

Exploration of adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives within a community college system

by

Jennifer Sramek

B.B.A., University of Texas, 1987
M.B.A., Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 1995

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Abstract

Community colleges rely heavily on their adjunct faculty to provide instruction; however, institutions often fail to fully engage and support adjunct faculty in the work of student success. Although adjunct faculty represent approximately two thirds of all faculty at community colleges (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2018), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) indicated they work under challenging conditions with limited support from their institutions.

The purpose of this multisite case study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and understand the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Understanding the adjunct faculty perspective is critical for institutions to make meaningful changes to policies and practices designed to enhance engagement of adjunct faculty.

Findings from the research indicated the community college system designed policies and practices to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. Policies and practices were created to address hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions. In addition, the community college system committed to invest in their employees through orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward of adjunct faculty contributions. The success of these strategies relied on consistency of implementation, communication, and fostering connections for adjunct faculty in the community college system.

Exploration of adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives within a community college system

by

Jennifer Sramek

B.B.A, University of Texas, 1987

M.B.A, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, 1995

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2023

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Martha Ellis

Copyright

© Jennifer Sramek 2023.

Abstract

Community colleges rely heavily on their adjunct faculty to provide instruction; however, institutions often fail to fully engage and support adjunct faculty in the work of student success. Although adjunct faculty represent approximately two thirds of all faculty at community colleges (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2018), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) indicated they work under challenging conditions with limited support from their institutions.

The purpose of this multisite case study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and understand the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Understanding the adjunct faculty perspective is critical for institutions to make meaningful changes to policies and practices designed to enhance engagement of adjunct faculty.

Findings from the research indicated the community college system designed policies and practices to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. Policies and practices were created to address hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions. In addition, the community college system committed to invest in their employees through orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward of adjunct faculty contributions. The success of these strategies relied on consistency of implementation, communication, and fostering connections for adjunct faculty in the community college system.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xii
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Background of the Problem	3
Context for Adjunct Faculty Use	3
Research on Employee Engagement.....	4
Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Mission	5
Adjunct Faculty Perspective on Engagement	5
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions.....	7
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	8
Alignment Table	9
Methodology	9
Delimitations and Assumptions	9
Significance of the Study	10
Definitions of Terms	10
Chapter Summary	11
Organization of the Study	11
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	12
Literature Search Process.....	12
Theoretical Frameworks	13
Kahn's Theory of Employee Engagement	13
Research Inspired by Kahn's Work on Employee Engagement	15
Conceptual Framework.....	16
Adjunct Faculty Identity	19
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission	22
Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	26
Hiring Practices.....	27
Compensation	28

Benefits	28
Employment Contracts.....	29
Working Conditions.....	30
Investing in Human Resources	31
Orientation	32
Professional Development	35
Support and Communication	38
Performance Evaluations	41
Recognition and Reward.....	43
Summary	44
Chapter 3 - Methodology	46
Purpose of the Study	46
Research Questions.....	46
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	47
Alignment Table	47
Research Design	48
Study Setting.....	48
Study Participants	50
Instrumentation	51
Pilot Study.....	51
Data Collection and Data Sources	52
Data Analysis.....	54
Study Quality	56
Ethical Considerations	56
Reflexivity Statement	57
Limitations	58
Summary	58
Chapter 4 - Research Findings and Analysis	60
Research Questions.....	60
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	60
Data Collection and Analysis	61

Institution and Participant Descriptions.....	62
Findings from Document Analysis	63
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	64
Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	64
Hiring Practices.....	65
Compensation/Benefits	65
Working Conditions.....	67
Investing in Human Resources	69
Orientation	69
Professional Development	70
Support and Communication	71
Performance Evaluations	71
Recognition and Reward.....	72
Findings from Participant Interviews at College A	73
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	73
Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	76
Hiring Practices.....	76
Compensation/Benefits	76
Working Conditions.....	77
Investing in Human Resources	78
Orientation	78
Professional Development	79
Support and Communication	81
Performance Evaluations	83
Recognition and Reward.....	84
Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources.....	85
Meaningfulness of Work.....	85
Psychological Safety of Work	86
Availability of Physical, Emotional, or Psychological Resources.....	87
Findings from Participant Interviews at College B	89
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	89

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	91
Hiring Practices.....	92
Compensation/Benefits	93
Working Conditions.....	94
Investing in Human Resources	96
Orientation	96
Professional Development	97
Support and Communication	98
Performance Evaluations	100
Recognition and Reward.....	102
Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources.....	103
Meaningfulness of Work.....	103
Psychological Safety	104
Availability of Resources.....	105
Findings from Participant Interviews at College C	107
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	107
Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	108
Hiring Practices.....	108
Compensation/Benefits	109
Working Conditions.....	111
Investing in Human Resources	112
Orientation	113
Professional Development	114
Support and Communication	115
Performance Evaluations	117
Recognition and Reward.....	118
Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources.....	119
Meaningfulness of Work.....	119
Psychological Safety	120
Availability of Resources.....	121
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	123

