunteer for committees, lead student clubs and organizations, and participate in departmental assessment and program reviews. On the other hand, tension in the academic culture, driven by a lack of belonging, leads to detachment from the college inside and outside the classroom (Bogert, 2004; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Roueche, Rouche, & Milliron, 1996).

In the absence of individual connections to community college faculty and the academy, and increasingly dissatisfied with their work environment, adjunct instructors have begun to make connections with one another, often through union organizing (Bobrove, 2012; M. Henry,
personal communication, November 15, 2014; Yoshioka, 2007). Unionization in the community college context has increased in impact since the 1990’s. Precedent was first set in New Hampshire, when adjunct faculty persisted in their drive for better working conditions through unionization. Their contribution to higher education was noted in *Adjunct Association of Keene State College v. Trustees of the University System of New Hampshire* (1999). The court quoted the Public Employee Labor Relations Board and acknowledged evidence that “[Keene] college would be hard put to operate without its established cadre of adjunct lecturers” (DiGiovanni, 2013, p. 15). This case paved the way for adjunct faculty unions to establish a collective voice in higher education.

Legislative and legal battles in California and Washington State also described the “exploitation” and “marginalization” of adjunct instructors. They led to development of an organized and unionized fight for access to health insurance and retirement plans (Ruiz, 2007; Yoshioka, 2007). Class action legal settlements between the two state college systems and their adjunct faculty associations have led to greater attention and consideration for adjunct faculty unions.

Union organizing by adjunct faculty has doubled over the past fifteen years, from 75,882 adjunct instructors represented in 1998 to 147,021 in 2012 (DiGiovanni, 2013). The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) claims that it represents 55,000 adjunct faculty members across the U.S. in joint and stand-alone bargaining units (Bobrove, 2012). Studies suggest that community colleges with adjunct faculty unions tend to have better conditions of employment and more equity with full-time instructors, despite the continued low pay (Bobrove, 2012; Caivet, 2005; DiGiovanni, 2013; Jacoby, 2012; Rhoades, 2013). Adjunct Action, a campaign of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), has staff in ten major U.S. cities and the
entire state of Washington with ambitions to organize hundreds of thousands of adjunct faculty in universities and colleges nationwide (M. Henry, personal communication, November 15, 2014).

In many cases, the establishment of collective bargaining units has helped to clarify issues around health insurance and other benefits, such as paid leave, dedicated workspace, or orientation and professional development programs (Duncan, 1999; Jacoby, 2012). However, due to multiple teaching roles and other jobs, many adjuncts cannot afford to stay on campus for committee, union, or department meetings, as they must travel to other community colleges (AAUP, 2006). According to one former community college adjunct union president, this makes continuity and connections between members hard to manage. Additionally, when faculty-administration tensions arise, often it is an unpaid representative of the adjunct faculty association who comes to the table (P. Ponzio, personal communication, May 23, 2013).

A current issue facing adjunct faculty and their community college employers is the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111-148), known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It was signed into law on March 23, 2010, and was almost fully implemented in 2015. Employers with more than fifty full-time employees must offer them the opportunity to enroll in minimum affordable health insurance (U.S. Department of the Treasury [Treasury], 2013). The law defines full-time employees as individuals who work thirty hours or more per week.

While adjunct instructors never teach thirty hours per week in the classroom, a twist was added to regulation guidelines. Crediting adjunct faculty with their work hours must take into account a “reasonable method” that includes class preparation time (Treasury, 2013). Acknowledging preparation time for adjunct faculty has caused assignments to be reduced as
some colleges and universities calculate one, two, or more preparation hours for every classroom/contact hour. At one Midwestern community college, this formula equals a maximum teaching load for adjuncts of four 3-credit classes, or 12 contact hours. With a preparation factor of 2.25 hours per contact hour, this equates to 27 hours of work per week (Keller, 2014). This formula is consistent with the collective bargain agreement for the college, but it reduces the number of assignments and eliminates the possibility of “overloads.”

**Best Practices for Adjunct Faculty Integration**

“Although colleges and universities are not, in fact, broke, their employment structure reflects a systematic, long-term financial disinvestment in instructional conditions of faculty work that detract from the learning conditions of students” (Rhoades, 2013, p. 1). This quote points to the continued imbalance of investment in higher education. New research may indicate that levels of investment, either in time, personnel, or programming ought to shift in favor of structure to support and engage adjuncts (Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Overstreet, 2014). Institutions and the entire field of higher education are beginning to recognize the need for intentional engagement with adjunct faculty, and research conclusions continue to call attention to examples of best practices, as described below.

New Faculty Majority was founded in 2009 as an organization committed to adjunct faculty advocacy, information, litigation, and legislative issues (newfacultymajority.info). Dedicated to “professional equity” in higher education, the Ohio-based institution sponsors seminars and research on behalf of adjunct faculty (Maisto & Street, 2011). The University of Southern California convened the Delphi Project in 2012 to examine hiring trends in higher education. Partnered with the Coalition on Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL), researchers share a focus on adjunct faculty and student success.
Many U.S. community colleges have invited their adjunct faculty to join full-time faculty in professional development (Cain, 1988; Harnish & Wild, 1992; Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Tomanek, 2010; Wallin, 2004). Roueche et al. (1996) sought recommendations for improving the role of adjunct faculty in community college culture. Interviews in their study revealed that administrators rarely pursued policies to integrate adjunct faculty. In response, Roueche et al. (1996) developed the Part-Time Faculty Integration Model. Their model encompassed four recommendations for college administrators: attempt to socialize adjunct faculty; encourage full-time and part-time faculty to communicate with each other regularly; give opportunities for adjuncts to participate in college activities; and develop systems so adjuncts are working together as colleagues.

In English composition, where student writing and communication skills transfer to many other courses, a recent emphasis on integrating adjunct faculty with assessment and student support is offered (James, 2015). This integration may occur on campus with internal resources, where adjunct faculty members collaborate with tutoring and writing centers, or with librarians and technology staff. Research suggests that connections between librarians, tutors, and other learning specialists with adjunct instructors increase both student and faculty success (James, 2015).

Older research on adjunct instructor integration consistently matches more recent findings regarding an increase in adjunct connection with instructional quality. For nearly twenty years, scholars have recommended providing office space and orientations, mentors, training, opportunities for participation in college life and governance, increased compensation, technology resources, and support for internal and external professional development (Banachowski, 1996; Benjamin, 1998; Cain, 1998; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Harnish &
Wild, 1992). Also, an increasing body of research has been published with a stronger adjunct faculty “voice” at the center, in both community colleges and four-year universities (Caivet, 2005; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Dolan, 2011; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010; Washington, 2010; Zeas, 2013). These studies, both quantitative and qualitative, have focused on adjunct identity, inclusion, membership, and social understanding.

Inquiry using adjunct instructor interviews, focus groups, open-ended response surveys, and narratives has emerged as a valuable method for administrators and department chairs to understand the needs and experiences of adjunct faculty in various postsecondary institutional settings. Meixner, Kruck, & Madden (2010) sought to identify ways to include adjunct faculty in pursuit of increased student success. Through surveys administered at an employee appreciation reception, adjunct instructors responded that greater communication, training, and peer interaction would improve their teaching efficacy.

Researchers and advocates in the field of higher education continue to search for answers about how to help teachers help students. One study examined the relationship between adjunct faculty professional development opportunities and job satisfaction (Hepner & Kaufman, 2013). Interestingly, adjunct instructor responses in this study of 358 participants did not demonstrate that a correlation existed, and the article questioned the relevance of professional development courses for improvement. Another study by Eagan, Jaeger, and Grantham (2015) reviewed over 4,000 survey respondents at the four-year college and university level. In contrast to Hepner & Kaufman, they did find a correlation between satisfaction and support, but the correlation specifically identified four factors: office space, autonomy, professional growth, and respect. Online adjunct faculty, interested in professional development for new technologies and ways to
support their students, indicated their motivations would increase if greater communication, collaborative opportunity, and regular evaluation existed (Dolan, 2011).

Researchers interested in the impact of adjunct faculty-student interaction agree that additional research in this area is needed, where both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used. For instance, a multi-case study of three community colleges in Florida involved interviews with faculty members in focus groups and the examination of institutional policies regarding adjunct faculty assimilation (Bogert, 2004). Another multi-case study in the southwestern United States included interviews with administrators about their perceptions of adjunct faculty and the impact those perceptions had on college policies, but did not include adjunct instructor perceptions (Wagoner et al., 2005). Three additional dissertations used qualitative research methods to examine the role of adjunct faculty in community colleges, agreeing that greater emphasis must be placed on socialization, integration, work conditions, and inclusive models in order to realize student success (Tomanek, 2010; Washington, 2011; Zeas, 2013).

Institutions are currently in pursuit of adjunct faculty models of intentional communication and engagement (CCCSE, 2014; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Overstreet, 2014; Sawyer, 2014). Best practices include reserving space for adjunct faculty, building union relationships (where applicable), and professional integration with department chairs and academic deans. Increased data collection from community college adjunct instructors is a form of adjunct engagement, and accreditation reports more frequently require data regarding full-time and part-time faculty (AACC, 2010; CCCSE, 2014). More national-level attention and data are needed on the inclusion of adjunct faculty in pursuit of student success.
Conclusion

Although community colleges are unlikely to reduce the number of part-time faculty, avenues have been identified to improve the work environment and institutional support in the direction of increased job satisfaction, campus culture, and positive impact on students (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Existing literature led to this paper’s central research question, which asked what encourages adjunct instructors to recognize and positively impact student success at a community college, over and above the discipline in which they teach. Additional questions included what kind of education instructors would like to provide that their adjunct status prevents, and how do instructors describe the cultural and structural support they receive from their colleges and/or unions (such as educational and classroom technology, professional development, social opportunities, or improved conditions).

The concern is not whether adjunct faculty are content experts, but whether instructors know enough about their institutions to offer a value-added experience as their students proceed with degree and certificate completion. This research examined how and if adjunct faculty members considered their impact on student success, with the objective of how best to determine institutional and cultural support for the adjunct faculty role.
Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter reviews the research methodology, study design, theoretical framework for analysis, and characteristics of the institution where the research was conducted. At the outset, the research question is revisited. A methodological overview, context, and justification follow. The research sample, site and participants, data collection process, data analysis, confirmation of validity, and protection of human subjects are detailed. Then a grid and group cultural theoretical framework is introduced as a lens through which data were analyzed. Finally, the site college is described, where all interviews and observations took place.

Research Question

Four premises formed the basis of the research question. These were explored fully in the literature review, and are summarized here:

- American community colleges have increased rates of adjunct faculty hiring, and adjunct faculty teach between sixty and seventy percent of community college courses nationwide.
- Adjunct instructors traditionally have few institutional obligations, campus connections, or input to the academic process, and fewer opportunities to connect with students.
- However, community colleges are under increased local, state, and national pressure to increase student success, defined as achievement of a degree, certificate, or educational goals.
- Therefore, adjunct instructors have a role in student achievement and success that ought to be enhanced.
Adjunct faculty members’ perspectives were sought on student success, including perspective on their connections and engagement opportunities. The primary research question that emerged from the literature review and the premises above was the following:

What is the experience of community college adjunct instructors with respect to institutional and organizational culture, and, beyond teaching, what value added components do adjunct instructors recognize as impactful for student engagement and success?

This two-part question offered participants the opportunity to explore various possibilities in their response, including personal and professional experience. They were asked to consider student success and the perception of their role as community college educators. The research question suggested a qualitative research methodology, designed to understand the experience of a particular population in post-secondary education, through the lens of classroom instruction, campus connections, and professional engagement in scholarly or career disciplines.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative research has its foundation in the philosophy of phenomenology (Chaffee, 2011). Phenomenology, a twentieth-century approach to the theory of mind, was a departure from the Cartesian dualist philosophy of “mind” separate from “body.” Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, philosophers working prior to and during World War II, challenged how humans define “being” in the world. Merleau-Ponty asked, “what aspect of our experience is most real” (Chaffee, 2011, p. 119)? His answer was the Lebenswelt, or “lived world.”

Phenomenology describes the human experience in the world as interactional, where there is no objective or subjective experience, only being (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Heidegger called this “Dasein,” which is a sense of being-ness that involves perceptions, objects,
senses, and consciousness in the world. Merriam (2002) described it this way: “Meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p.3-4).

Constructivists assert that reality is ‘known’ through the faculties of the mind, and that truths are contextualized and socially constructed. Extreme examples of constructivism include the belief that reality is only in the mind, similar to the question raised by philosopher David Hume, whether any objective reality or empirical causation can be confirmed at all (Alexander, 2006). Constructivist research, in this study, sought to understand the reality of adjunct instructors through interaction between researcher and faculty participants. Largely, the goal of phenomenology and constructivism is the revelation of something essential about the human experience (Robbins, 2009).

The primary objective of this research was to increase understanding of adjunct instructor engagement in community colleges, both with students and their institutions. Overall, the goal of phenomenological research broadly, and this study specifically, was “not to explain experience but rather to clarify understanding of it” (Chaffee, 2011, p. 121).

**Overview of Case Study**

Case studies are defined by identification of a specific population or site – in this instance, a faculty group at a large Midwestern community college. Case study research is widely attributed to Yin and his work, which began in the early 1980s (Yin, 2003). Case studies are used in business, government, policy, and social science research, and they serve to illustrate societal and organizational behavior that is to be emulated or avoided. Lincoln and Guba (2002), after their earlier work on research methodology, explored assumptions of quality and accuracy of research using case studies. Quantitative research is restricted, as hypotheses can only be tested in statistical analysis. However, case studies allow hypotheses to emerge as a result of the
research, and occasionally serve as the objective of study (George & McKeown, 1985). As long as internal consistency is observed across participant data, the “social enterprise” of case study research offers valuable insight to a given population.

This was a “bounded case study,” characterized by a process of inquiry with a discreet group and physical location, involving extensive data collection (Creswell, 2008). Identification of a case study population led to a description and analysis of the group. The intent of the research was to understand the “how” and “why” of the relationships and connections adjunct instructors have with their college.

Case study research involves assessment and evaluation, with data from multiple sources. This was a single instrumental case study, where the issue was adjunct faculty engagement with a community college, using one college and one set of faculty members (Stake, 1995). Over the course of a single semester, and using data gathered from observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, and reports, this “bounded system” (or context) revealed rich information about the lived experiences of adjunct instructors (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007).

Challenges to case study methodology come in three forms: scope, subjectivity, and application or generalization of the data (Schell, citing Miles, 1982). Often, case study artifacts, in this case emails, flyers, digital or physical resources, are difficult to sort with appropriate weighting mechanisms. Further, it is challenging to verify and validate data internally, which is to say that the causal links between participant and their experience may not be strong (Yin, 2003). Subjectivity of the researcher involved with participants can also muddy the conclusions. However, data drawn from interviews can be detached from the researcher’s bias or assumptions of causation with careful planning, listening, and sense of purpose (George & McKeown, 1985; Seidman, 2006). Additionally, in the research, case study data from artifacts and observations
were sorted and analyzed for contextual understanding of the cultural and working environment of higher education.

In this case study with adjunct faculty members, open-ended interview questions offered wide latitude for responses. Personal reflections from participants regarding their experiences and perceptions of community college students were explored within the context of their teaching. Examples from participants illustrated examples of collegiate connections and student success.

**Overview of Information Gathered**

This research pursued four types of information within a bounded case study: contextual, demographic, perceptual, and conceptual (Kvamme, 2007). The contextual information included an extensive review of documents related to adjunct faculty support, communication, professional development, and operational processes at one Midwestern college, most of which were available publicly through the college’s website. Documents were found online or in hard copy. Two additional requests for documentation were made from the adjunct faculty support office, after interviews were completed.

Information gathered from adjunct faculty at the site institution included faculty perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and information they need to teach at a community college and increase student success. Understanding the broad definition of student success and adjunct instructor role in this pursuit was central to the research question, and was emphasized in each interview. Further, discernments of resources, relationships, access, and communication were sought, as well as how each enhanced or detracted from connections and engagement with students.
Finally, conceptual information included the application and analysis of grid and group cultural theory, as well as current research on adjunct faculty engagement and student success. Research questions were open-ended, and follow-up questions included reflections from participants. Findings were synthesized and analyzed using an understanding of community college autonomy, authority, personal connection, loyalty, and socialization.