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	124
Hiring Practices.....	124
Compensation/Benefits	125
Working Conditions.....	126
Investing in Human Resources	126
Orientation	127
Professional Development	127
Support and Communication	128
Performance Evaluations	128
Recognition and Reward.....	129
Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources.....	130
Summary	131
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations	133
Statement of the Problem.....	133
Purpose of the Study	133
Research Questions.....	134
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	134
Methodology	135
Data Collection and Analysis	135
Discussion of Findings and Related Literature.....	136
Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission.....	136
Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices	137
Hiring Practices.....	137
Compensation/Benefits	138
Working Conditions.....	139
Investing in Human Resources	140
Orientation	140
Professional Development	141
Support and Communication	142
Performance Evaluations	143
Recognition and Rewards	144

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources.....	145
Key Takeaways From the Findings	146
Key Takeaway 1: Communication.....	146
Key Takeaway 2: Consistency.....	147
Key Takeaway 3: Connections	148
Unexpected Findings	148
Practical Implications	149
Recommendations for Further Research.....	151
Summary	151
Research Question 1	152
Research Question 2	153
References.....	155
Appendix A - Alignment Table	167
Appendix B - Improving Status of Part-time Faculty	168
Appendix C - Interview Protocols	169
Appendix D - Informed Consent Form.....	170
Appendix E - Map of Initial Codes.....	172
Appendix F - Study Quality	173
Appendix G - Institutional Review Board Approval	174
Appendix H - Audit Report.....	175
Appendix I - Participant List.....	177

List of Figures

Figure 4.1	73
Figure 4.2	89
Figure 4.3	106
Figure 4.4	123
Figure 4.5	131

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Community colleges across the nation are looking for solutions to address achievement gaps and student success (Achieving the Dream [ATD], 2022). To make improvements in student outcomes, community colleges have implemented reforms in advising, developmental education, and comprehensive student support services (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018). In addition, many community colleges have redesigned their student experiences completely by following the guided pathways model, which creates a streamlined path and support systems to guide students' educational journeys while aligning with their career and educational goals (Bailey et al., 2015).

Although many community colleges have implemented major reforms already to improve student success, one area that has received less attention is the effective engagement of adjunct faculty (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018). As noted in a field report by ATD (2022), engaging all faculty members, including adjunct faculty, in the central role of transformation is critical to address student outcomes. However, the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement noted much work is still needed to integrate adjunct faculty fully in the student success agenda (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2019). For example, CCCSE's survey findings indicated 63% of adjunct faculty had little or no knowledge of guided pathways work being done at their own institutions.

The priority in a community college mission to improve student success and degree completion involves the challenge of serving students from all walks of life with varied levels of college-readiness skills (Bailey et al., 2015). To serve diverse community college students successfully as an educator requires understanding the student body, their challenges, and their motivations. As noted in a report prepared for the National Commission on Higher Education

Attainment, not preparing adjunct faculty fully for the work of student success “compromises faculty engagement in student attainment” (Rhoades, 2012, p. 6). Recognizing this systemic weakness, a special report by CCCSE (2014) recommended institutions examine policies, processes, and practices to determine if they are designed to prepare adjunct faculty to contribute to student success.

Statement of the Problem

Community colleges rely heavily on their adjunct faculty to provide instruction; however, institutions often fail to fully engage and support adjunct faculty in the work of student success. Although adjunct faculty represent approximately two thirds of all faculty at community colleges (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2018), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) indicated they work under challenging conditions with limited support from their institutions. Bickerstaff and Chavarin (2018) noted it is common for adjunct faculty to have unequal access to institutional resources and a limited network of colleagues to call on for assistance.

Despite the disadvantages adjunct faculty face, the role they play as the majority in the faculty base is critical to support student learning and the overall student experience at community colleges. Tinto and Pusser (2006) stated, “Though student success is indeed everyone’s business, it is the business of the faculty in particular” (p. 8). First, as instructors in the classroom, adjunct faculty engagement is critical to ensure effective teaching and learning is occurring (ATD, 2020). Second, adjunct faculty members’ roles put them in a position to provide support to students, both inside and outside of the classroom, by informally advising, providing referrals to support services, and instilling a positive learning environment. An ATD framework to advance student outcomes noted the importance of engaging adjunct faculty to be well-versed

in evidence-based pedagogy and the array of support mechanisms available to students. ATD (2020) further emphasized, “We cannot move the needle on student success if we do not engage both full-time and adjunct faculty” (p. 82).

Background of the Problem

Several factors are important to understand the background of the problem. The context for adjunct faculty use describes why community colleges use a large contingency of adjunct faculty. Research on employee engagement has demonstrated the importance of strategically integrating adjunct faculty in the work of student success.

Context for Adjunct Faculty Use

Adjunct faculty, also referred to as part-time faculty or contingent faculty, play a critical role in delivering instruction at community colleges. Nationwide, adjunct faculty hold 65% of faculty appointments at 2-year institutions (AAUP, 2018). Research conducted as part of the Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement project by ATD also noted the prevalence of adjunct faculty and indicated 60% of community college classes are taught by adjunct faculty (ATD, 2019). Despite the vast number of adjunct faculty in higher education, the designated titles of adjuncts or contingent faculty convey the widespread belief that this group of employees is considered supplemental to the core group of faculty with their primary role focused on teaching (Rhoades, 2012).

Community colleges use adjunct faculty for a variety of reasons. Colleges can manage budgets and implement cost-saving strategies by hiring adjunct faculty who are less expensive to pay than full-time faculty (Guthrie et al., 2019). Secondly, hiring adjunct faculty gives institutions great flexibility to expand or contract the number of faculty based on fluctuating enrollment trends (Banachowski, 1996; Xu, 2019). Finally, adjunct faculty are often industry

professionals brought into the teaching arena to broaden the expertise of the overall faculty team and provide valuable insights for students preparing for their careers (Banachowski, 1996; Guthrie et al., 2019). The advantages of affordability, flexibility, and enhanced skill sets found in employing adjunct faculty suggest community colleges will continue using adjunct faculty on a frequent basis to ensure academic continuity.

Research on Employee Engagement

Research across many industries has linked employee engagement to individual and organizational performance. Gallup (2022) surveyed more than 2.7 million employees across 54 industries in 2020 to study the relationship between employee engagement and performance data. Gallup's survey results demonstrated high levels of engagement led to an 81% decrease in employee absenteeism, 43% decrease in turnover for low-turnover organizations, 64% decrease in safety incidents, and a 66% increase in employee well-being. Gallup (2022) emphasized the importance of fostering employee engagement, stating, "Developing highly engaged teams results in fewer negative outcomes, more positive outcomes and greater success for your organization" (p. 3).

PeopleElement (2022) conducted another significant employee engagement survey in 2021 of more than 200 organizations in the United States from multiple industries including education, health care, business, and government. With over 30,000 survey responses, data indicated only 58% of employees felt engaged at their workplaces. Based on survey results, PeopleElement recommended leaders employ five strategies to increase employee engagement, including: (a) communicate clearly and transparently, (b) demonstrate employees are valued, (c) create career growth opportunities, (d) foster employee connections, and (e) provide resource support and work-life flexibility.

Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Mission

Community colleges have focused their mission on student success, prioritizing the elimination of achievement gaps and increased degree completion (Community College Research Center, 2021; O'Banion, 2010; Wyner, 2021). Founded on the philosophy of increasing access to underserved students, community colleges traditionally have served as a gateway to universities, the workforce, and lifelong learning. In addition, community colleges have strengthened their focus on providing programs that lead to workforce degrees, certificates, and credentials needed to enter high wage, in-demand jobs (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, n.d.). Adjunct faculty members who possess valuable industry experience play a critical role in providing training and skills development for students entering these programs.

Although many students have entered the college arena through open access institutions, many have also left without completing their degrees. A report published by the Association of Community College Trustees noted, "More than 39 million Americans have some college credit, but no awarded degree and, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions more did not enroll to begin their higher education journey" (Hendricks & Voight, 2022, p. 1). Critical work of the student success agenda can be seen in the fact community colleges have a 60.5% retention rate for full-time students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022a); however, only 36% of all students successfully complete a 2-year degree within 3 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022b). Student success initiatives such as guided pathways aim to improve student outcomes by increasing student persistence and completion (Bailey et al., 2015).

Adjunct Faculty Perspective on Engagement

Existing literature has indicated adjunct faculty report feeling isolated and disengaged from critical work of the college community (Fain, 2014; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Colleges use

strategies, such as orientation, departmental communication, mentoring, and professional development, to support the growth and integration of adjunct faculty members. However, a survey of 482 adjunct faculty members at ATD leader colleges indicated adjunct faculty lacked knowledge about both academic and nonacademic services, including strategies to identify students in need of support (Ran & Sanders, 2019). The gap in institutional knowledge makes it difficult for adjunct faculty to effectively serve their students.

According to a report by the AFT (2020), in addition to feeling isolated, adjunct faculty reported working conditions are related to their engagement at the institution. Negative working conditions for adjunct faculty include low pay, lack of benefits, lack of professional development opportunities, late teaching assignment notice, and no guarantee of continued appointment (AFT, 2020; Maxey & Kezar, 2015). Lack of reported institutional support results in adjunct faculty members not being able to improve their own effectiveness in the classroom (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Kezar & Sam, 2013). For example, with low pay and lack of paid professional development opportunities, adjunct faculty members may find it difficult to justify paying out of pocket for training to develop their teaching abilities. Bickerstaff and Chavarin (2018) emphasized “A comprehensive vision for the improvement of community colleges must include improving the working conditions of adjunct faculty” (p. 1).

Several authors have also noted lack of respect has been a challenge for adjunct faculty members related to their institutional engagement. Adjunct faculty have been described as an “invisible faculty” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. xi), “strangers in their own land” (Roueche et al., 1995, p. vii) and “second class citizens” (Masri, 2018, p. 25). According to Masri (2018), interviews with adjunct faculty members revealed being perceived differently by students,

colleagues, and administrators in the college environment has taken a personal toll on them and contributed to negative impressions of their professional identity.