**Research Sample**

A purposeful homogenous sampling strategy was utilized in this research (Creswell, 2008). Purposeful sampling recommends that individuals and sites be chosen for the best understanding of the issue. Homogenous sampling involves choosing a population or site that has shared characteristics and is a subgroup of a larger population. The characteristics of individuals chosen to participate in this study were the following:

- Participants were men and women, with representation of both sexes;
- Participants taught credit courses applicable for degrees or certificates at the selected college; and
- Participants were from across academic and career disciplines of the college, with representation from multiple departments.

**Site and Participants**

Between eight and ten community college adjunct faculty members were sought as participants for this research. A single institution in the Midwestern United States, where the researcher has no existing relationships, employed all participants. Individuals in each academic division of the community college were invited to participate in interviews, after the researcher secured permission to draft an invitation email (Appendix B). Flyers were prepared and approved
for posting but were not used, as the email call for participants was very successful. A gift card incentive of participants’ choosing was offered in appreciation of their time.

The initial call for participants was sent in an email from the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development office (AFPD – a pseudonym) on a Thursday afternoon. By Friday morning, fifteen responses had been received. At the conclusion of the weekend, over thirty-five emails had been received and responded to. Faculty volunteers who indicated interest through the initial outreach process were contacted electronically with a follow-up thank you note.

At the end of three weeks, 64 out of a total 575 adjunct faculty (10%) had indicated they wanted to participate in the doctoral research. Responses were logged and categorized by academic discipline. Non-credit adjunct faculty members were not eligible to participate, and they were thanked but told via email they would not be eligible. Participants who were eligible were asked to share their availability, and scheduling was conducted based on distribution of academic division and ability to meet within a specific time frame.

One participant responded to the email because his uncle had attended the student researcher’s university (Northeastern University), and another responded because she was an alumna herself. Within two weeks of initial contact all interview dates, times, and locations with each participant were confirmed. All participants signed an informed consent form in advance of interviews, addressing risks, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw at any time from the study (Appendix C).

Participants agreed to be audiotaped, and had the opportunity to ask questions about the use of the data. The interview part of the study consisted of one face-to-face interview of approximately 45-60 minutes with each participant, using an approved interview protocol form.
All interviews took place at the site institution, in order to permit a rich work and cultural context for observation.

**Data Collection Process**

Interviews are a valued method for understanding the stories and culture of a group (Seidman, 2006). One of the characteristics of credible qualitative research, according to Stenius, Makela, Miovsky and Gabrheik (2008), is that an audience can follow the reasoning behind the process on a step-by-step basis. This transparency allows future researchers to repeat the research at another community college, for example, and have confidence that similar analysis would be reliable. An intentional line of inquiry was pursued, regarding how adjunct instructors influence student success through connections and engagement. Through conversation about an adjunct instructor’s work and perception of their role in student success, greater understanding was gained regarding the academic, social, and personal connections and culture of the selected site.

Each interview was consistent with the next. Participants were met prior to teaching a class, shortly after class, or in conjunction with a planned trip to campus. Classrooms, conference rooms, and work areas were familiar settings for the interviewees, and participants were generally comfortable and relaxed. Two minor exceptions occurred, first when a copy machine interrupted two interviews conducted in a faculty workroom, and a recording malfunction (during the second workroom conversation) that led to a repetition of six minutes worth of questions. Both participants were unfazed by the interruptions.

During introductory conversation, the researcher minimized positionality bias by focusing only on her graduate work at Northeastern University and the development of the research question. The researcher’s service as an adjunct faculty member was, however, mentioned in one interview. The conversations were wide ranging and allowed participants to
freely answer in any way, and several individuals expressed gratitude at the chance to share their input.

After the interviews were completed, each participant was sent an email thank you, a handwritten thank-you note, and gift card of their choosing. An invitation to review the interview materials was extended. If clarification of certain interview answers was needed, arrangements were made for follow-up email and/or telephone conversations. All participants submitted approval of their contributions by email, and these records were securely retained.

Through document and media review, additional data collection led to greater understanding of the cultural and professional conditions for adjunct instructors in their workplace. Interviews and observations of the case study site, combined with evaluations of documents, artifacts, media, and the working environment, allowed for a complete picture of adjunct faculty engagement and student success (Stake, 1995).

Data Analysis

The data were organized by type, including interviews, observations, documents, and electronic and visual materials (Creswell, 2013). Backup copies of all materials were secured in a locked home office cabinet in case of primary source loss or damage. Initial analysis included a contextual overview of the case and participants, including aspects of the case as it related to the research question, and a leveling of data over time and among participants, to ensure comparison of like results (Creswell, 2013; Dansereau, Yammarino, & Kohles, 1999; Yin, 2003).

Interview data were transcribed and confirmed for accuracy. Initial (or first cycle) coding was applied with simultaneous coding (Saldana, 2009). Simultaneous coding allowed the use of two or more codes to a “unit” of data. Units were defined as responses to research questions. Multiple codes revealed more of the participants’ perspectives overall, and separate responses
reflected the participant’s “voice.” The essence of each response was highlighted in the transcript, in a table parallel to the text. Answers were summarized in a neighboring column, and specific words were identified in quotations as essential terms or phrases of the participant’s contribution.

Second cycle, or axial coding, was drawn out of the first level of profiles and quotations. An initial set of experiential descriptors, or codes, offered themes revealed from the transcripts. The last part of the second cycle coding sought to identify themes that stretched across most or all interviews. Themes were then ranked by frequency of appearances in participant responses, and compared across all interviews.

Findings were represented visually to display data drawn from the research question and follow-up questions. These are illustrated in comparison tables. A narrative accompaniment to the illustrations outlines the research findings. Interview data were considered through the lens of the grid and group analysis as described below. This theory was applied to perceptions of the specific organizational context and coded responses from participants.

**Validity and Credibility**

Trustworthiness and validity of the study addressed key criteria. Primary considerations included self-disclosure of bias, triangulated observations (corroborating evidence with others) and analyses of interviews, as well as extensive contextual detail. To establish trust, each interview was conducted in a quiet area or office with few distractions, and several minutes of introductory conversation about community colleges, education, and other casual interaction took place as each participant became comfortable. In order to protect the integrity of each interview, the initial questions were asked by the participant, prior to turning on the recording
device. In this way, the purpose of the study could be informally discussed prior to the formal discussion of the objectives during the interview protocol.

Faculty members were given the opportunity to review their data for accuracy and tone. Internal consistency was sought. Notes regarding interview environment, interruptions, and non-verbal cues were made. In this way, confidence of authentic responses was increased.

Risks to validity would occur in this study if an insufficient number of adjunct faculty members had been available for this research, as one indicator of valid qualitative research is sufficiency of breadth and depth (Creswell, 2013). However, out of nearly 600 adjunct faculty who were sent the call for participants, 61 responses, or 10%, indicated interest. Data collection took place near the conclusion of spring semester 2015, over a three-week period.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Pseudonyms were used for participant names, the name of the institution, and some academic departments and programs of the community college case study. Anonymity was ensured with letters of consent, pseudonyms, secure audio recordings, and password-protected electronic files. Hard copies of all research data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure personal office. Transcripts and recordings were destroyed at the conclusion of the project, and only the student researcher and principle investigator had access to the materials.

**Theoretical Framework: Grid and Group Analysis**

The difference between theory and methodology, according to Lincoln and Guba (2002), is described as the difference between having an understanding of the world (theoretical framework) and testing the understanding through inquiry (methodology). In this research, the layers of research were applied in reverse. A qualitative case study methodology was used to
make the inquiries and conduct the research, and the grid and group theoretical framework was used as a tool to understand the world of the adjunct instructors who participated.

Douglas (1982) introduced the concept of grid and group analysis in a 1978 lecture as “a way of checking characteristics of social organization with features of the beliefs and values of the people who are keeping the form of organization alive” (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Douglas, an anthropologist, was troubled by the inherent bias of social scientists as they observed artifacts, cultures, and social groups. Her interest in bias-free, or objective research of social and cultural systems led to her identification of grid and group theory as a “mechanism” for categorizing human relationships and identity within structures and organizations (Douglas, 1982; Gosden, 2004).

In the grid and group process, Douglas identified the group by the social boundaries and allegiances that defined it, and the grid as the norms and rules that governed behavior of individuals in the group (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982). Measurements of organizational loyalty were analyzed on the horizontal, \( x \)-, or group axis, while observations of authority (autonomous or centralized, for example) were analyzed on the vertical, \( y \)-, or grid axis. Douglas acknowledged a vertical axis of authority in organizations, from minimum to maximum authority, and a horizontal axis of loyalty or allegiance to an organization, describing an individual’s organizational connections (Hendry, 1999).
Much of Douglas’ research focused on groups and relationships within groups, including the physical aspects of human interaction (Harris, 2006). She likened the organizational body to the human body, which has internal and external operations, defenses, perceptions of health, and coordinated systems (Douglas, 1982). The range of individual and organizational freedom is represented on the vertical axis of Douglas’ grid and group typology (Ellis, 2006). Rules, bureaucratic policies, stability, and authority comprise a “high/strong grid” environment. A “low/weak grid” environment includes significant freedom from structure, and empowers individuals, but with less permanence (Douglas, 1982). On the horizontal axis, a “high/strong group” category indicates that membership and collective goals are important to members of the group, and a “low/weak group” category suggests minimal socialization (Ellis, 2006; Chitapong, 2005).

Harris (2006) described research using grid and group as a framework for educational leadership assessment. Data was collected similarly to the research presented in this paper: interviews, observations, and document analysis. After data had been collected and reviewed,
Harris used grid and group analysis to present a unique perspective on education. Criteria of autonomy, independence, socialization and allegiance were applied to the dynamic relationships and culture of a private school. The holistic nature of grid and group proposed, “schools don’t have cultures, they are cultures” (Harris, 2006, p. 138).

Grid and group analysis is a practical use of cultural theory in many fields, including education, organizational research, risk management, and social justice (Chastain, 2005; Chitapong, 2005; Harris, 2014; Wouters & Maesschalck, 2014). Cultural theory identifies patterns and trends in human behavior within a social context, although the relationship of behavior to context is not linear. The number of variables in social and cultural contexts resists easy categorization of human behavior, but with these categories Douglas was able to demonstrate with repeated accuracy the attitudes of individuals in their workplaces and daily life (Harris, 2014). Grid and group analysis accompanies research results.

**Site College Background**

The following table describes enrollment characteristics of the case study college. A large institution, the college was founded in 1967 and claims more than 40,000 students per year, in credit, non-credit, and continuing education classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester Enrollment</th>
<th>Degree Enrollments</th>
<th>Ethnic Diversity</th>
<th>Average Age: 26</th>
<th>Certificates &amp; Degrees Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>6,757</td>
<td>General Associates</td>
<td>163 White – Non-Latino</td>
<td>8,376 Ages 17-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>Baccalaureate or Transfer</td>
<td>9,263 Latino</td>
<td>3,260 Ages 21-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>5,391</td>
<td>Career &amp; Technical</td>
<td>4,011 Asian</td>
<td>1,665 Ages 25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>9,566</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>Ages 31-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,957</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education</td>
<td>835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The college population is relatively stable in overall enrollment: Over the past decade, fall semester registrations have stayed consistently between 14,000 and 16,000 students, with between 8,600 and 9,100 of those full-time each year. The college sits on over 188 acres of land near a major metropolitan area, with over 788,000 assignable square feet of space. In July 2014, however, nearly half of the assignable square feet were affected by construction, making the college by far the busiest under construction among public community colleges in the state.

**Campus Observation**

Observations of the community college campus, its environment, and the interview settings were made on several occasions, independent of the interviews, in order to glean a sense of institutional setting and culture. Some observations were made casually, such as a drop-in visit to the site, while other observations were pre-arranged. At least one visit included taking photos of unoccupied office spaces, classrooms, and work areas.

The college campus is comprised of seventeen attached, semi-detached, and detached buildings, plus three off-site locations. Passageways between buildings are enclosed, for the most part, which is an important factor for cold winters and hot summers of the Midwest. As of 2014-2015, however, four buildings were under major construction across central areas of campus. Pedestrian walkways, building access, and relocated offices were inhibitors to cross-campus progress. Most of the work is scheduled to be complete in 2017.

Hallways are wide and lined with study tables, meeting areas, and workstations. Several hallways are designated “quiet areas” where students complete schoolwork rather than socializing. Most areas of campus are carpeted, and foot traffic is unobtrusive during passing times. Food and vending services are available in most buildings, and the college boasts brand-name coffee and sandwich shops. There is also a cafeteria, in addition to a student-run restaurant,
operated seasonally by culinary students. Several computer labs are well placed for student work, with large, staffed spaces.

Adjunct faculty offices, in comparison, are quite small, some with only three or four workstations. Additionally, 788,000 square feet of assignable educational space across campus means significant distances between classrooms and faculty offices, and between student services and academic resources. The Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) office is located in the lower floor of the library, and it will be centrally located in the future, but it is currently cut off by construction from two directions. The AFPD has a workroom, classroom, secretarial support and two deans’ offices. Friendly and accessible, the location is new and modern.

**Document review**

The college has a wealth of information on its public website, from links to faculty evaluation and goal-setting forms to professional development and training opportunities. Most all of the communications referenced by interviewees are archived on the website. The Adjunct Faculty Professional Development office (AFPD) publishes a newsletter every fall and spring. Each newsletter contains adjunct instructor success stories, news about college events, and information about professional development workshops, faculty retreats, and teaching strategies. Student services are highlighted, particularly new college polices, library information, academic tools, and career-search events. Initiated in Fall 2013, the newsletter transmits a mixture of resources, policies, and information to faculty.

Adjunct faculty member resources are also electronic, and available on the college’s public website. These materials require no login, and they offer a high level of access to information. The adjunct faculty union contract, evaluation forms, professional development
resources, and teaching resources (such as a syllabus checklist) are all available. An adjunct faculty pre-orientation video is available, with college history, mission, and recommendations for faculty and student engagement for success. The video contains five modules, including college policies, student and faculty resources, and tips for teaching.

Table 2: Faculty Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 Faculty Distribution</th>
<th>Full-Time Female</th>
<th>Full-Time Male</th>
<th>Part-Time Female</th>
<th>Part-Time Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Faculty Headcount: 785</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full-Time Male</td>
<td>Part-Time Female</td>
<td>Part-Time Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty:</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to neighboring colleges in the state, the part-time and full-time faculty distribution has been remarkably consistent. In Fall 2000, the total faculty headcount was 753, and adjunct faculty totaled 550, or 73 percent. In Fall 2014, total faculty headcount was 785, and adjunct instructors totaled 575, or 73.2 percent. This indicates that the breadth of course offerings has held steady, even as programs shifted and annual catalogs examined for this research reflected changes in career and technical training. Other colleges in the state have fluctuated more widely, some having doubled the number of adjunct instructors in fourteen years, while others have reduced the overall number of adjunct faculty members.

Conclusion

Research design and attention to detail are integral parts of qualitative methodology. The notes collected during observations, the interview process, and the components of data protection add credibility to the method. Because the researcher operates as witness, transcriptionist, categorizer and analyst in one, carefully established practices are required (Stenius, et al., 2008). The proposal submission, defense, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures instilled additional discipline to the data collection process. The interview process relied on three things:
attentive listening, asking open-ended questions, and allowing participants to tell their stories (Seidman, 2006). Careful transcriptions, notes, and observations were collected for well-defined data presentation.

Grid and group cultural theory was proposed as a lens through which to view the data. Although this theory has been used frequently in business and anthropology, it has never been applied to part-time faculty in the culture of a community college or university. Its promise of objective application offers visual imagery and analysis of interview data.

Finally, a description of the community college was included in the research design chapter for two reasons. First, the interview data was dynamic and substantial. The context of faculty members’ experiences and reflections risked being sidetracked by descriptions of documents, buildings and hallways. Further, eight of fifteen participants had taught or were currently teaching at another institution, and their reflections on student success transcended location. Second, while the research design was a qualitative case study, the data emerged as cultural inquiry. Grid and group analysis reflected the college culture rather than the institution, and the implications and warranted actions are therefore more generalizable than institution-specific.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

Introduction

Data collection was comprised of fifteen in-person interviews with adjunct faculty members from four academic, career, and technical divisions at the case study college. Interviewees were invited through their college email accounts to participate in the project, which was described as “an hour of your time and experience . . . regarding your work as an adjunct instructor at [the college]” (Appendix B).

When all interviews were complete, and all transcriptions, thank-you notes, and gift cards had been transmitted, each participant was contacted one final time with an opportunity to verify their input to the research. Minor changes were incorporated, and participant profiles were then developed from observations and responses before, during, and after the interviews. These profiles offered an initial sorting function to the data process, sorting that would become valuable as first and second level coding ensued. Themes emerged from the totality of interviews, as well as categories and subcategories. Categories were verified in the observation and documentation process as well.

Participant Summary

Of fifteen interview participants, six were men and nine were women (40% male, 60% female). While this distribution does not match the college adjunct instructor population, which is closer to 50/50 male and female instructors, it was reflective of the response rate for participants (61 volunteers; 44% male, 56% female). Only one of the six men (17%) taught as an adjunct as a primary source of income. Three of the nine women (33%) taught as a primary source of income. Divisional distribution included two from Business & Social Sciences, four from Liberal Arts, three from Math & Sciences, and four from Health Careers. Of the eleven
who did not teach as a primary source of income, three women and three men were retired, and three women had full time jobs elsewhere, while two men had full time jobs elsewhere. Of the four who taught as a primary source of income, all of them confirmed that they hope for full-time jobs in teaching someday.

The longest serving participant taught as an adjunct instructor during evenings throughout a high school teaching career, and has taught at the college for thirty years. The newest adjunct instructor had just finished his second semester teaching at the college. The distribution of years of teaching by percentage, across all fifteen participants, is reflected in the following table.

Table 3: Years of Teaching, Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>Percentage of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 Years</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 Years</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29 Yrs.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+ Years</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Participants, Gender, and Academic Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Jackson”</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Business &amp; Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Aiden”</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Business &amp; Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sophia”</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Liam”</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Lukas”</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Emma”</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Noah”</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Math &amp; Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Olivia”</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Math &amp; Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjunct Faculty Profiles

**Jackson, Business & Social Science.** Jackson holds a Master of Arts in Management, and has taught as an adjunct for one year, with classes in international management and principles of marketing. Prior to joining the community college as a marketing specialist in a full time role, he taught English in Japan and Italy. His desire to teach stemmed from a double major in English and psychology combined with travel and teaching abroad. Although fully committed to his assigned classes, Jackson’s “day job” is in the marketing department, promoting the college to traditional-aged students, their parents, and high school counselors.

Jackson admits a unique perspective in the classroom because he is already “part of the culture” at the college. He sees himself as one step in a holistic process that will take students to new opportunities or a new job. However, his experience in marketing has taught him that written communication is an absolutely critical skill. He realizes he isn’t teaching Shakespeare or Chaucer, but even in the field of marketing he teaches that the “difference between writing well is the difference between getting and keeping a job.”

Each class meeting, Jackson tries to bring a piece of information into the classroom related to student events, student success, college resources, or tutoring services. He finds that students are often not aware of all the services available to them. When asked what factors
impact student success, he suggested a wide variety, including writing and math tutoring, the amount of time a student spends on campus, and study abroad opportunities. He is concerned that “a lot of students park, come to class, and leave; or worse, park, come to class, go back to the car and sit, and then go back to class.” If students aren’t engaged on campus, there are fewer opportunities to support them towards completion.

Jackson stresses “proper English, time management, and a clear policy on deadlines and accepting late work,” as part of classroom management. He states, “I put that in place so they learn that a deadline is a deadline, and in the real world it can be the difference between getting and keeping a job or not.” Other factors for student success have included working one-on-one with high-performing students who understand the benefits of community college instructors as resources. One student, Jackson noted, was a returning adult who was changing careers, and understood the need to “connect in a larger part to the communications of his business.” As an adjunct faculty member, Jackson offered to review the student’s resume, discussed internships, and sought a work-study position on campus. However, this was all outside class hours, and he admitted “if I had all of my students asking for this level of detail, there would be no way I could manage it.”

As a full-time employee of the college, Jackson is only able to teach at nights and on weekends. He does not use the office space provided by the college to meet with students after class, and was unable to describe it, but he is highly responsive to student emails. He portrayed the culture of the Business & Social Sciences division and the Marketing department as one “I feel fortunate to be a part of.” Each semester, he recalled, the division and the department have meetings at the beginning. Food is provided and the coordinator (not a department chair, but a full-time faculty member) spends time introducing new faculty members, going over enrollment
trends, and announcing changes in policies or procedures, with additional speakers frequently in attendance. Recently, the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) office sent two speakers to an all-faculty meeting, “to talk about creating dynamic presentations. The department is focused on improving adjunct faculty support, especially with technology.”

When considering how the college connects with its adjunct faculty members in pursuit of student success, Jackson noted that the college had a strong emphasis on tools and techniques associated with the learning management system, Blackboard. Online training courses are always available for adjunct faculty, there are “constant training sessions” offered by AFPD, and the administrative assistant to the AFPD regularly sends out newsletters about workshops and seminars offered. Some seminars are offered for credit or a stipend. “There is never a shortage of things that come from AFPD or other entities on campus to help teachers develop themselves as teachers,” Jackson said. He admitted, though, that he’s only taken one or two, as his schedule doesn’t allow as much as he would have liked.

Generally, Jackson described a great deal of autonomy with classroom teaching and management. The college provides a “general template, and there are pieces the college wants to you to include, but beyond that, you are free to teach as you wish.” Adjunct faculty members are also observed in their classroom, and some mentoring is offered. Jackson stated, “I had my supervisor observe me, but also someone observed me from AFPD and both provided me separate types of feedback about my teaching style.” Admittedly, courses in business and management are seeking standardized learning outcomes, so sometimes a midterm is standardized, Jackson noted. When asked about collegiality among business faculty, Jackson observed the following:
Adjunct faculty members are busy, and most have another full time job, or God bless them, they are juggling multiple adjunct positions and trying to put a patchwork together. I give them great credit – I’ve had a similar schedule and I wouldn’t wish that on anyone. It is one of the challenges of a community college. Students take their classes and go. Adjunct instructors come here and teach, then go. The chance to mix every day doesn’t really happen.

Overall, however, Jackson thinks that student success would increase if the college provided more places and reasons to spend time on campus, such as additional work-study opportunities. In his opinion, expanding the number of advisors and counselors would impact the ability of students to complete and graduate in a timely manner. Time to meet one-on-one with students would help. He observed that the level of diversity, backgrounds, and experience levels in his classroom makes a one-size-fits-all method challenging.

**Aiden, Business & Social Science.** Aiden has taught managerial accounting for two semesters and will teach financial accounting in the Fall of 2015. He has his own accounting and tax practice locally, so when he was first assigned a section it was a night class. However, enrollment was low and the class was cancelled. The following semester, he was asked to teach a daytime section, so he carved out time from his business to teach two days a week. Aiden noted:

“I think I’m more refreshed by [teaching] during the day. I was amazed by the facilities here, as I hadn’t been here in a while, and it was good to see students walking around the college environment – it made me think back to when I was an undergrad.”

Aiden indicated that his 35 + years in the field of accounting add significant value to the classroom and to student success. He has worked in corporate accounting, consulting, and in his own tax and accounting practice. Students ask him about his profession, and he tries to “interject
things that have happened with clients into teaching, and I believe that helps them understand more what the real world is like.”

The Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AxFD) office, he said, offers a lot of programs to help instructors be more successful in the classroom. Recently enrolled in his first workshop, Aiden met with the facilitator during the program. It helped him understand what the program could do for him. “They’re even willing to pay you for participating in some of the programs.” Adjunct instructors are invited to propose workshop topics, and if a proposal is chosen, they are paid a stipend to facilitate the workshop for colleagues.

Aiden’s interest in the interview questions increased when asked about his department, and he shared a concern about instructor credentials. In the Midwestern state where the college is located, Certified Public Accountants must be licensed to practice, in addition to having passed the CPA exam. To be licensed, CPAs are required to pay for and take 120 hours of continuing education every three years. Some years back, the state permitted CPAs to be “registered.” Registered CPAs did not have to pay for or take 120 hours of continuing education courses that licensed CPAs must complete, and it became a lesser credential. Aiden is licensed, and although he knows his accounting students don’t know the difference, he feels strongly that his knowledge in the field of accounting is something he brings to the classroom that his peers may not.

According to Aiden, full-time faculty are registered CPA’s and are not required to adhere to the same 120 hours of continuing education, nor have the professional experience of someone working in public or private accounting environments. He observed:

Under current rules, I’d be willing to bet that instructors here wouldn’t know the proper way to perform a compilation, or how to perform a review, or an audit, and are lacking in
the knowledge of taxation because they do not have to comply with State continuing education requirements.

Aiden noted that most adjunct faculty at the college are licensed, and thinks that adjuncts may have more to offer students than the full-time faculty.

In response to inquiry about college resources outside the classroom for student success, Aiden recounted that he tries to arrive at his classroom early, before class begins, to talk with students and get to know them. At the beginning of the semester there isn’t much interaction, but by the end of the term students ask him different questions about the field of accounting, such as how to open their own businesses, taxation, and the different types of clients and experiences he has. Regarding one-on-one meetings with students, Aiden observed:

There’s a big room over there for students and faculty to meet, and I see a lot of adjuncts meeting students there, but I don’t think that is the best environment. I always ask for the conference room. It would be better to have something more private.

Additional college support for accounting students includes an accounting club and a student success center, where faculty members can refer students for note taking and study skills improvement. Aiden appreciated the many resources for students, from practice exams to the tutoring center. He remembers when he went to university, instructors did not care – “if you showed up or you didn’t – if you failed, well that’s the way it was.”

Aiden reflected on the collegiality of the business department, and in the fields of business, industry, and education overall. He claimed that everyone in the department is nice, and that he interacts sufficiently with all other faculty and staff, but things have changed over the years. He recalled that in the past, colleagues would celebrate holidays, go bowling, go out Friday nights, or socialize with each other’s families. The culture has changed and these things
don’t happen anymore. Why? “Partly due to the economy and the pressures on businesses to cut costs, and people are worried about their jobs, so maybe they don’t put themselves out there as much as they used to.” Asked whether this absence of socialization impacts his teaching or the classroom, he noted that younger teachers could learn from the older ones, adjuncts could learn from full-time faculty, and full-time faculty could learn from adjuncts, because, “even though you are socializing, you still talk a little business.”

In an effort to improve his own teaching, Aiden asked the department coordinator if he could sit in on her class. He was impressed with her teaching and incorporated some of the things she did into his own class. His teaching was also observed by AFPD, his coordinator, and by another full-time instructor. After a second semester of observations, he knows he won’t need to be observed for another three years.

Aiden offered a suggestion to improve student success overall at the community college level. He is concerned with the lack of motivation he sees in his students, and their inability to take college seriously. He doesn’t think adding more tutors would help – the college has enough of those. But students don’t have a “big picture concept” of what they can or want to do with their lives, as they often combine school with part time jobs. He thinks some source of student inspiration should spur completion and success. Aiden admitted that his own teaching would be enhanced if he could continue to teach the same content for multiple semesters, so he could strengthen lesson plans that would best serve student learning, although he is grateful for the opportunity to teach other classes.

**Sophia, Liberal Arts.** Sophia has taught a variety of humanities classes at the college over ten years. Her degrees are in English literature and art history, with a Master’s degree plus 36 graduate credits. She teaches online, blended, and face-to-face, and thinks that she’s most
successful taking on classes that have been “dropped” by others. For example she “rescued” a non-western humanities course by sending notices to the Advising Department, and successfully enrolled 26 students.

The college is supportive and encourages faculty to teach and assess their classes appropriately, not just to pass students. Sophia feels comfortable giving college-level work and making students earn their grade, but expressed concerned overall:

I think it is an extension of No Child Left Behind. We’re getting those students in our classrooms now – they can’t read or write. I’ve worked with people who’ve been told ‘just pass them’ . . . in the last ten years I’ve observed rising GPAs, but what students are learning has stayed the same.

Sophia considers her main contribution to student success is helping students “get to the next level.” In some cases, she has consulted with her department chair about struggling students, plagiarism, and academic standards, and feels quite comfortable doing so. She used to be shocked, especially teaching online classes, when students would fail to do the work, say “I paid for this class,” and expect a good grade. She acknowledged that colleges are under pressure to make money, and some deans she has worked with put pressure on adjunct faculty not to “make waves,” either by failing students or by writing up conduct violations such as plagiarism. However, she feels no pressure currently to undermine her own teaching standards at this institution.

Adjunct faculty office space at the college is large and removed from the departmental offices. Many adjunct instructors prepare together there for classes, but Sophia doesn’t perceive much collegiality among teachers, and feels that “office politics” prevents genuine engagement with one another. She has perceived favoritism and alliances that have hurt her opportunities for
advancement at the college. For example, when she rescued the non-western humanities course and got some momentum behind it, she recruited another part-time instructor to teach the class after her, and that person ended up being hired full-time.

However, Sophia feels that the AFPD offers sufficient opportunities for professional development, and at one time the college offered graduate classes on campus for faculty members, although this has been discontinued. She appreciates the workshops, because “they offer the opportunity to bounce ideas off other teachers.” She also respects deans in the AFPD and her division who have experience teaching in the classroom, and hopes that high teaching standards will be maintained across the college.

As an adjunct instructor, Sophia’s greatest challenge is “fighting for classes” every term, at all the schools where she teaches. She talks with other adjunct instructors who are retired or supported by spouses, and they don’t understand her stress. She has to support herself, she said, and the politics and personal issues that she faces at all three schools are “exhausting.”

Overall, Sophia believes that student success is dependent on community colleges preparing students with the skills, abilities, and confidence to “move on to the next level,” and thinks that colleges should do more to track transfer students and their success at four-year institutions. As an instructor, she would be interested to know more about student success, because it could impact her teaching. If she knew how many of her students were leaving the college without a degree and why, or if she knew how many of her students were meeting their educational goals, she could support her students more effectively.

**Liam, Liberal Arts.** Liam is an instructor of world religions, non-western philosophy, and American religion in the philosophy department at the college. Although he’s been an adjunct instructor at the college for the past five years, his teaching experience spans several
decades and continents, in public, private, and corporate settings. He holds a Ph.D. in world religions, and taught first in graduate school, following a career in insurance sales and telecommunications. Liam also lived and worked in Singapore and Africa with his family, and brings a worldly perspective to the community college classroom. Corporate training and curriculum design also informs his current work with returning adult students.

Liam is confident that he adds value to student success through his life and career experience. “Many of us who are adjuncts had a career in teaching, business, or other experience that relates to what students need. I look at what it is that people need to function in civilization, and the skills it takes to make a meaningful job or life.” However, “I found myself shocked,” not only at students’ lack of preparedness to graduate from community college, but also a lack of preparedness to be in college in the first place. “80% of my students have not completed a successful high school education. They don’t have the writing or reading skills,” he said, and compared American K-12 education to that in Singapore, where students take twelve years of English and Math.

Liam’s greatest concern for student success in the current educational environment is the ability for students to communicate, both verbally and in writing. He is also concerned with students’ understanding of history and culture. “I can’t get through Judaism because they have no idea who Moses was,” he lamented. He feels strongly that English should be taught across the curriculum, and has not found a standard yet at this college. Liam also feels that his role as an educator is to teach critical thinking, how to be a good neighbor, and how to understand the world. “Good neighbors stay out of wars,” he teaches. But remedial reading and writing instruction required for content learning regularly sidelines student progress.
His commitment to student success over the years has led to a practice of “meeting students where they are” and moving them forward. Liam assigns grades based on progress, not performance, and although he admits awarding many A’s, he also knows that he can’t expect any class to be homogeneous in its knowledge of science, climate, languages, history, geography, or literature:

When I ask students to locate Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran on a map, only 10% succeed. I’m bringing together history, critical thinking, and literature from around the globe, and there are so many gaps in their knowledge, it takes a lot to get going.