Community colleges strive to provide quality educational experiences that lead to completion of students' educational goals (Bailey et al., 2015). As a significant percentage of the overall faculty base, the engagement of adjunct faculty members is critical to ensure the institution is maximizing efforts to reach the goal of improved student outcomes. Witt and Gearin (2021) noted the successful engagement of adjunct faculty members relies on "policies and practices which are supportive and responsive to their needs and interest" (p. 23). By seeking to understand the engagement experiences of adjunct faculty members, institutions can begin to consider how existing policies and practices regarding adjunct faculty can be improved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and understand the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) recommended the purpose of a study reflect the recommendations of other authors for continued exploration of a topic. Thirolf (2017) recommended new research be conducted on engaging adjunct faculty in initiatives to improve student outcomes. Potts (2021) also stated it was imperative to understand the lived experiences of adjunct faculty members to improve conditions that support student success.

Research Questions

Two primary research questions informed this study:

1. What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?

2. What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study used Kahn's (1990) engagement theory as the theoretical framework. Kahn's work was the first research on the topic of engagement in the workplace and focused on employees working in summer camps and architectural firms. Kahn concluded employees engage or disengage from situations based on the strength of three conditions: (a) experienced meaningfulness of work, (b) perceived psychological safety, and (c) having the resources needed to personally engage. Kahn (2010) noted, "People have a desire to engage. They have an instinctive drive to express who they are, and who they wish to be, and given a chance at work, they will do so" (p. 30).

Gappa and Leslie's (1993) research provided the conceptual framework for the dissertation. Gappa and Leslie worked to provide recommendations for improving the status of adjunct faculty in higher education. Their recommendations were grouped in three chapters categorized into broad themes: (a) using adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives, (b) developing fair and equitable employment practices, and (c) investing in human resources. Gappa and Leslie stressed the importance of institutions first working to understand their adjunct faculty identity, which Kelchtermans (2009) described as their self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective that contribute to self-understanding. When institutions understand the adjunct faculty identity at the local level, they can implement Gappa and Leslie's recommendations more successfully to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives.

Alignment Table

To conduct effective research, aligning the problem based on the literature findings with the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and methodology was critical. In this study, the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology, and interview questions were all designed to align and address the specific problem of interest (see Appendix A).

Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology with a multisite case study design to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a large community college system. Additionally, the current study was designed to increase understanding of adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) stated, "A case study is an approach to qualitative research in which a practitioner scholar focuses on a detailed study of one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 102). Semistructured interviews with adjunct faculty members provided insight on the lived experiences of adjunct faculty members through the lenses of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. An analysis of documents, policies, and practices examined strategies used by the institution to engage adjunct faculty members. Use of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks helped refine the concepts studied and data analyzed (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations were self-imposed boundaries for this study. The current study was delimited to a community college system and experiences of adjunct faculty members who were employed for at least 2 full semesters prior to January 2023. This time was chosen to ensure the adjunct faculty members experienced the full cycle of engagement activities occurring within 2

semesters prior to participating in the study. Assumptions included interviewees would be honest about their experiences and accurate in their recollections.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to contribute knowledge regarding strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Tinto and Pusser (2006) noted institutions "need to know a great deal more about the impact on student success of the use of adjunct and/or part-time faculty" (p. 33). By listening to the voices of adjunct faculty members, community college leaders can use adjunct faculty members' perceptions to inform and design effective institutional policies and practices that contribute to positive engagement of adjunct faculty and indirectly benefit institutions and students.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms have been defined for the purposes of this study.

- *Adjunct faculty* are nontenured, part-time instructors working with little job security or benefits (AAUP, 2018). They are also referred to as adjuncts, contingent faculty, or part-time faculty.
- *ATD leader colleges* are colleges participating in ATD that have demonstrated 3 years of sustained student success improvements (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018).
- *Engagement* is the degree to which an individual is attentive to their work and absorbed in performance of their role (Saks, 2006). For this study, engagement required involvement with the college in student success initiatives beyond teaching responsibilities.

- *Engagement strategies* are actions and behaviors that facilitate faculty professional growth (Thirolf, 2017). For this study, engagement strategies were focused on professional growth in the areas of student success initiatives at the college.
- *Faculty identity* refers to self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective that contribute to self-understanding (Kelchtermans, 2009).

Chapter Summary

The focus of the community college mission to improve student outcomes calls for broad engagement of both full-time and adjunct faculty. This chapter included a description of the statement of the problem related to adjunct faculty engagement, the purpose of the study, the research questions guiding the study, and the significance of the study. In addition, Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement and Gappa and Leslie's (1993) recommendations for improving the status of adjunct faculty were introduced as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks to inform the research.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of this dissertation contains a description of the problem, its significance to community colleges and student success, and a brief description of the research study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review of themes and theoretical and conceptual frameworks related to the engagement of adjunct faculty in the community college environment. Chapter 3 details the qualitative study methodology. Chapter 4 describes and analyzes the study's findings. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the entire study and includes conclusions, implications, and recommendations from the study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Scholars and practitioners have acknowledged that adjunct faculty are a significant component of the faculty base due to the considerable number of adjunct faculty employed at community colleges and universities across the nation (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Roueche et al., 1995). Acknowledging the nature of the faculty composition, Kezar and Sam (2010) stated, “We can no longer continue to operate according to the perceived status quo, pretending that tenured faculty are the mainline faculty of the academy” (p. 3). With that declaration in mind, the purpose of this study was to (a) examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and (b) understand adjunct faculty members’ perceptions of these strategies.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the literature search process and an overview of theoretical and conceptual frameworks related to engagement. A review of relevant literature themes is provided, including understanding adjunct faculty identity, adjunct faculty involvement in the mission, developing fair and equitable employment practices, and investing in human resources. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion on the gap identified in the literature and a chapter summary.