The college has attempted to address this, Liam admitted. The college has proposed coursework to emphasize English language and principles of critical thinking skills in a separate class, even a basic course in world religions. He understands the college is looking for ways to even out the experience, especially in English composition:

I give essay tests, and I challenge students to understand that they have to learn to communicate with their boss, their teammates, and in their workplace. They need to set aside their feelings and realize everyone is entitled to their own faith and that diversity is not a danger. I’ve lived overseas and I’ve seen that Americans are often viewed as idiots in that way.

Professional development opportunities are extended to adjunct faculty members all the time, Liam recalled. However, he lives downtown, over an hour away, and understands that because most adjunct faculty teach at odd hours and days of the week, it is hard to schedule offerings, from an administrative standpoint. He looks to the AFPD office for guidance and clarity, but notes that many faculty members who return from professional careers are not “fresh out of graduate school,” and the academic terminology makes each opportunity sound like it is
written in code. Architects and firefighters have their own lingo, Liam noted, but somehow all adjuncts are supposed to understand what educational terms mean. Although he was once responsible for training 6,000 employees, he never used “rubrics,” and the absence of a shared language among adjunct faculty members is a problem, one that the AFPD could address.

Liam understands the attempts the college has made to engage faculty in professional development, but the college “is not answering the questions I’m asking.” He tried many of the AFPD classes when he first arrived, and continues to receive flyers from the office, but he was disappointed with their content, which is too simplistic. His list of what-not-to-do for adjunct faculty training includes: don’t make teachers do childish exercises or group work; don’t treat faculty like children; don’t be late or disorganized; and don’t offer “online” classes that are simply refried correspondence courses. Liam knows that faculty members have real problems and real challenges with students at the community college level. They want to share those challenges and learn about resources and strategies from experienced peers.

The philosophy department and the Liberal Arts division are “really good.” A new philosophy chair has a great reputation, and Liam is confident she will follow in the footsteps of her predecessors. Colleagues are supportive and assist with occasional student situations, and the dean and staff are strong as well. He believes he has autonomy as an instructor. “Nobody’s ever stuck their nose in and said ‘you can’t do that,’” Liam noted. Further, although there were interim deans of Liberal Arts, his impression of the newest dean is that she is a doer-a visionary. “I have seen how she responded to others in meetings – a very genuine response.”

If Liam had the power to increase student success across the college, he would put more support behind the new Promise program – free tuition for students taking a full load and earning C’s or better – because it would lessen the distractions that keep them from learning. He also
would generate the “right kind” of college involvement, anything that would focus interest in education and completion.

**Lukas, Liberal Arts.** Lukas has taught humanities and English composition for six years at the college, and works as a tutor in the writing center 5-20 hours per week, depending on his schedule. A “proud product” of the community college system, his interactions with “great professors,” combined with travel and a knack for working with people led him to teaching. Lukas received a Master’s degree in comparative literature and cultural studies in Ireland, and volunteers as a faculty advisor in the college’s study abroad program. He hopes to take an English class to Ireland next spring, and insists it was a life-changing experience for him when he studied overseas.

Lukas enjoys teaching in the humanities department because the curriculum is diverse and inspiring, and motivates students to become lifelong learners. Student success, in his classroom, includes “cultural comprehension . . . being an active and aware human . . . a sense of citizenship . . . and valuing life experience.” His insistence on experiential learning as part of his syllabus, including museum trips and cultural events, “is like Plato and stepping out of the cave.” He also adds reading and cultural comprehension, as well as writing and speaking tools, and emphasized, “being able to articulate yourself is one of the most important skills you can have in life.” He feels responsible to impart these skills during students’ Associate’s degree pursuit, because otherwise their Bachelor’s degree and employment prospects will be reduced. Lukas feels a genuine responsibility to his students, and assures them that success is not reached when they graduate. “Graduation is only the beginning.”

In Lukas’ experience, factors that positively impact student success include attendance, use of the tutoring center, use of office hours, asking questions about assignments through email
and after class, and using all the resources and materials posted on Blackboard. The college gives excellent access to education, is remodeling student space, classrooms, and labs with the best technology, and takes the community college responsibility seriously in the local area. Lukas believes students only fail if they don’t take advantage of all the resources at the college, and if so, they “really fail themselves.”

With respect to faculty connections to the college, Lukas notes that the adjunct faculty office is “free and open,” in contrast to another college where he teaches. The workspace is nice and recently remodeled, and adjunct instructors are given access to technology, lockers, and office supplies. Lukas cautioned “we are transients, as adjuncts, and when we have to keep all our stuff in our car, it is disempowering. Give us a little, and we’ll give a lot back.” Fortunately, adjunct and full-time faculty relationships are positive, and the department chair is well respected. Lukas also knows a few people in other departments, and the sense of connection he feels with his colleagues is an important reinforcement to his teaching.

Professional development is not something Lukas has yet looked into, as he teaches five or six courses each term at two colleges, and he can’t afford more commitments at this time. He was disappointed when the Affordable Care Act passed, because although he was a proponent of the legislation, the end result was that the college cut back on the number of classes he could teach. Lukas is limited to teaching three classes at the college and teaching six hours in the writing center per semester, and he is frustrated that “we are becoming a part-time nation.”

The hardest part of being contingent faculty, in the truest sense of the word, Lukas reported, is that “we are so easily disposed. It has affected my health to have classes cancelled. I had to cut down trees to earn money one term. It is demoralizing. You get nothing when you lose a class.” Improvements to the plight of adjunct faculty on the part of the college (and all
colleges, he noted) would include assistance with graduate school loan repayments, a 401K, and increases in pay rates. Colleges keep updating certificate and technical programs and hiring full-time career and technical faculty, Lukas claimed, all while neglecting departments and faculty who are doing the foundational work of education – reading, writing, critical thinking, and cultural understanding.

Lukas thinks that student success overall would be positively impacted with as much access to professors as possible, keeping students on campus with incentives like restaurants and coffee shops, and increasing access to technology and learning opportunities. The current college construction is “smart stuff,” Lukas noted, and 40-50 year old classroom technology needs replacement. Educational opportunities and access to advancement, however, need to be available for everyone in the community college, from students to faculty.

**Emma, Liberal Arts.** Emma is a Spanish teacher in her fourth year at the college. As an undergraduate, she’d intended to complete language study as an entrée into international business. When she entered graduate school in human resources, however, she was awarded a teaching assistantship, and discovered that she much preferred teaching to business. After switching degrees, she finished a Master’s degree in Spanish and began teaching as an adjunct faculty member directly out of graduate school.

Emma observed that student success in the liberal arts is hard to quantify, and therefore departments “are, sadly, always trying to prove relevance to the whole mission. Student success,” she continued, “is focused on the STEM fields, where there is always a right answer and a wrong answer.” Her own approach is to tell stories about her own education. She was ready to get her “piece of paper and go,” and then she spent a semester living in Mexico, where she realized she “was communicating in code,” and that she could do amazing things being
bilingual. Breaking that “code” became her teaching method in the classroom. She takes what the textbook says, decodes it, and brings it alive in the real world, or the “wild” world, as Emma calls it.

Emma knows it is easy to get “trapped in academia,” so she tries to relate language to students’ everyday lives.

Anyone who knows the different languages and knows how people [hop between countries] for jobs – they are familiar with the European culture where everyone knows at least four languages. If you’re talking to politicians who ‘get it,’ they don’t need to have language education explained. If you’re talking to someone who is newly elected and has never been out of the U.S., it’s a real struggle to tell them why languages are important. Languages influence the way humans think about their world, their culture, and their history.

One of her favorite teaching techniques involves mimicking common errors made by English Language Learners (ELL). She asks, “Have you ever heard people say X when they’re learning English? This is why, I tell them.” When students realize they are making similar mistakes learning Spanish, they not only learn the principles of language more easily, but they become more empathetic to others’ struggles in a foreign country.

Emma brings additional resources into her language classroom, and although she is only on campus two days per week because of her teaching assignments at other colleges, she shares cultural and heritage events with her students. Another example of connecting the Spanish classroom to everyday experience, Emma reported, is the college enrollment banners are written in the imperative verb form, and she engages her students by walking around campus and
translating all of the imperatives. “Go to school! Work hard! Clean up! Get ready! Start here!” include some of the phrases students encounter.

The college attempts to engage students and adjunct faculty, but there are many similarities and struggles with both groups. “Students are as busy as I am. Even if there are events we’d like to attend, we can’t carve out the time. Working around everyone’s schedule is like herding cats.” It is also hard to feel enmeshed in college culture, because when Emma began teaching at the college, she was only on campus Friday nights.

Moreover, the majority of her students transfer, so there is a great deal of transiency among the groups. As a transfer-oriented community college, summer classes fill up with university students returning home for summer. Summer used to be a term when she could earn more money for the winter when December holidays eliminate three paychecks, but after the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the institution interpreted it more strictly than others, and adjunct faculty members can only teach one course per summer, down from three in previous years.

The Liberal Arts division has shared workspace that was recently renovated. The space has lockers available to instructors, a kitchen and a refrigerator - several amenities Emma appreciates. IT and Blackboard support are “fantastic,” and personnel always resolve problems quickly and easily, often face-to-face. The computers and online access work nicely on and off-campus, and the college issues student emails with a common domain, so it is easier to email an entire class roster.

Emma thinks she has good support from her department and her division. In the department of languages, there is a lead instructor and full time instructors for each language. “Depending on the problem, I have two people to contact,” she said. Emma doesn’t know anyone
‘above’ the chair – she knows that the division dean is new – but she missed the introductory meeting because she had a class at another school that evening. In terms of adjunct colleagueship, she reported a “pretty great” level of engagement with fellow instructors. “We are going to lunch next week, and we are friends on Facebook. If I need a sub I know I can email adjuncts directly, and don’t have to go through my chair.”

Consideration of her own professional and personal success led to a couple of suggestions from Emma. She would appreciate more language-oriented professional development, even via webinar or asynchronous delivery. The college offers $250 per semester for classes and conferences off-campus, but only as a reimbursement after the course or event is complete. “I can’t always front the money. I would love to earn a certificate in translation, but I can’t afford it.” She recommended a tuition-exchange program with a university where faculty could be eligible for courses that would advance their post-graduate credentials.

Overall, Emma said, the college has students with more motivation and direction, in contrast to other schools, but if students need help it is available. There is a referral program called “Oyster” (a pseudonym) that identifies at-risk or first generation students, and faculty members receive alerts and inquiries on behalf of the Oyster students:

We get emails a couple weeks into the semester. I have to log in and note whether they’ve attended, if they are missing homework, or performing badly on exams. The note goes right to their counselors, and I can also see other classes a student is taking, and whether ‘attendance alert’ exists for others. It is a helpful tool to share confidential information about plagiarism, cheating, or whether a student is ‘playing the system’ instead of trying to learn.
Noah, Mathematics & Science. Thirty years ago after graduate school, Noah taught a few classes at the college when he worked as a research chemist in the area. He then moved on to a career the software field. In 2009-2010 his company didn’t require as much of his time, so he returned to teaching as an adjunct chemistry instructor at two local community colleges. He has taught the first two courses in the chemistry sequence for about two years at the college, and “prefers to teach their highest level freshman chemistry . . . most of these students go into the health fields and engineering.”

Noah appreciates institutional support for student success represented by the physical plant and the college’s commitment to maintaining technology standards. He also recognized the focus on improving adjunct teaching, through the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) office, where everything from preparation of lectures to uses and innovations with technology in the classroom are housed. Support extends to degree programs as well. “They have a Bachelor’s completion program with the University for engineering – if a student keeps a certain GPA for two years here, they can go right into the engineering school at the University.” Further, he has noticed an increase in students choosing community college based on affordability alone, as state funding decreases and tuition goes up around the nation. Regarding student success, Noah stated:

The college does what they can to encourage students and make them successful. The better job they do, the better they can sell their product [community college degrees] to the parents. Parents don’t want to send their kids to a two-year school and be told their student is doing wonderfully, and then go to university and fail miserably. That doesn’t serve anyone well.
Noah’s philosophy of teaching includes learning about his students on the first day of class, and addressing them by Mr. and Ms., rather than by first names. He inquires about their educational plans, interesting facts about them, and introduces the objectives of chemistry. It is a technical field, one in which they have to “be able to think their way out of a paper bag.” Problem solving is a top priority in chemistry, and he invites small presentations and small groups to the white board to complete problems and explain the solutions to the rest of the class. “They have to present and defend their ideas along the way – they’d better be prepared to do that – someone who goes into nursing must defend why a doctor may have prescribed something wrong.”

The college offers support to adjunct faculty in a variety of ways, Noah stated. There are functions in place to allow him to share with administration those students who are having difficulty. They’ve instituted a “sort of peer review” where he sat in on someone’s class and wrote up a description of what he took away from the class – particularly things he would incorporate into his own class. The peer program was an offer shared with all adjuncts. Noah was also critiqued by full time chemistry faculty and someone from AFPD, and added that colleagues are generally helpful and welcoming.

He has befriended one or two exceptional students over the years, and has had dinner with a colleague once or twice, but the characteristics of adjunct teaching do not lend themselves to long-term collegial relationships. The culture of the chemistry department is a function of the adjunct teaching schedules across day and evening courses, Noah admitted. “Because of the nature of the position – you’re here, you do the class, and you’re out the door, there isn’t a lot of overlap.” Noting the distance some instructors travel to get to the college, and the fact that many of them teach at multiple schools to make a living, Noah acknowledges it is tough. Grateful that
he doesn’t have to make a living as an adjunct, he recalls this challenge in higher education “has been around a very long time. Colleges and universities have always cut their costs by hiring adjuncts.”

The level of autonomy and bureaucracy is a necessary mix in chemistry, Noah admitted. For good reasons, all instructors give the same exams at the same times and offer labs concurrently with each other. All instructors must be in lockstep with each other in terms of the chapters and labs, but each instructor develops his or her own way of teaching the material. Noah writes his own exams, with exception of the final, which is an American Chemistry Society standardized test. He feels that it is a good mix of structure and leeway for his teaching methods.

His biggest concern is government intervention in education. “I’ve seen too many failed experiments in education over the years.” The emphasis on Common Core mixed with unwillingness to hire and pay decent teachers has tainted education. If a college has highly motivated teachers and clever students, learning can take place in a “cardboard box.” Noah lamented:

Kids come out of high school very poorly prepared. Everyone wants to be a rock star, or on one of those reality shows. They don’t know how to turn water into a gas - They don’t know whether to add heat or remove heat. Ugh.

Overall, though, Noah finds teaching rewarding and “enjoys the interactions with the students.” He finds his personal and professional pursuits are being met. The only connection he’d be curious to make in education, Noah concluded, would be to know how and where his students go after they leave his class, and after community college generally.
**Olivia, Mathematics & Science.** Olivia has taught three semesters at the college, and has taught at four other colleges over a decade while raising a family. An adjunct instructor by design, Olivia has done her best to schedule around children’s and family activities, and is happy working part-time. She teaches college level courses, and also tutors in the developmental center.

Olivia was impressed with the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development office, and thinks it is a more effective department than at other schools where she’s taught. She sensed a great deal of “effort into integrating adjuncts into the school.” However, the adjunct instructors are not well connected with their department, and if a friend of hers were not also a full-time faculty member at the school, she would not “know anything that was going on.” Despite the engagement with the AFPD, instructor evaluations came across as unprofessional and unhelpful. She believes strongly that her department should observe its own adjunct faculty, and although her evaluator had a background in a related field, the feedback was not meaningful to her.

Other ideas to increase student success at the college, Olivia noted, could include sending adjunct instructors to conferences, ensuring appropriate technology resources in assigned classrooms (“I teach in a food services classroom, and it really doesn’t have the computer programs I need”), and separating the Math and Sciences division in two. Because the two large departments are housed across campus from one another, the division cannot establish a center of leadership or administration. Olivia senses that the size of the division has impacted the college’s ability to keep a dean in place, and the lack of interaction doesn’t help students or faculty.