Literature Search Process

The information in this chapter was gathered from a variety of databases including Education Full Text, Educational Resources Information Center (i.e., ERIC), APA PsycInfo, and ProQuest Dissertations. Both extant and current literature have been included and analyzed to demonstrate the depth and scope of literature related to the dissertation topic. Literature sources included peer-reviewed journals, books, higher education articles, dissertations, reports, and websites. Keywords and phrases searched included *adjunct faculty*, *part-time faculty*, *contingent*

faculty, community colleges, engagement, identity, professional development, student success, orientation, compensation, work conditions, adjunct perceptions, and 2-year colleges.

Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks provide a lens for viewing an area of interest more acutely (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Both theoretical and conceptual frameworks can provide guidance to inform research methodologies, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings in research studies. The sections that follow describe the theoretical and conceptual frameworks explored in this study.

Kahn's Theory of Employee Engagement

In his seminal work on employee engagement, Kahn (1990) introduced the concept of employee engagement, defining engagement as the “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles” (p. 694). Kahn proposed people choose to use varying degrees of self in work and personal experiences based on temporary states that influence their motivations. By researching employees’ perceptions of self, the work, and its contexts in two diverse work settings, Kahn concluded there are psychological conditions contributing to people either engaging or disengaging at work.

In the first research setting at a summer camp in the West Indies, Kahn (1990) acted as both a participant and observer in the research because he was employed at the camp. Through document analysis, observation, informal conversations, and interviews, he looked for examples of engagement or disengagement and explanations for either behavior. In his observations, he noted the camp represented a temporary setting where employees only worked during the summer. Kahn also observed the camp had little administrative hierarchy. In this setting, Kahn interviewed 16 counselors who were an average age of 25.5 years old. These employees reported

work–life balance on the job was blurred due to the constant nature of caregiving required while simultaneously living and working at the camp.

In the second research setting, Kahn (1990) acted as an outside researcher at an architectural firm in the northeastern United States. Building on work from the first setting, Kahn conducted in-depth interviews seeking examples of when participants chose to engage or disengage and explanations for their behavior. Although the summer camp was considered a temporary workplace, the architectural firm served as a permanent work setting with a traditional management hierarchy. Kahn conducted interviews with 16 designers who were an average age of 34.3 years old. These employees noted the tempo of work varied greatly and would ebb and flow with the number of architectural projects worked on by the firm.

Results of the research from two diverse work settings led to the creation of Kahn's (1990) theory on employee engagement. Kahn's findings indicated meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability of resources contribute to employee engagement. Employees experience meaningfulness when they feel their efforts are valued and valuable. Leaders contribute to meaningfulness by defining employee roles, creating positive work interactions, and clarifying task characteristics. Psychological safety is experienced when employees can be their authentic self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or their career. Leaders enhance psychological safety by being supportive, creating positive group dynamics, and defining cultural norms. According to Kahn, availability of resources is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage. Leaders ensure employees have availability of resources by being aware of employee needs and seeking to find solutions to address those needs. Kahn concluded these three psychological conditions (i.e., meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability of resources) interact with employees'

roles to create temporary states influencing their choice to further engage or disengage in their work settings.

Research Inspired by Kahn's Work on Employee Engagement

May et al. (2004) empirically tested Kahn's (1990) theory. Results of May et al.'s research found Kahn's three psychological conditions of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability were significantly related to engagement. Meaningfulness had the strongest relation to employee engagement. Job enrichment and role fit were positive predictors of meaningfulness. Supportive relationships with coworkers and supervisors were positive predictors of psychological safety. Availability of resources was also related to engagement; however, participation in activities outside the organization that may present time conflicts for employees was a negative predictor related to physical, emotional, or psychological availability.

Although Kahn's research introduced the idea of employee engagement in 1990, the topic of employee engagement remained relatively dormant for about 20 years after this publication (Saks & Gruman, 2014). However, the body of literature on engagement expanded after 2010. Furthermore, at the time of the study, Kahn's work was cited more than 3,300 times, according to the count provided in ProQuest APA PsycInfo. Saks and Gruman (2014) noted two reasons more recent attention on engagement is not surprising. First, employee engagement has been linked as a key factor for an organization's success and competitive advantage (Crawford et al., 2010; Harter et al., 2002). Kahn's (1992) work also found high levels of engagement led to positive outcomes for individuals and organizations. Second, employee engagement declined during the years from 2000 – 2022 (Bates, 2004; Harter, 2022; Richman, 2006). A Gallup poll of 15,091 employees in the United States highlighted this downward trend, stating, "Employee engagement took another step backward during the second quarter of 2022" (Harter, 2022, p. 1),

with the proportion of engaged workers at only 32%, which was the lowest rate in more than a decade.

More than 30 years after Kahn's (1990) initial publication, engagement continues to be a timely and relevant topic. Seeking to develop a model to help community colleges support their adjunct faculty, Thirolf (2017) created an inclusive model of faculty engagement. Thirolf acknowledged engaging adjunct faculty would require actions on the institutions' part with a clear understanding of the perspective of adjunct faculty. The model proposed the alignment of faculty identity with comprehensive engagement strategies can contribute to positive outcomes for adjunct faculty members, institutions, and students. In addition to incorporating elements of Kahn's work on employee engagement, Thirolf's model was also inspired by Roueche et al. (1995) and Tinto (1993). Thirolf emphasized the importance of colleges using both academic and social engagement strategies to engage adjunct faculty, which follows the strategies Tinto described to engage students. Thirolf also noted the work of Roueche et al. on adjunct faculty integration contributed to the ideas in her model regarding communication, socialization, and participation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on research from Gappa and Leslie (1993). Gappa and Leslie conducted their research for their book by interviewing 467 adjunct faculty members, full-time faculty members, chairs, deans, and chief academic officers at 18 community colleges and universities in Washington, D.C., Kentucky, Illinois, Ohio, Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont, and California. Gappa and Leslie noted institutions had a lack of intentional planning for the effective use of adjunct faculty and a sentiment by adjunct faculty that they were exploited by their institutions. Based on their

research, Gappa and Leslie provided 43 recommendations to improve policies and practices to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives (see Appendix B). Recommendations were grouped into three chapters categorized into broad themes, including: (a) using adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives, (b) developing fair employment policies and practices, and (c) investing in human resources.

In the first broad theme, Gappa and Leslie (1993) discussed recommendations for using adjunct faculty to achieve educational outcomes. They stated institutions need to move away from a reactionary stance where adjunct faculty are temporarily used to overcome situations when enrollment demands are greater than can be handled by existing faculty. Instead, Gappa and Leslie recommended adjunct faculty be proactively incorporated into the staffing plan by determining what specific needs adjunct faculty can fill to strategically meet academic program objectives. Intentionally incorporating adjunct faculty into the staffing plan would maximize the specific skills, knowledge, and experience adjunct faculty contribute to the work of the college. In addition, Gappa and Leslie recommended periodic reviews of the use of adjunct faculty to ensure the mission is still being met effectively.

In the second broad theme, Gappa and Leslie (1993) provided recommendations for developing fair employment practices and policies for adjunct faculty. Their recommendations were based on the premise that adjunct faculty are an important part of the overall faculty base and deserve to be treated accordingly. Gappa and Leslie (1993) recommended adjunct faculty be employed under “parallel but different employment policies that cover the same topics in place for full time faculty” (p. 260). Gappa and Leslie noted effective practices and policies developed for adjunct faculty enable them to do their job well and provide security and rewards necessary to inspire institutional commitment.

The third broad theme addressed by Gappa and Leslie (1993) promoted investing in human resources. Gappa and Leslie stated investing in the future of adjunct faculty members can contribute to a positive return on investment through stronger institutional performance, adjunct faculty commitment, staffing continuity, and teaching capabilities. Recommended practices in this area include use of orientation, professional development and mentoring, performance evaluation, and recognition and reward. In this theme, Gappa and Leslie (1993) concluded, “Institutions should maintain and invest in the capabilities of part-time faculty because that is the most effective way to improve the teaching and learning process” (p. 276).

Consistent throughout their recommendations, Gappa and Leslie (1993) emphasized the importance of institutions embracing change to make adjunct faculty feel successful, valued, and supported within their positions, stating, “A college or university strengthens itself through the wise use of its part-time faculty” (p. 277). They further noted institutions can only realize academic excellence by ensuring all faculty members, including adjunct faculty members, are all working together toward student success. To accomplish this goal, adjunct faculty members must be integrated into the life of the institution with support and resources needed to accomplish their role in the mission.

Gappa and Leslie’s (1993) influential work contained valuable guidelines for improving adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives. Gappa and Leslie stressed the importance of first understanding the elements of adjunct faculty identity, such as self-image and job motivation, to design policies and practices that support their role in the mission effectively. Exploring adjunct faculty identity and the three broad themes of the book helped to inform the direction and structure for the remaining literature review. Based on these areas of focus, the remaining sections of the literature review focus on: (a) adjunct faculty identity, (b) adjunct

faculty involvement in the mission, (c) developing fair and equitable employment practices, and (d) investing in human resources.

Adjunct Faculty Identity

A study often referenced on the topic of adjunct engagement was conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2014). This study examined community colleges' commitments and expectations with contingent faculty by surveying 71,451 faculty and interviewing adjunct faculty members in 32 focus groups. CCCSE's research contributed to understanding the characteristics of adjunct faculty identity.