Olivia knows she could be more involved, but she has young children at home. She teaches at night, completes her work on campus, and “flies out.” She confessed she doesn’t have the chance to interact with colleagues because of her schedule. However, she knows some adjunct instructors have taught at the college for years, who are very committed to the institution,
its students, and the department. But she doesn’t possess that level of commitment, and for that reason, she always advises her students “never take a class from an adjunct if you don’t have to.” Having been through the full time hiring process before, she understands the screening for adjuncts is not nearly as rigorous. “I was hired at a reception,” Olivia remembered. Further, there is little oversight of adjunct instructors, and the independence and autonomy is almost too much.

If anything could be done for community college student success, it would be the hiring of more full-time faculty, Olivia emphasized. From hiring and training to connections and engagement, “if you have five classes you always offer each term, hire a full-time instructor.” She specified there are community college presidents with huge salaries and “golden parachutes” across the state – some of the salaries and some of the administrators should be cut.

**Mason, Mathematics & Science.** Mason began teaching while a high school instructor in a large local high school. The math department chair was teaching as an adjunct at the community college, and wanted a break, so Mason was invited to teach in the evenings. That was thirty years ago. Retired from the K-12 system, Mason now teaches pre-calculus and a number of developmental courses, keeping track of former students and encouraging them. He personally encourages students to finish their degrees before transfer when he teaches.

If they complete their degree they can transfer credits en masse to university. I’m amazed how many students don’t know this. I told a student heading to SU today: finish your degree; otherwise SU will get to pick and choose the credits they take.

Mason is a member of the adjunct faculty union at the college, the only research participant to have an active role in governance. Union leadership meets with the college president and provost, along with members of the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) to discuss college issues. It was in these meetings that the emphasis on degree
completion arose, and Mason was surprised to learn how many students don’t complete their degrees. The union and the AFPD send emails and newsletters to pass on these issues and concerns, but “the problem with adjunct faculty is that we’re almost as transient as the students.” Acknowledging that adjunct instructors schedule their teaching in blocks because they have different jobs, other income sources, and families, Mason has a clear understanding that the nature of the job prevents the connections to students and the college.

Retirement allows Mason to spend time on the community college campus between his afternoon and evening courses, and he keeps himself available to students. He arrives early to his classroom and works in the hallway in order to attract student questions. “They won’t ask questions in class,” he said, “but they’ll ask questions in the hall.” Seeing a familiar face in the hallway gives students a feeling of belonging. Following that logic, Mason also requires attendance and gives an attendance grade in his classes, so students feel part of the process of learning. When asked if adjunct instructors would feel more connected to the college or their students if attendance was required at faculty meetings, committees, or other employee events, Mason replied:

It is very hard to get adjuncts to do this when the college says ‘just volunteer.’ Sometimes adjuncts joke that we will work for food, but the college won’t even do that, so we’re only paid for what we teach in class.

However, the math department has made a “tremendous effort” to connect instructors with each other, and the college has begun math placement testing more thoroughly. The college is also working more closely with the area high schools, to make sure students are prepared for the next step after high school.
In his years as an adjunct faculty member, Mason has seen considerable change. When he started at the community college, adjuncts “were virtually on their own.” There was no professional development, and anyone who came into the classroom without the ability to teach did what he or she could. For students, in the years before placement testing, an individual could come in and sign up for Calculus 3, without any checks or balances. “The failure rate was tremendous.”

Community colleges now offer professional development, ways to volunteer, and the occasional chance for advancement to a full-time position. Mason has not observed promotional potential at the college, but has at another institution where he teaches. At this college, there is no preference offered to adjunct faculty. “The person who schedules the adjuncts doesn’t even get involved in the hiring process,” Mason recalled. Because the institution is a well-respected junior college, hundreds of applications come in for every faculty opening, and the college gets to pick and choose.

Departmentally, his math colleagues are well connected with each other, but math and science administrators only come in the classroom every two years for scheduled observations. He’s “lost count” of the number of deans he’s seen in the time he’s been teaching, and sees the deans’ positions as a revolving door. The AFPD makes a strong effort to connect with new hires, and adjuncts have many opportunities to improve their skills. Unless it is union business, Mason rarely interacts with administrators.

Mason isn’t aware of the details of the various adjunct faculty workspaces, although prior to construction the math department had one small adjunct space. He recalled that the liberal arts people have their own space, and at another college where he teaches, a converted classroom serves as the adjunct preparation area. “There it is, a space just for adjuncts, and we sit in there
and build comradery, talk to people, make friends, cover for those who need a substitute, and interact.” He is hopeful the new construction will bring such a space at this college.

Adjunct instructors have significant independence and autonomy, although many classes administer departmental final exams. Even though instructors are given the course objectives and what sections of the book to teach, delivery is up to each instructor. Mason recognizes the value of the AFPD for untrained teachers who bring expertise in an area to the college. He also feels strongly that untrained educators can be a deterrent to student success. AFPD attempts to support, prepare, and enhance adjunct faculty work with workshops and seminars.

Overall, Mason feels that paid office hours would increase student success and faculty engagement, both in the discipline and across campus. He is paid a fractional rate of his teaching stipend to hold office hours at another college, and students come to see him every day. At the site college, the tutoring center hires extra math tutors, rather than paying adjunct faculty members to support their own classes. Especially in math, where method and “how-to-do-this-problem” can differ, tutors often confuse students more.

The reason community colleges love adjuncts is because adjuncts save the college six million a year, and we may get a third to half of what full timers get. Paid office hours would cut into their profits, or money saving, or whatever you call it.

To support the personal and professional considerations of adjunct faculty, Mason suggested, community colleges ought to assign seniority to adjunct faculty, and offer them scheduling preferences. It would increase the feeling of being valued and having their time respected. That small choice, Mason emphasized, says, “You are a valued employee” and conveys a great deal more appreciation than the paperweight he was given for 30 years of service. Other colleges even allow senior adjunct faculty to “bump” junior adjunct faculty if a
full-time instructor bumps them. Union policies and best practices differ, Mason said, but the other college he teaches at makes adjuncts feel like they have a place. Forced to choose, Mason admits he would leave this college and teach for his other employer.

Ava, Career & Technical Programs. Ava started teaching interior design at the college in 1997. After a career in commercial and interior design, she took time to raise two children. When a friend who was teaching at the college needed a substitute during maternity leave, Ava stepped in, and immediately knew it was a good fit. Teaching “helped me discover a whole new side of myself I didn't know existed, and it was a great way to stay connected to the design industry.” As her own children began school, she was able to devote more time to research in her field and develop as an instructor. Further, her own children’s educational experience made her more observant as a teacher to the diverse needs of students in the classroom. When Ava returned to work full time, she continued teaching as an adjunct.

Back when I was in school, I had no idea how important the foundations of this field were. The class has made me a better professional, and yet my design experience makes me a better teacher. I can tell stories from the real world.

Ava is confident that she adds to student success in the classroom with knowledge of what's next in the field and in her students’ educational “lane,” and she can direct her students to places and resources where they can find success. She thinks that students need to be inspired about something to put forth the effort to complete, so she shares success stories of others, such as one of her former students, who won an achievement award at a transfer institution from the International Interior Design Association. She also relates opportunity to real life –like the fact that the cable channel HGTV is focused on residential design, but there is much more opportunity in commercial, restaurant, hotel, and marine design.
One of Ava’s interests in participating in the research stemmed from the fact that the college recently accepted the resignation of the only full-time interior design instructor and department chair, and then announced the position would not be refilled. The department chair of architecture will become the lead instructor for two departments in Fall 2015. Ava and other adjuncts, professionals not seeking full-time employment, advocated for a replacement without success. Interior design will become an all-part time department, and Ava fears the program will be eliminated altogether.

She is concerned that program advocacy will diminish because adjuncts aren't paid for anything outside the classroom. Most importantly, Ava emphasized, one of the national design credentials offered by the college will be up for recertification next year. During discussion of the impending retirements, an administrator told adjuncts, “it will be all hands on deck” for re-accreditation of the program. Ava recalled thinking, “you expect all of us to volunteer to put this together? We need someone at the helm.” Like many career fields, interior design is a career field with many sub-professions. Each sub-profession has credentials, exams, and continuing education. If community colleges stop offering training in these technical areas, not just for HGTV-style decorating, but “moving walls and protecting health and welfare,” Ava cautioned, a great investment would be lost.

The college provides resources for student success, and Ava is confident many students benefit from access and disability services, note taking, and the writing center. Her class requires a research paper, and the diversity of ages, experiences, and backgrounds increase the relevance of multi-level student support. Varied cultural backgrounds also offer the opportunity to describe experiences with materials and design components from multiple eras and regions.
When asked what would increase student success, Ava indicated that value could be gained from community college students shadowing professionals for a day, seeing what they do, how they dress, who they interact with, what tools they use. As an adjunct instructor, Ava knows she has limited opportunity to facilitate wide-scale opportunities for students, but she plans to continue offering as much “value-added” engagement as she can.

Collegiality with full-time instructors was great, she said. “They kept up with trends in education and the industry, such as sustainability. Faculty led a departmental field trip with the US Green Building Council, with phenomenal turnout.” Full-time faculty also advised the interior design student club. Although departmental faculty members work well together, Ava isn't closely connected to her division, or the deans and administrators. Recently she was observed and evaluated, but it was “a waste of my time.” Ava teaches a three-hour class once a week, and the observer attended for forty-five minutes, and then asked for an hour-long follow-up meeting, “Where she asked about all the activities and student engagement I'd done the other 70% of class.”

However, her experiences with the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) courses and workshops have been positive. She has taken quite a few of those classes, some even with stipends. She thinks those are a “win-win” for the instructors and the students. The college website is great, Ava noted, and access to information is plentiful. IT often helps with computer questions face to face, and staff members are very helpful. She recalled there are announcements and opportunities frequently through the portal or Blackboard, and her department chair shares additional industry-related professional events and career-related news.

Overall, Ava experienced a lack of engagement with the division and its strategic-planning processes, and the communication needed between a technical career education
program and administrators. The “disconnect” between professional practitioners who teach and the administrators who make program decisions has not inspired confidence. A sense of inclusion in the decision process might have resulted in greater understanding, even if the outcomes had been the same. Ava’s commitment to the college makes her want to see her field continue to grow and recruit new talent.

Isabella, Career & Technical Programs. Isabella began her career as a chemist and sales representative, working for a global water technology company for over a decade. One of her favorite aspects of work was teaching new sales representatives, but she tired of the “corporate grind,” and looked for something new. She enrolled in a graphic design course and found a new calling. She secured a new job and continued her schooling in graphic design, and after some time the department chair at the community college where she was studying asked Isabella to teach a class. Although she didn’t yet hold a Master’s degree, she had industry experience and was a natural teacher, and she spent five years teaching while she finished the graduate degree.

Isabella left corporate America for part-time teaching sixteen years ago, nearly two of which have been at the case study community college. She teaches advanced graphic design, “utilizing the design elements and principles with the software, to make a strong visual communication.” Students in her classes put their talents towards development of a portfolio they can show a potential employer or four-year school. Her focus on student success acknowledges the diverse backgrounds and demands on her students. She understands they have jobs, families, and often they are only part-time students, so she tries to reach them on multiple levels. “As an adjunct, I foster personal relationships with my students. Personal emails abound, and I even have a student who has been writing to me via ‘snail mail.’” Isabella is “happy to have found a
college that values her efforts and most importantly, values the students.”

Isabella acknowledges the creative, artistic element of graphic design, and encourages the “true creatives” in her classroom. At the same time, she warns students they won’t be able to get a job if they can’t “follow a spec, read the proposal, do the math, or communicate with clients.” They can’t just be artists, she cautions, and graphic design isn’t “making pictures using Photoshop.” Isabella knows this misunderstanding leads to disappointed students and a bad fit for career training, and is concerned that college advisors do not always convey the rigor of graphic arts technology to students. Counselors, she said,

Used to send athletes to my classroom, and now they send the NCLB [No Child Left Behind] students that have reduced instruction in the arts or those that have severe disabilities. It is a disservice because they couldn’t possibly do a [graphic design] job like this.

However, the college supports struggling students with the “Oyster” program, an early alert system that gives Isabella the option to flag students who need academic and study-skills support. She noted that other faculty members and the department chair care about both students and the college’s connections with community businesses. Other colleges where Isabella taught suffered from bad leadership, and had no ties to business and industry. This college makes an effort to stay current, sends faculty members to trade shows, and connects students with jobs in their field. Isabella emails job opportunities to her students, reminds them of jobs in class, and even prints out flyers – multiple attempts to encourage students to consider their future opportunities while in school.

Isabella noted in a follow-up email, after her interview, that a recent classroom observation and evaluation was the first she’d ever felt valued enough that a supervisor would
take an interest in her work, and had this to say:

The ratio of part-time to full-time faculty has changed significantly over the last 15 years.

The College appears to have invested some money to ensure that the education of
students would not be negatively impacted . . . It is the only college that I have taught at
that teaches adjuncts how to teach or improve their teaching methods. Classroom
evaluations conducted by Deans include detailed follow-up with specific resources that
adjunct faculty are to review. Presentations, select reading, quizzes, interactive peer
learning, etc. are all specifically chosen for areas marked for improvement and forwarded
to an adjunct. End result: adjunct faculty members become capable of doing their job.
The college’s support is very useful for the adjuncts that are being sourced from industry
who do not have teaching experience - a big plus for the students.

The culture of her department is positive. The department chair sends out emails
regarding industry seminars, trainings, and professional development opportunities. Having an
engaged department chair connected with the infrastructure of the college is key to Isabella’s
sense of communication and engagement. Administration and department leaders value full-time
and part-time faculty members, and a team effort is communicated. Other colleges where
Isabella taught previously suffer from an “us” and “them” attitude among staff, administrators,
and full and part-time faculty. Support for adjunct faculty is significantly higher than at other
institutions as well, from the point of hiring through training and ongoing evaluations. Adjunct
instructors are interviewed and some departments require a teaching demonstration.

The level of independence and autonomy is high, Isabella stated. “They leave me alone,
let me teach my class,” she said. When it comes to overall student success, she feels strongly that
her classroom is a starting point for students getting “ready for the world.” However, the entire
college needs to have a “core list of skills and deliverables” identified that students need to succeed in a job or at university. Students should not be able to leave with a D average, she said, or be told they will succeed without specific skills, because “in this career field, they won’t make it.” Finally, students must take responsibility to get engaged with their program of study outside the classroom. The Graphics Design department has a student club, and many other events and college opportunities that wrap students in to the learning environment.

**Mia, Health Careers.** Mia is a part-time clinical lab supervisor who teaches several subjects in the allied health fields, helping students prepare to enter health care careers such as phlebotomy. She serves as an instructor and clinician at other institutions, and has worked at the college since 2005. Her experience as a health care professional and as a liaison with medical providers has afforded her insights to share with students about the “real world” of healthcare and medical office practices. She has also been a student at the college in pursuit of her own degree, and she offers additional guidance to students about college resources and pathways to success.

Mia comes from a family of educators, and enjoys “seeing the light bulb go off when they understand something.” Her perception of student success and her role encouraging students to complete their degrees and certificates is focused on a hands-on component of education. Students repeat clinical skills and tasks until perfected, work in partner clinics to earn clinical hours, and pursue their board exams and credentials after courses are complete. Mia spends time advising, encouraging, and reminding students to continue their work until they are certified in their fields.

The college has strong relationships with local hospitals, outpatient clinics, and assisted-living facilities, and students benefit from a rich diversity of on-site training. The college offers a
range of degrees and certificates in the medical fields, including nursing, certified medical assisting, cardiac technician, ultrasound, and health information technology. Full-time and part-time instructors work closely with one another, as sequential courses and lab requirements overlap.

However, Mia observed that an unusual turnover rate of faculty and administrative leadership has led to a highly competitive environment for teaching assignments. Further, Mia noted that the hiring process for full-time faculty members does not take into account the service of adjunct faculty members. The perception exists that the college does not look “in-house” for full-time instructors, but regularly hires from outside, regardless of talent already on staff. The lack of potential for advancement is disheartening to Mia and others.

As an adjunct instructor, Mia is uncharacteristically involved in her department. She attends department, division, and advisory board meetings. A new college provost once observed her teaching, and she appreciated the meaningful feedback received. The program director forwards professional development opportunities to faculty members, but many workshops are scheduled on days and times when adjuncts are working or teaching elsewhere. Further, a stipend of $250 for a six-week series of workshops does not motivate individuals to make extra trips.

The college offers a great deal of autonomy to its instructors. The risk of so much independence for faculty, Mia cautioned, is that classroom management and expectations of professionalism are not standardized. Students are handed from one instructor to another, and a “tendency for gossip and chatter” ensues in this competitive environment. The autonomy has potential for other disadvantages, as Mia “thinks it goes both ways – not being supported enough, but also being ignorant of the resources available for teaching.” The college offers
orientation for new adjunct faculty members, but the departmental orientation is “not as thorough as it could be.” Mia conducts many of the orientations herself, as a lab supervisor.

Overall, Mia believes that students would benefit from a more stable set of instructors and departmental leadership that would support them through the educational process as they enter health careers. Job security and teaching assignments are unpredictable, and this impacts students in the classroom, in terms of scheduling and access to instructors.

With the kind of class I’m teaching, fifteen students is a ton of work, and the class was full. They cut it and changed the class times – the HIT [Health Information Technology] students couldn’t make the schedule change. Students want to get the program done in a timely manner – a cancelled class can put them a whole year behind.

Mia appreciates the relationships she builds with students, and the real world experience she can share with them. Her understanding of the medical field helps students learn outside the textbook, and “They all come back and tell me they appreciate it.”

Zoe, Health Careers. Zoe has worked at the college in an adjunct role since 2010, following a full-time teaching and administrative career that spanned five states and included both community college and university instruction. Although it is new for her, she loves working as a part-time instructor, where she can “come and go as I please.” She has designed and taught nursing curricula, researched nurse retention, and offered clinical leadership. Her current teaching assignments at the college include medical terminology, healthcare informatics, and skills labs – all required courses for nursing, radiology, and medical office assistant careers.

Zoe recognizes the importance of getting to know each one of her students, particularly at the community college level. She learns what their educational and career goals are, because “community college students are not your run-of-the-mill students.” Most of her students have
families, jobs, added responsibilities, or are returning to school after other careers. She teaches online and lecture classes, but lives close to campus, so she schedules her office hours around student schedules to be most accommodating. Zoe also stays in touch with top students and offers current and past students the chance to network and mentor each other. Several have gone on to large teaching hospitals, and this has helped to motivate others.

Previous institutions and her teaching and research positions afforded individual office space for Zoe, and for her first few years at the college there was a productive adjunct faculty office available for student meetings, class preparation, and collegial interaction. “It was an important part of institutional support,” she noted. Suddenly, last fall, the adjunct faculty office was closed for renovations on short notice, and the space has remained untouched and locked for over six months. “It is difficult to meet with students if there isn’t a space where I can come and meet with them,” Zoe admitted. Adjunct instructors are given keys for the classrooms where they teach, so she is forced to look for empty classrooms, conference rooms, or the hallway to meet and work with students.

The Health Science department has had personnel turnover that has impacted everything from training and morale to curriculum and assessment, according to Zoe. Previous administrations invited adjunct and full-time faculty to participate in curriculum alignment, textbook selection, and learning outcomes. Faculty met with high school dual-credit programs to coordinate academic pathways:

The former administration paid adjunct faculty by the hour for special projects and for meetings to discuss issues related to planning and evaluation of courses. There was consistency in course content and in the materials that were used. The focus has now shifted from course objectives to course textbooks and materials, with all faculty
members teaching the same course, trying different textbooks, without discussion of their results or outcome achievement.

While this leads to greater independence and autonomy for instructors, the lack of consistency in teaching and learning expectations is troublesome. “It is a community college, but it is a place where people come to start their education, and healthcare is a life and death profession,” she said. Zoe is concerned how this will impact accreditation when it comes time to verify standards for the many health courses taught by the college.

Departmental culture has not impacted Zoe much, although she regrets “there is no interaction - or planned interaction - with other faculty. Collegial interaction and mixing of minds is critical everywhere, but especially in academia.” On the other hand, she loves the adjunct instructors she works with, emphasizing; “we pat each other on the back.” The Adjunct Faculty Professional Development office is a good source of campus-wide opportunities. It has a culture of inclusion, and they have some strong programs. However, for the Health Science faculty, the AFPD location is not convenient, and professional development offerings are no longer offered across campus, as in the past.

Overall, student success in the Health Sciences could be positively impacted with greater consistency of course expectations, instructor and program coordination, and quality instruction. While she is not looking for a full-time position, Zoe recognizes the need for leadership in hiring and administration, and believes that simple appreciation and recognition goes a long way for all faculty members. “Nobody ever says, ‘you know what – you did a great job this semester,’ and they never look at the work I did and say ‘wow.’” Zoe acknowledges her performance reviews are fine, and student feedback is valuable, but wishes there were more positive interactions among colleagues and supervisors in the interests of teamwork and student success.
Lily, Health Careers. Lily works full-time in the health information technology (HIT) field, with hospitals and IT departments. Her connections to higher education were made through involvement in state associations and advisory boards. Many colleges are implementing HIT programs as the field has grown more complex, and Lily was asked to teach an introduction to HIT for several community colleges in the region. She has taught at the college for three years, after serving on the advisory committee that built and accredited the program.

Lily’s role in student success is directly related to her real-world experience, expert colleagues, and knowledge of governance in the healthcare field. Experience in IT departments, hospitals, and with HIT vendors makes her a valued resource to students as they explore their options and career goals. Connections with others in the field allow her to invite speakers into her classroom for technical and applied lectures. Lily also encourages students to attend state, regional, and national meetings for the profession, not only to learn but also to volunteer and network.

When Lily was hired, she was impressed with the level of orientation and training she received, compared to the other two colleges where she taught. Although she only teaches one class at night, she feels connected through the AFPD newsletter and feels that the opportunities for professional development are open to full-time and part-time faculty alike. “Workshops on goal-setting, teaching adult learners, Blackboard – all the tools – everything is really out there,” Lily complimented. She has not seen that change at other colleges, and has appreciated the feedback she received on how to present material and how to “flip” classroom learning. She confessed, “I’m not an educator, I’m in the profession. I’ve only learned at [this college] that there is a real difference becoming an educator.”
An outside governing board accredits the HIT program, so the college has to maintain and meet all the objectives of the program. Students take prerequisites before arriving in Lily’s class, so they are usually prepared for the rigor. Lily has genuine autonomy in her classroom and with the design of her syllabus as part of the HIT program, but she is interested in learning more about her students before and after they leave her course. Many students end up in her classroom with preconceived notions of the profession and opportunities, details that college advisors don’t know. Lily would appreciate better tracking of students into and out of her classroom, so she could take students further into the particulars of the professions. Very few of her students are straight out of high school, and she wished better guidance and advising could set her students up for success.

Adjunct instructors at the college don’t see each other much, Lily observed. She has the chance to share stories and seek feedback from the AFPD classes she’s taken, but doesn’t have a chance to share with instructors specifically in her field. She thinks the teaching techniques and peer support would make her own skills that much stronger. Further, she notes that most professional development is offered on Mondays or Tuesdays, and it is a challenge to work her schedule around limited options. Overall, for students, however, she thinks the college is doing well. She appreciates her role in the education process, stating,

I give back – I’m getting paid, but I’m giving back to the profession. My day job is supporting the knowledge that I bring to the students. Some of them could be my potential clients, or I can hire them. We’ve hired students in the past. They come in and work for us for a month, and then if we think they’d be a good fit when they graduate then we can hire them.
**Emily, Health Careers.** Emily has worked at the college since 2009, for six years. After a fulfilling career as an OB/GYN nurse and department director, she retired and continued as an independent contractor, teaching courses and leading workshops on health law. She holds an MBA in Health Services Management (Health Administration) and an MJ in Health Law (Master of Jurisprudence).

Emily was hired by the college to teach medical terminology, health law, and medical ethics. “When you're an RN, your life is legal. What you do can become a liability if you don't follow the code of ethics or follow the standards,” she explained. Her primary motivation is to teach students to be proactive, and know that what they are learning not only saves and extends lives, but protects healthcare professionals and hospitals from lawsuits, through careful attention to detail.

When asked about student success, Emily understood the college perspective examines numbers of degrees and certificates awarded. However, her confidence in degrees is qualified by the abilities and skills students take away with them, and she is adamant that her students be able to discuss the subject they're learning, as well as read and write about it. “My students think I'm tough because I count for spelling. But if they misspell something on a patient chart – a medical term that spellcheck won't catch- they may go to court with that, and find themselves guilty.”

Emily uses real world examples regularly, particularly published cases in the medical legal field. Her emphasis on published cases adds to the emphasis on confidentiality and safety issues to which the students will become accustomed. “Whatever topic we are talking about, they remember my stories,” she noted.

The diversity of student backgrounds led Emily to learn more about college resources for student success. ESL students, high school dual-credit participants, returning adults on their third
or fourth careers, and traditional students combine in her classrooms. The college has a writing center Emily refers her students to, as well as the “Oyster” early alert program that follows identified students with extra support.

The culture of her department is “interesting right now,” Emily recalled. Health Sciences and Nursing adjunct instructors were told to move out of their office before Christmas. It was a place they could store materials and share desks, with cubbies, cabinets, and drawers. Instructors were told, “take everything out of here and take it home.” However, Emily noted that instructors are told to keep student papers for two years, and this move forced an unexpected storage issue for many. It was not appropriate to bring student records home, so her solution was to leave multiple boxes on a counter in the division office, with final exams locked in the director’s office.

At one time we had five adjunct faculty members in the office during the days we were here at the same time. It varies. This was the adjunct office used by both the Nursing and Health Science adjunct faculty. When you teach all day, you need a place to hang out between classes. You have to find a place to sit. I can’t talk with students in the main division office. It is not a confidential environment, and is uncomfortable for the students and faculty. I’ve worked in construction areas before at hospitals, and know that the space designated for renovation can be used until the actual demolition starts, but we haven’t been able to use this space, nor have we been given any information as to when the space will again be available.

Office space impacts the culture of the health sciences faculty experience, as does the evaluation process, in Emily’s estimation. She recalled, “A temp consultant was hired to do evaluations, and stayed for 25 minutes of a three-hour class,” during her most recent evaluation.
She received a bigger surprise when the evaluator presented her with a nice written evaluation, and told her, “I didn’t understand what you were teaching but you did it very well.” Emily was mystified how that statement made any sense at all, and was offended that it might be considered meaningful by the college. During her career, she evaluated hospital staff for over twenty years, sometimes 100 per year, and did not feel that the supposed “expert on evaluations” offered her anything new as an instructor.

When asked what would improve campus culture for adjunct faculty, Emily noted that a spirit of inclusiveness and teamwork existed in previous administrations, where departmental curricula, textbooks, and evaluations would be discussed regularly with all faculty members. A change in leadership and the growth of the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) office shifted the inclusiveness away from the department. The AFPD offers “lovely classes” on campus, Emily knows, but the days and times never vary, so many instructors cannot attend. Positive interaction between full-time and part-time faculty would also be a boost to culture. “Simple things like saying good morning in the hall make a difference,” Emily observed, although she has good rapport with the office staff and director.

If Emily could do anything at the college to increase student success, she imagined that she would ensure all students had a strong basic education in English, math, and speech classes. These foundational courses and the liberal arts curriculum prepare students for highly technical classes and the skills they need to develop for the field of healthcare. She recommends a back-to-basics focus.
Themes

Although participants considered a dozen factors, four key themes emerged as instructors considered their role in student success, and they are reviewed below. The need for college students to demonstrate basic skills for success was acute. The fact that adjunct faculty members offer many qualities and talents from the “real world,” was a clear value-added characteristic in community college. Additionally, interviews revealed clear understanding that student engagement was critical to graduation or completion of educational goals. The fourth theme was comprised of aspects of faculty connections and engagement that impact instructor self-efficacy.

The following table reflects the emergent themes from the interviews, and they are listed below, next to instructors who identified positive and/or negative characteristics of themes.

Table 5: Emergent Themes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Identified By</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructors emphasize skills and life-lessons in pursuit of student success</td>
<td>English &amp; writing - College &amp; professional level necessity</td>
<td>Jackson, Sophia, Liam, Lukas, Noah, Ava, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math &amp; problem solving - College &amp; professional level requirement</td>
<td>Aiden, Noah, Ava, Mia, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation &amp; communication - College and professional level skills essential for success</td>
<td>Jackson, Liam, Lukas, Emma, Noah, Ava, Emily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evaluative, evidence-based reasoning crucial for college and professional level work</td>
<td>Sophia, Liam, Lukas, Noah, Ava, Mia, Emily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Students must have tools to understand the world</td>
<td>Jackson, Liam, Lukas, Emma, Ava, Isabella, Lily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Where do students go after community college?</td>
<td>Sophia, Emma, Noah, Mason, Isabella, Mia, Zoe, Lily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Making the most of instructor and college resources</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Liam, Lukas, Emma, Noah, Ava, Isabella, Mia, Zoe, Lily, Emily</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jobs &amp; work-study - Opportunities for experience and/or spending time on campus</td>
<td>Jackson, Lukas, Emma, Lily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjunct instructors consistently connect students with the “real world”</td>
<td>Opportunities outside the college</td>
<td>Jackson, Liam, Lukas, Emma, Ava, Isabella, Mia, Lily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peers, instructors, and other experienced individuals in college or profession offer their time</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Liam, Noah, Olivia, Mason, Isabella, Mia, Zoe, Lily, Emily</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic and campus engagement impacts student success</td>
<td>College tutoring centers</td>
<td>Jackson, Lukas, Olivia, Emily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Oyster” early alert system</td>
<td>Emma, Isabella, Emily</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Connections and referrals from adjunct faculty to college resources</td>
<td>Liam, Lukas, Mason, Isabella, Zoe, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student space, campus space</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Olivia, Mason, Ava</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to technology and modern equipment</td>
<td>Lukas, Noah, Olivia, Isabella, Mia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs, organizations, work-study, and campus events add to success</td>
<td>Aiden, Liam, Mason, Ava, Isabella</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjunct faculty member engagement and self-efficacy adds value to student success</td>
<td>Full-time and part-time faculty and staff relationships relate to adjunct sense of value</td>
<td>Aiden, Sophia, Olivia, Isabella, Mia, Zoe, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD)- Positive, engaging, informative</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Sophia, Noah, Ava, Isabella, Lily, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFPD - Negative, unhelpful, distant, or irrelevant</td>
<td>Liam, Olivia, Ava, Mia, Zoe, Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department Chairs and Coordinators – Positive or strong relationship</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Liam, Emma, Noah, Mason, Ava</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Chairs and Coordinators – Negative, weak, or non-existent leadership or relationship</td>
<td>Olivia, Mia, Zoe, Emily</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deans and Administration – Positive, strong, helpful, engaging</td>
<td>Jackson, Liam, Noah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans and Administration – Negative, inconsistent, weak, or non-existent relationships</td>
<td>Emma (non-existent), Olivia (weak), Mason (non-existent), Ava (inconsistent, weak), Mia, Zoe (inconsistent), Emily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy and Independence - Ability to teach classes unfettered by superiors or hampered by bureaucracy</td>
<td>Jackson, Aiden, Liam, Emma, Noah, Olivia, Mason, Mia, Zoe, Emily</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Space – Positive - Sufficient</td>
<td>Lukas, Emma</td>
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Theme one: Adjunct instructors recognize skills critical to student success. Eight of fifteen adjunct instructors called attention to one or more basic college-level skill needed for student success, in English, Math, critical thinking or communication. One instructor charged that students were not even able to demonstrate high school-level skills, let alone those required for college. Jackson, Sophia, Liam, Emily, and Isabella agreed that the lack of reading and writing skills hampered instructors’ abilities to effectively establish a level playing field for student success. “As an English teacher, there aren’t enough hours in the day,” to provide individual attention, Jackson recalled.