The CCCSE (2014) report stated adjunct faculty members have become an essential part of the economic model for community colleges, providing an inexpensive way for institutions to meet their needs for additional instructors. At community colleges, adjunct faculty members comprised 70% of all new faculty hires in 2009 and taught 58% of all courses. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP, 2018) reported similar trends in 2018, noting 65% of faculty appointments at 2-year institutions were held by part-time faculty members. Institutions use adjunct faculty members as an inexpensive way to deliver instruction; however, colleges need to ensure this model serves students well (CCCSE, 2014). CCCSE noted the nature of contingency associated with adjunct faculty members often leads to a transactional relationship in which adjunct faculty are expected to do little beyond showing up to teach their classes and submitting final grades at the end of a term. As a significant group in the faculty base, seeking to understand the identity of adjunct faculty members is critical to improve adjunct faculty engagement and the goal of student success.

Tucker (1993) attempted to describe the adjunct faculty profile by defining seven types of part-time instructors, categorized as: (a) full mooners who supplement their full-time

employment by working an additional part-time job, (b) graduate students, (c) hopeful full-timers, (d) part mooners who hold multiple part-time jobs, (e) homeworkers who are not seeking full-time work due to other family responsibilities, (f) semiretireds, and (g) part-unknowners who fall outside the definitions of the other six categories. In further attempts to develop a profile of adjunct faculty, Gappa and Leslie (1993) found adjunct faculty members teach for a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. They grouped adjunct faculty in four categories, including: (a) professionals, specialists, or experts having altruistic desire to help others; (b) career enders; (c) freelancers who work at a variety of jobs; and (d) aspiring academics seeking full-time faculty status. Gappa and Leslie noted most adjunct faculty members at community colleges hold at least one master's degree and extensive work experience. Gappa and Leslie also indicated many adjunct faculty members express excitement for teaching while also describing dissatisfaction with some conditions of employment.

Research conducted at six Achieving the Dream (ATD, 2019) leader colleges found many of the same characteristics in their profile of adjunct faculty. ATD indicated adjunct faculty members come to institutions with a variety of goals, experiences, and reasons for seeking part-time faculty employment. ATD also found a few distinctions from other studies, noting some adjunct faculty members simultaneously hold full-time administrative positions at the same institution where they teach. Other adjunct faculty, referred to as freeway fliers by CCCSE (2014), work on multiple campuses piecing together a work schedule from multiple institutions (ATD, 2019). ATD concluded understanding adjunct faculty identity is important to understand what these employees need to be successful and feel engaged in the college community.

ATD (2019) recommended institutions work to understand their adjunct faculty identity to best address their needs. Wagoner (2019) stated gaining this understanding can be difficult, noting data on adjunct employees are difficult to disaggregate. Wagoner stated the biggest distinction in groups of adjunct faculty members is whether they are seeking full-time employment at the college or not. However, as noted, other authors have endeavored to describe the identity, motivations, and experiences of individuals who choose to work as adjunct faculty (ATD, 2019; CCCSE, 2014; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Tucker, 1993).

Thirolf (2017) noted the importance of aligning faculty identity with engagement strategies. Citing organizational and psychological research, Thirolf indicated employee engagement can contribute to positive outcomes for faculty, the institution, and students, stating engaged adjunct faculty members could have enhanced job satisfaction and sense of belonging, organizations could see improved individual employee performance, and students could have increased engagement and outcomes. Gappa and Leslie's (1993) work also noted if colleges better understand and support their adjunct faculty members, there could be great benefits, including improved employee morale, teaching effectiveness, and student outcomes.

Although Thirolf's (2017) model predicted improved outcomes, not all scholars have agreed outcomes of engagement can be predicted clearly. Saks and Gruman (2014) stated, "We know that there are positive relationships between employee engagement and work outcomes; however, we are not in a position to say that employee engagement causes a particular outcome" (p. 171). Even though this statement may be true, there are many ways for community colleges to increase adjunct faculty engagement while potentially contributing to the benefit of the employees, college, and students.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

Another seminal work written on use of adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives was *Strangers in Their Own Land* (Roueche et al., 1995). The book was written with three goals: (a) to review issues related to adjunct faculty, (b) to describe the reliance of community colleges on adjunct faculty, and (c) to highlight successful models for adjunct faculty use and integration. After researching a random sampling of member colleges from the American Association of Community Colleges from 49 states, Roueche et al. (1995) concluded, “Colleges must take serious steps towards improving the utilization and integration of part-time faculty” (p. 154).

Similar to recommendations from Gappa and Leslie (1993), Roueche et al. (1995) recommended hiring adjunct faculty members with a clear purpose and direction tied to the mission and the work of student success. Roueche et al. stated it is the responsibility of institutions to define what the role of the adjunct faculty members will be and how that will contribute to the institutional mission. Additionally, Roueche et al. noted the importance of monitoring and providing feedback on how well adjunct faculty members play their assigned roles in the institutional mission.

The American Association of Community Colleges (2022) created competencies for community college leaders and emphasized leaders must support student success by seeking opportunities to increase retention, access, and success. In the competencies, they provided guidelines for faculty, noting the importance of their active engagement in the institution’s student success agenda. These guidelines included creating a positive classroom environment, using data to drive pedagogy, and participating in transparent program review and assessment of teaching strategies. The competencies also emphasized opportunity exists for individuals in

leadership positions to examine how all faculty members contribute to student success and how the institution can best support their efforts.