Nine of fifteen participants mentioned of the need for college-wide standards, basic-skill “deliverables,” and English across the curriculum. Their job, added Noah, involves “preparing [students] for the next course, but also preparing [them] for the analytical thinking ahead.” Liam challenges students to learn to connect with their supervisors, their teammates, and their neighbors. “If they can’t communicate they can’t do anything with their education,” he said.

Theme two: Adjunct instructors offer “real world” perspective on student success. Nearly every adjunct instructor used stories of their own educational path, career experiences, or professional work to inform their teaching. All of them believed strongly that community college students are looking for purpose and direction, and that “real world” teaching had an impact. In the business, career, and technical disciplines, adjunct faculty members encourage portfolios, recommend professional conferences, and share job and internship opportunities. In Humanities
and Liberal Arts, instructors draw from current events, cultural influences, and world travel to inspire thoughtful progress. General education classes are designed to build a broad foundation of understanding and knowledge in undergraduate education. Most focus students on transfer to four-year universities, and Mason was surprised to learn, through meetings with administrators, how many students don’t complete their degrees. “They think transfer credit holds the same value,” he said, but often universities will “pick and choose” from student transcripts.

**Theme three: Adjunct instructors understand student engagement as key to completion of degree, certificate, or educational goals.** Participants offered detailed examples to highlight their understanding of student needs and benefits of engagement, in the classroom and out of the classroom. Four participants called attention to the “Oyster” program, and four others noted the value of having a writing resource center and tutoring center available for their struggling students. Lukas offers office hours and takes attendance, and believes student success is increased with access to professors. Aiden takes attendance and holds hallway office hours for informal but critical interaction. The diversity of students in Emily’s classes motivated her to learn more about campus resources for students. Jackson shares information in class about campus resources, and tries to give extra time to high achieving students, although he knows the struggling students need even more time.

Emma would spend more time on campus, but she teaches at two other colleges each week. Ava is confident many students benefit from access and disability services, note taking, and the writing center, as her interior design class requires a research paper. Instructors attempt to engage their students with campus events, but emphasized the transient nature of community college students. Jackson worries about the tendency of students to “park, come to class, and
leave.” If students aren’t engaged on campus, there are fewer opportunities to support them towards completion.

Liam and Aiden agree that too many distractions prevent student success, including jobs and lack of purpose. Liam supports the free-tuition proposal to encourage a focus on education. Lukas appreciates keeping students on campus with incentives like restaurants and coffee shops, and would recommend even more of them. Jackson hypothesized that student success would increase if the college provided reasons to spend time on campus, such as additional work-study opportunities.

Finally, three faculty members knew of student clubs and organizations in their discipline (accounting, interior design, and graphic design). Clubs offer a positive mix of academic and social engagement. Construction on campus is disruptive but modernizes educational resources, and conveys a commitment to the community to higher education and career training. Noah and Lukas acknowledged the construction would have a positive impact in the future.

**Theme four: Adjunct instructors acknowledge faculty engagement as a significant component of their teaching efficacy.** Nine out of fifteen faculty members described positive relationships with fellow college instructors, while four expressed mixed or negative relationships, and two claimed no relationships because they always teach at night. Lukas claimed the sense of connection he feels with his colleagues is an important reinforcement to his teaching. Emma socializes with other adjuncts off campus, and Zoe emphasized, “we pat each other on the back.” Negative relationships or lack of collegiality stems from three root causes: competition for class assignments, personnel turnover, and lack of interaction due to teaching schedules.
Chair and lead instructor relationships, participants reported, were also predominantly positive. Eleven were satisfied with departmental leadership, while four, all in the health sciences area, perceived negative or non-productive relationships. Positive experiences were described with examples of mutual respect and collaboration, invitations to participate in college or professional events, and a sense of access and openness to communication. Negative experiences reflected tensions between full-time and part-time faculty, non-communicative leadership, passive rejection through loss of office space, and a sense of exclusion from participation.

Adjunct instructors have few, if any, connections with administrators, other than those who run the AFPD. Of the nine who held opinions or shared experiences with administrators, only three were positive. The others found their administrative leaders in flux, indifferent, uninformed, or reluctant to accept input. In some cases, disconnects between faculty and administrators led to disappointment and confusion. In other cases, ineffective leadership has led to a perceived lowering of standards.

Participants were unanimous in their estimation of autonomy given to instructors. The college provides a “general template, and there are pieces the college wants to you to include, but beyond that, you are free to teach as you wish.” Adjunct faculty members are also observed in their classroom, and many had been offered mentoring. Some standardization exists for certain disciplines and credentials, and science and career labs are coordinated for resource efficiency. The question of adjunct workspace and other physical support was a frequent topic of reflection by adjunct faculty. Generally, Liberal Arts division adjuncts were pleased with their recently remodeled area. Because the college encompasses so many buildings, faculty members were generally not aware of another division’s workspace. Business and Social Science workspace was described as adequate, but lacking in privacy for faculty-student meetings.
Identifiable workspace offers faculty a sense of place, of ownership, and a feeling of inclusion. The Math and Science division have multiple buildings and multiple faculty offices, one of which is under construction (math), and another of which was so small the interview took place in the hallway (chemistry). Career and technical offices included resource rooms and labs, such as the textile and wallpaper room for interior design, and the graphics design studios. The Health Careers division, as noted previously, had no adjunct faculty office during this research.

Health career instructors complained of the loss of their adjunct space in December 2014. “It was an important part of institutional support,” Zoe noted. However, adjunct instructors are given keys for the classrooms where they teach, so some look for empty classrooms, conference rooms, or the hallway to meet and work with students. Equally important to adjunct faculty was the absence of explanation or information about the future of their workspace.

Participant suggestions to increase efficacy of instructors and, by extension, success of students, included paid office hours, invitations to attend faculty meetings, compensation to serve on college committees, and scheduling preferences or seniority-based scheduling. These incremental steps, instructors claimed, demonstrate that the college values them and respects their time. Although the adjunct faculty union negotiates a contract with the college, and there are minor incentives included throughout, the incentives alone were not enough to keep adjuncts on campus longer each day to interact with their students. Several participants indicated that they were political supporters of the Affordable Care Act, but that its passage and implementation was not helpful to adjunct faculty in higher education. The case study college chose to interpret the ACA conservatively, and thus some adjuncts now teach fewer classes at the college. This impacted primary income earners most, as they were forced to add more colleges to their teaching load, sometimes up to nine courses at three schools during a sixteen-week semester.
Thirteen of fifteen participants had taken some sort of training or professional development through the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development (AFPD) office. Of those thirteen, all but two found the programs “impressive,” and “helpful.” For Isabella, it is “the only college that teaches adjuncts how to teach or improve their teaching methods.” Faculty recognized that the AFPD is focused on improving access to training, technology, and collaboration, and appreciated the many offerings, newsletters, and presentations. The most common criticism heard was that workshop and seminar offerings were mostly on Monday and Tuesday nights, preventing some instructors from attending. Faculty members in their first two or three years at the college perceived the AFPD office most positively.

With respect to the work conducted by the AFPD office for faculty evaluations, reviews were mixed. Members of the same department or discipline did not evaluate some instructors. This made feedback less meaningful. Several complained that “temps” had been hired to evaluate their teaching, and situations were described that were demeaning, disorganized, and unhelpful. Conversely, others had observations by both their department chair and a full-time AFPD dean, and these were valuable and encouraging. Lily was impressed with the level of orientation and training she received, and confessed, “I’m not an educator; I’m in the profession. I’ve only learned at [this college] that there is a real difference becoming an educator.”
Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Warranted Actions

Introduction

This chapter revisits the problem of practice and analyzes the data with the application of grid and group theory. Grid and group analysis evaluates the organizational cultural of the case study college, as it relates to the sample population studied. Finally, this chapter offers implications and recommends additional research. A three to five-year research agenda is proposed.

Existing literature acknowledges both the increased reliance on adjunct instructors in community colleges and the increased pressure for those colleges to produce more graduates with associate degrees and certificates (CCCSE, 2014; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Jacoby, 2006; Overstreet, 2014; Sawyer, Kata, & Armstrong, 2014). The initial body of evidence concludes that community college administrators ought to facilitate opportunities for adjunct faculty engagement and professional development, as in most cases this comprises a significant employee group (Roueche, et al., 1996; Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2005). The emerging body of evidence asks how and why student interaction with adjunct faculty impacts graduation and transfer rates, grades, and college completion (Christensen, 2008; Cox, et al., 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Green, 2007; Jacoby, 2006; McArthur, 1999; Rhoades, 1996; Umbach, 2007).

Current literature suggests increased benefits to students and institutions if adjunct faculty members are integrated with the educational culture (Dolan, 2011; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; James & Binder, 2012; Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013; Pearch & Marutz, 2005). Both qualitative and quantitative studies reflect the claim that changes should be made by administrators to increase student success by way of policies, communication, and structural
support. However, attempts to realize labor savings, mixed with increased requirements for degrees and certificates in the work force put colleges in a tight spot. How do administrators increase student success without raising costs? Grid and group analysis offered an answer and validates current literature: a more inclusive organizational culture.

**Grid and Group Analysis**

As of this writing, there is no accessible literature on community college faculty using a grid and group cultural overlay. The quadrants of autonomy, bureaucracy, loyalty, and allegiances offered a lens through which a contextual understanding of experience was gained. Grid and group theory includes a “formula for classifying relations” in human systems (Douglas, 1982, p.viii). It includes components of relationships: a bounded social system or unit with a common purpose or shared identity; rules to guide behavior; social inclusion and group allegiances; and hierarchy or structure.

The degree of organizational structure and social interaction varies from very high to nearly none along the grid and group axes (see Figure 3). Symbols of cultural structure are also included in the theory, from language symbols to physical symbols associated with routine and communal behaviors (Douglas, 1982). Adjunct faculty members and their place in the culture of a community college relate to both the grid and group of higher education. Given the central qualitative research question on the question of community college engagement, culture, and connectivity, it was an appropriate angle through which to view findings.

Adjunct faculty members, as a community of individuals within an organizational structure, were surveyed about their perceptions of student success and teaching in a community college (bounded system with a shared identity). They reflected on the level of rules to guide their behavior (grid), and also their perceived level of social inclusion and loyalty (group). Using
the themes that surfaced from the interview process, as well as existing literature in this area, the quadrants of grid and group theory will be discussed.

Figure 2: *Grid and Group Quadrants*

**Grid axis and student success.** Douglas (1982) hypothesized that an abundance of rules and regulations cause the individual to perceive their organization as a “machine,” one that offers only repression and restriction. These are the high grid, upper quadrants of Figure 4, which represent constraints on the individual. Of the fifteen adjunct instructors interviewed, none of them had experience with restrictions on their classroom teaching or boundaries on academic freedom. In this, their self-efficacy was strengthened. Those who acknowledged rules and regulations in their classrooms were faculty members in departments with science and health career laboratories, where chemistry and nursing required coordinated scheduling and content. Others appreciated structured syllabi, shared textbooks, and assessment expectations where provided. On the unstructured, lower end of the vertical axis, some participants expressed concern that not enough oversight was provided. One participant, who wished one comment to
remain anonymous, said, “There is so little involvement, I could be showing movies in every class, and nobody would notice.” Some bureaucratic interventions are respected.

Instructors had concerns with the limitations and barriers at the college. Opportunity for professional advancement was agreed by all participants to be limited or non-existent at the case study college, even for those who were not seeking full-time employment. Additionally, the Affordable Care Act led to a reduction in teaching assignments. The ACA and lack of professional advancement were particularly disheartening factors for four of fifteen participants who desired teaching careers. This restriction on “entry” to the full-time faculty ranks was perceived as being closed in the organization, and it impeded teaching self-efficacy and sense of worth. Other participants understood or had served as adjunct instructors in their careers and knew the pressures of trying to make a living teaching part-time, a key factor in job satisfaction (Hoff, 2014; Maisto & Street, 2011; Overstreet, 2014).

Another constraint was the absence of office space and the college’s perceived lack of interest in offering confidential workspace for adjunct faculty to meet with students or prepare for class. Faculty members acknowledged workspaces as critical to their perception of access, privacy, and productivity. This emphasis is supported by over twenty years of literature and research (Banachowski, 1996; Benjamin, 1998; Cain, 1998; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Harnish & Wild, 1992; Rhoades, 2013; Yakoboski, 2015). Math instructors, temporarily housed in hallways while buildings were under construction understood the awkward structure of their working environment and assumed its short-term nature. Accounting and nursing instructors, however, had to ask permission to meet with students in quieter rooms and conference spaces to aid student success.
The range of bureaucracy, autonomy, and organizational stability on the vertical axis also includes the Adjunct Faculty Professional Development evaluation system. Faculty members who received their evaluations from department chairs and peers welcomed the feedback. In Douglas’ grid and group framework, they would find themselves higher on the vertical axis, as professional evaluation is a structural approach with which to acculturate faculty (Tomanek, 2010; Peterson, 2007; Wallin, 2012). Several adjunct faculty members objected to the temporary evaluators hired to conduct classroom evaluation, particularly in academic disciplines where external evaluators confessed subject-knowledge ignorance. This constraint of impersonal evaluation had a negative impact, pushed downwards on the vertical axis, and served as a reminder of instructors’ contingent status (Bogert, 2004; Christensen, 2012; Lyons, 2007).

**Group axis and student success.** The horizontal, or x-axis of the grid and group diagram represents the extent to which members of an organization feel personally connected to their group. The sense of belonging is greatest in the right two quadrants of the diagram, and the lowest sense of connection is in the left two quadrants. Moving from left to right, individuals gain a sense of socialization and relationship in several ways: through shared language, shared experiences, and shared resources (Douglas, 1982). Loyalty and affiliation to an organizational body is included on the group axis.

It is worth noting that eleven of fifteen volunteers, or 73 percent of participants intentionally made the choice to teach part-time. In an earlier nationwide survey, “intentional” adjunct instructors measured only 51 percent (Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Some estimates are as low as 25 percent who choose adjunct faculty status (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, [CAW] 2014). Therefore, it was an unexpected finding that nearly three quarters of participants who volunteered for this research were not seeking full-time employment. While each participant
identified his or her status as either retired, career professional, or teaching for supplemental income, information regarding the impulse to volunteer was not captured. Motivation to volunteer in this study could have been as straightforward as the promise of a gift card. However, if adjunct faculty member volunteerism emerged from a sense of loyalty to the college because the call for participants was distributed through the AFPD, then the analysis might have shifted the group towards a more socialized culture. Although the absence of this information is not a limitation of the research, it would have helped paint a richer cultural picture of the site institution.

More than one participant noted the similarity between adjunct faculty and community college students: that they are easily drawn away from the college for other responsibilities, and that they are less likely to stick with the institution in a pinch. One went so far as to say, “the problem with adjunct faculty is that we’re almost as transient as the students.” This common characteristic of students and adjunct faculty provided a perspective on student success that reinforced the need for student engagement (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Jacoby, 2006; James & Binder, 2011; Johnson, 2012, Umbach, 2007). Further, the sense of being “free to leave” on the low group quadrant of the axis, may be more tangible on community college, or commuter campuses. The paradigm of contingent and temporary teaching is far to the left on the group axis.

Adjunct faculty at the case study institution had diverse experiences with their professional and personal ties to the college (Benjamin, 2002; Harnish & Wild, 1992; Lyons, 2007; Stejskal, 2011). Student success anecdotes focused primarily on the personal connections, networking, and relationship-building students were able to engage in with dedicated part-time instructors. Mentoring and additional resources increased the socialization and self-efficacy of both faculty and students in each example.
Most of the newer faculty members agreed that the orientation and onboarding process was thorough and inclusive. The professional development opportunities, offered by the college to increase faculty members’ teaching skills, were commonly acknowledged. This is an improvement on existing research that revealed few colleges conveying consistent “invitations to membership” for adjunct instructors in the academic community (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Phillips & Campbell, 2005). Also positive in this area was the experience with the AFPD and its frequent communications and workshops. Instructors valued the chance to share experiences with other teachers at these workshops, even if the content being taught was less relevant to their classroom. Invitations to department meetings, curriculum planning, textbook review, and class scheduling were meaningful examples that increased participants’ sense of belonging and value. Those who did not receive these opportunities felt a lower level of connection.

All of these efforts conveyed a sense of inclusiveness and engagement. Recent research with part-time instructors indicate that a sense of engagement is more likely to promote student success, principally when adjunct faculty members have a sense of loyalty to their college or university (Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Dolan, 2011; Washington, 2011). This becomes a value-added quality to teaching, when instructors are vested with their students. Loyalty to an institution can be manifest in allegiance to students and their futures, and integration is more likely to increase retention of adjunct faculty, who might otherwise continue searching the job market for better opportunities (Akroyd, & Caison, 2005; CCCSE, 2014).

The opposite can occur, with a low grid, low group environment. Decades earlier, Douglas (1982) predicted a similar struggle for university students:

Grid without group. Each [student] moves from impersonal lecture halls to isolated lodging; the groups he joins are fragmentary and short-term . . . the organization to which
he is subject seems to prevent him from realizing his aspirations instead of securing them for him (Douglas, 1982, p. xv).

Like the students in the quote above, a lack of belonging leads to part-time instructors’ detachment from the college inside and outside the classroom, translated as the low group quadrant (Bogert, 2004; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Roueche, Rouche, & Milliron, 1996). Short-term hiring practices, absence of relationship, and few reasons to stay on campus hurt the chances of a high grid, high group experience. Several instructors worried about the lack of educational engagement by their students. One prescribed “something to motivate students to finish,” because many of his students lacked apparent drive or direction.

Many adjunct faculty members felt strongly that college completion would occur with increased socialization, campus engagement, and fewer distractions from their educational goals. Several instructors recommended work-study and other campus employment, praised the effort to increase on-site restaurants and coffee shops, and emphasized the need for more spaces for faculty and students to meet. One member credited the free-tuition movement as a positive step in the right direction for completion, as students could focus only on studies.

It is worth noting that not all adjunct faculty members in this study agreed with the definition of student success. Completion of a degree, certificate, or achievement of educational goals did not hold for several individuals. A quantifiable increase in degrees does not guarantee educated citizens, declared two participants. Additionally, one participant noted that at another college where she taught, adjunct instructors were subtly encouraged to pass students rather than assess them accurately. To sacrifice knowledge and education for graduation numbers, one contributor cautioned, hurts all parties. Students “succeed” by graduating from a community
college, but go on to fail at work or university, and this neglect will catch up with the “successful” college.

**Implications**

The case study addressed the research question, “What is the experience of community college adjunct instructors with respect to institutional and organizational culture, and, beyond teaching, what value added components do adjunct instructors recognize as impactful for student engagement and success?” Participants’ responses corroborated conclusions from national research (Akroyd & Caison, 2005; CCCSE, 2014; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Adjunct faculty members’ input fell into four categories, or themes:

1. Instructors recognize the critical skills needed for their students to succeed in both higher education and life, and are concerned with recent trends in college and career readiness.

2. Part-time faculty members are proud of the life lessons and professional experiences they bring to the classroom, to inspire, inform, and motivate students to “the next level” in education.

3. Adjunct instructors understand the need for students to engage inside and outside the classroom during college, and also understand the pressures and demands that drag students away.

4. Adjunct faculty participants highlight their professional and personal engagement with the case study college as having a significant impact on their teaching abilities and self-efficacy.

While the case study institution has put significant effort and time into the development of its Adjunct Faculty Professional Development office, some gaps remained, not necessarily within the control of the AFPD:
• Instructors are concerned with the English, math, and communication skills of community college students across the curriculum;

• Consistent standards for and access to adjunct faculty office space and student meeting areas do not exist; and

• Administrative turnover has fostered some uneven and unproductive relationships.

For the case study institution as well as a broader audience, the grid and group analysis combined with instructor data produced four considerations derived from this study to best serve student success. It includes the following reflections for department chairs, deans, and professional development:

• Instructors want to share academic and professional resources with students;

• Instructors want space in which they can work, meet with students, and reinforce classroom instruction;

• Instructors want relationships with academic colleagues and other members of the college community, which increases their likelihood of retention, sense of value, and fidelity to students; and

• Instructors want evaluations and appreciation that honor the investments they have made.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study sets the stage for a greater research agenda. A bounded case study at a large Midwestern community college may be a small but promising catalyst for regional, state, or national action in higher education. The study described here addressed central research about adjunct faculty perceptions of student success and their contributions to their institution. That institution should be applauded for its efforts in professional development and outreach to its
nearly 600 part-time instructors. However, this study also opened up a research agenda that encompasses three potential opportunities in higher education over the next three to five years.

**Narratives and student success.** First, the value of stories and illustrations of student success from instructors themselves cannot be overemphasized. Narratives from adjunct faculty members on a much larger scale should be gathered. Several organizations have begun to assemble rich data from adjunct faculty members, and the emphasis has begun to coalesce around the concept of student success, through organizations such as the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce, the Coalition on Contingent Academic Labor, the Delphi Project, and the New Faculty Majority. Many of these organizations have collaborated already in research and at conferences, for congressional testimony, and with national and local union leadership. Classroom-to-commencement accounts from part-time faculty will offer an insider’s perspective from those who are “outside” full-time teaching. Narratives from adjunct instructors will also add value to the national discussion of how to “add fifty percent more high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020” (AACC, 2010, p.2).

**Permanent part-time recognition.** Further, if part-time faculty members have become a permanent fixture in higher education, then their status should be acknowledged, formally integrated, and recognized as such. The paradigm shift to recognize an actual employee group should be encouraged, not simply through union organizing, but through the implementation of ‘permanent part-time’ structures in community colleges, and through policy structures across higher education. These structures ought to incorporate the relational and socialization aspect of a college, as well as the clear boundaries and opportunities within the community. Retention of high-quality, committed adjunct faculty is as important as retention of students, and research
regarding ‘permanent part-time’ structures to keep both groups on campus and engaged with the institution needs to be conducted at the national level. Recommendations could then be considered in policy research for accrediting bodies to determine parameters for accountability in student learning and success (Elman, 2002). Ultimately, if the implications of this research are meaningful, then the integration of part-time faculty ought to be a larger factor in community college assessment.

**Policies and investments.** Practical research recommended as a complement to the larger, collaborative efforts above includes the question of financial impact. It is difficult to find literature on the cost of meaningful investments in adjunct faculty engagement. However, political and financial investment details will likely accompany recognition of a permanent system for adjunct faculty members. Specifically, if community colleges spend money on an adjunct faculty center, increased office space and physical resources, leadership training for chairs and deans, and professional development and recognition for part-time faculty, the bottom line per capita can be explored. Alternatively, it is worth considering the opportunity cost, or what is lost, by not making these investments. Administrators can address many of the cultural and structural concerns relayed by participants in this study responsibly. All remedies do, however, require treating part-time faculty as critical contributors in pursuit of student success, and adding systems and resources for those contributions.

**Conclusion**

Colleges and universities long have been identified as a “gateway to the middle class” (Immerwahr, Johnson, & Gasbarra, 2008, p.5). If community colleges hire approximately 280,000 adjunct faculty members out of 400,000 total instructors each year, there are no doubts these men and women influence millions of students annually (CCSSE, 2014). At a critical
juncture in global competition for jobs and economic security, colleges and universities are under political pressure to prove their students are achieving educational goals.

However, college leaders have begun to recognize the significant barriers to student success that accompany part-time faculty employment practices (AAUP, 2006, AACC, 2012; White House, 2012). In data collected for this study, faculty and student engagement were substantiated as keys to success (Benjamin, 2002; Coburn-Collins, 2014; Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Green, 2007; Hepner & Kaufman, 2013; Jacoby, 2012). Additionally, instructors agreed that positive professional and institutional connections impacted their ability to serve students well, teach effectively, and support students outside the classroom (James, 2015; Kezar & Gehrke, 2013; Kuh, et al., 2006; Trueheart, 2011, Yoshioka, 2007). This research increased understanding of how faculty members perceive students and teaching efficacy. It also identified current practices that support or detract from student success.

Student success, then, defined by both quality and quantity of college degrees and certificates, is an attainable goal. Further, it continues to be a vital one. Fortunately, “a college can change its relationships with part-time faculty” (CCCSE, 2014, p.3). This relationship includes a cultural shift across institutions, and likely across higher education overall. Research to shepherd this cultural shift will begin with the critical addition of part-time instructors’ testimonies. Policy options will establish a permanent part-time employee group, no longer considered ‘ad hoc’ in academia. Finally, the political and financial investments necessary will be addressed. Because part-time faculty members are on the front lines of higher education, they observe first-hand the gaps and opportunities for their students. Given greater opportunity to work effectively alongside their full-time colleagues, part-time faculty will become fully vested contributors to community college student success.
References


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Chastain, B. (2005). *A grid and group description of improving schools and raising student achievement with six SREB leadership strategies* (Doctoral dissertation). Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.


NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: April 1, 2015
IRB #: CPSI-S-03-04

Principal Investigator(s): Carolyn Bair
Loren M. Keller

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: Adjunct Faculty Engagement: Connections in Pursuit of Student Success in Community Colleges

Participating Sites: [redacted]

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: MARCH 30, 2016

Investigator's Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix B: Email for recruitment

Email For Recruitment:

Northeastern University

Dear Adjunct Faculty Member,

My name is Loreen Keller, and I am conducting research for my doctorate in Higher Education Administration at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and I'd like to ask for your assistance. Would you be willing to grant an hour of your time and experience to a one-hour on-campus interview this spring, regarding your work as an adjunct instructor at

The purpose of this research is to gain understanding of adjunct faculty engagement at a distinguished community college. College students and community colleges are under pressure to complete college credentials. Instructors play a major role in this effort, yet adjunct faculty members have little time, space, or remuneration to engage with students outside of the classroom.

Results drawn from your confidential adjunct faculty experiences may include recommendations for better hiring, mentoring, and support practices. This may lead to greater faculty-student connections and increase the ability to contribute further to students' educational goals.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate.

Your willingness to participate in an interview will be compensated with a gift card upon completion. I hope you will respond and indicate your interest in being interviewed. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Loreen Keller
Student Researcher

Your input is valued!
Appendix Q: Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department of Education

Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Carolyn R. Bair (Principal Investigator), Loreen M. Keller (Student Researcher)

Title of Project: Adjunct Faculty Engagement: Connections in Pursuit of Student Success in Community Colleges

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to determine adjunct faculty perceptions of their connections to a community college and their ability to contribute to student success, transfer, and graduation rates.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

The study will take place at a location of your choice, and involve an interview of approximately sixty minutes. You will be asked to respond to questions about your professional background and reflections on work as a college instructor.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about the experience of adjunct instructors, community college culture, and student success.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers and will know that you participated in this study. Any reports or publications based on this research will only use pseudonyms, and will not identify you or any other participant as being part of this project. No names will be associated with any interview information; any information that could be used to identify a participant will be altered to protect their confidentiality; the recording of the interview will not be labeled with the participant’s name, but rather a pseudonym; all data files will be encrypted and password protected, and only the Principal Investigator (Professor Carolyn Bair) and Student Researcher on this project (Loreen Keller) will have access to the files.

The data will be used for the Student Researcher’s doctoral thesis project, and potentially for future journal articles, books, presentations, or research. Even in these potential instances, confidentiality will be kept for all participants.

Each interview will be audio-recorded by an electronic application called “AudioMemos” on two separate devices (the Student Researcher’s iPad and iPhone) to ensure the audio is captured. AudioMemos has no limit to audio-length, and electronic recordings can be transferred to a computer as mp4 or .wav files.

The electronic recordings of the interviews and all other electronic documents will be downloaded and then saved to the Student Researcher’s personal USB flash drive, personal.

Approved LPS 08-08-14
Valid Through 03-30-14

Northeastern University - Human Subject Research Protection
Rev. 03/28/14
external hard drive, and personal storage account. All files will be encrypted and password-protected.

Transcripts will be saved in the same secure manner as the electronic recordings. The only other person who would have access to original files and actual names would be the Principal Investigator (Dr. Bair), should there be a need. After the thesis project is complete, any hard-copy materials containing confidential interviewee information will be destroyed. All remaining electronic data stored on the student researcher’s USB flash drive and personal external hard drive will remain untouched, and kept in a locked safe in the office of the Student Researcher.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

You will receive a gift card upon completion of the interview.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Student Researcher, Loreen Keller, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Carolyn Bair (Northeastern University, Boston, MA, 132)

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan Clark
Regina, Director, HSIRP.
You may call anonymously if you wish.

I agree to take part in this research.

Signature of participant ______________________________ Date ______________________________

Printed name of participant above ______________________________

Signature of person who explained the study ______________________________ Date ______________________________

To the participant above and obtained consent

Printed name of person above ______________________________

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Rev. 3/28/2014
Appendix D: Interview Protocol/Script

Interview Protocol Form (Italicized text will be read to each participant)

Student Interview Protocol

Institution: 

Interviewee (Title and Name): 

Interviewer: 

Date: 

Location of Interview: 

Adjunct Connections & Engagement Interviews

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes). Build rapport, describe the study, and answer any questions (an informed consent form will be reviewed and signed here).

Part I: Introductory Protocol

Thank you for speaking with me today. You have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience of being an adjunct faculty member at . My research project focuses on the experience of adjunct faculty and their perception of student success in community colleges where they teach, particularly as it relates to adjunct college connections, organizational culture, and engagement. Through this study, I hope to gain insight into how you are connected, and how you see your role in promoting student success.
Hopefully this will allow community colleges to identify ways in which they can better support and engage with adjunct faculty on their campuses.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview? [If yes, thank the participant and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. My principal researcher, Dr. Carolyn Bair, and I will be the only one privy to the recordings, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. To meet our human subjects requirements at Northeastern University, you must sign the confidentiality form I have with me. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) this research does not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

I have planned this interview to last about 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction, Interviewee Background

1. How long have you been an adjunct faculty member here
2. What made you decide to start teaching?
3. Tell me about your professional work as a community college instructor.
Part II: Objectives (35-40 minutes): Obtain the participant’s perceptions, in his/her own words, of the role of adjunct faculty in student success, and the connectivity and engagement with a community college employer.

Prefatory Statement: I would like to hear about your adjunct experience in your own words. To do this, I am going to ask you some questions about and your role here. Your responses may include both academic and non-academic elements as appropriate.

Adjunct Faculty in Community Colleges

For the purposes of this study, student success is defined as completion, graduation, transfer, or achievement of educational goals. It is a relatively recent area of focus by political leaders seeking increased college completion rates. I am interested in learning about your experience at and the connections, culture, and engagement that increase your ability to help students meet their goals. These questions ask you to reflect on several versions of this question.

1. What is your experience with respect to institutional and organizational culture, and, beyond teaching, what value added components do you recognize as impactful for student engagement and success?

2. What is your experience at this college, including your sense of institutional and cultural engagement, and what things do you recognize as impactful for student engagement and success?
   a. Follow up: If applicable, perhaps you have an example of institutional or cultural engagement with?
3. How do you, as an adjunct, identify and focus on your role in student success (defined as the completion of a certificate or degree, or the accomplishment of an educational goal)?
   a. Follow up: Describe examples inside and outside the classroom, if relevant.

4. How does the organizational culture of your department, division, itself strengthen or weaken your professional teaching?
   a. If applicable, describe examples that strengthen (or add to) your teaching.
   b. If applicable, describe examples that weaken (or detract from) your teaching.

5. Describe some of the opportunities (or lack thereof) for faculty-institution, and faculty-student connections, such as shared governance, professional development, recognition, communication and access to information, workspace, or other physical or technical resources at

6. How do you perceive levels of independence, autonomy, bureaucracy, or hierarchy as a teacher? Describe levels such as a high or low level of structure and bureaucracy, or a high or low level of autonomy or comradery?

7. What do you perceive would increase student success at
   a. Follow up: What do you think would increase your professional and personal connections to
   b. Follow up: Describe examples of connections and engagement you have seen or read about in community colleges.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your participation. I will follow up with you to check any transcription questions and verify the data you’ve provided today within one month. What kind of gift card would you like in appreciation for your time?