Rhoades (2012) stated, emphatically, “Faculty are the linchpins to student success. They are at the center of student success not just as individual pieceworkers in increasingly large classrooms, but as a collective, engaged in various departmental and organizational initiatives to enhance student achievement” (p. 19). Recognizing a gap in student success, CCCSE (2014) reported one area in which colleges must improve is engaging all faculty, including adjunct faculty, to serve students well. The special report concluded the role of part-time faculty members must be strengthened by institutional leadership to improve student outcomes. Commenting on this imperative, CCCSE (2014) stated, “It’s about making sure more students have access to high-impact experiences and faculty who are prepared to engage them in those practices” (p. 24).

Many researchers have examined the effectiveness of adjunct faculty members in their teaching roles and the contributions they make toward student success (Ran & Sanders, 2019; Ran & Xu, 2018; Xu, 2019). Understanding adjunct faculty members’ contributions is important because many students’ initial college experiences may be in a course taught by an adjunct faculty member, which may influence their subsequent academic choices and outcomes (Ran & Xu, 2018). With student success measures focused on retention, completion, and closing achievement gaps, it is important to consider how adjunct faculty members potentially contribute to these outcomes. CCCSE (2014) noted adjunct faculty members report having no role in planning, designing, or facilitating student success experiences, and their skills could be useful in accomplishing this work.

Quantitative research conducted by Bettinger (2010) focused on 1st-year students entering universities in Ohio. Bettinger indicated the relationship of adjunct faculty to student success varies by discipline. Analysis of the data showed taking a class from an adjunct faculty member often increases the number of subsequent courses taken by a student in a given subject and may also increase the likelihood the student majors in the subject. Data also suggested adjunct instructors are especially effective in fields tied more directly to a specific profession, such as education and engineering.

Ran and Xu (2018) conducted a quantitative study to examine the extent to which student outcomes varied based on the instructor's employment status and found results that differed from Bettinger (2010). In addition to considerations of part- and full-time status, Ran and Xu differentiated adjunct faculty members by how long they had been at their institutions. Examining data sets of 155,904 students from both 2- and 4-year institutions, results indicated being taught by adjunct faculty members had a positive relationship on students' course grades in initial classes but a negative relationship with subsequent course enrollment, especially when the adjunct faculty members did not have long-term employment with the college.

Xu (2019) conducted further research to understand adjunct faculty members' contributions in community colleges. Xu analyzed transcript data for 150,000 students enrolled from 2004–2009 to explore how taking an initial course with a part-time faculty member was related to student performance in later courses. Results were similar to Ran and Xu's (2018) findings, and indicated adjunct faculty are associated with higher grades in initial courses but poorer performance in subsequent courses. Ran and Sanders (2019) also conducted a quantitative study on the relationship of adjunct faculty in student success, specifically in developmental and gateway courses at six ATD leader colleges. Ran and Sanders's findings from institutional data

and a survey administered to 482 respondents showed students with part-time instructors were less likely to enroll in subsequent courses even if they were successful in the initial course taught by the adjunct faculty member. Ran and Sanders concluded a lack of resources and institutional knowledge may prevent adjunct faculty members from engaging effectively with their students in a way that would encourage retention and completion.

According to ATD (2019), it is important to use institutional data to track success measures for students taught by adjunct faculty members so refinements can be made to include adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. Gappa and Leslie (1993) noted teaching quality and effectiveness from adjunct faculty members was generally high, stating adjunct faculty members are, for the most part, “superbly qualified for their teaching assignments, highly committed, and conscientious about their teaching assignments” (p. 6). Although performance of adjunct faculty members varied from one instructor to the next, Gappa and Leslie (1993) boldly claimed adjunct faculty members are often faulted for elements outside their control “in a system where they are the victims of shortsighted and exploitive practices” (p. 6).

Analyzing the relationship of adjunct faculty members and student success is a critical step for beginning to improve conditions for engagement. As noted by ATD (2019), “When colleges create the appropriate conditions for full-time and adjunct faculty to be meaningfully engaged in student success work, they thrive in these roles and their students benefit” (p. 19). By understanding how adjunct faculty members contribute to retention and completion, community colleges can design systems to help improve adjunct engagement and effectiveness in student success initiatives.

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

Several authors have highlighted the importance of designing fair and equitable employment policies that support adjunct faculty members. For example, Kezar (2012) noted concerns about the engagement of adjunct faculty members, stating they were often ignored by policymakers, the college, and scholars. The CCCSE (2014) report stated community colleges need to focus on how all faculty members, including adjunct faculty members, are involved in discussions about policies and practices. Thirolf (2013) found adopting practices and policies to address the needs of adjunct faculty members has a positive influence on how adjunct faculty members perceive their own value to the institution. Furthermore, Ran and Sanders (2019) indicated policies and practices that create adjunct faculty members' working conditions are more important to student outcomes than part-time instructors' teaching practices.

Wagoner (2019) reviewed data on part-time faculty from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and applied an ethical framework to evaluate decisions college leaders face in using adjunct faculty. The framework by Wood and Hilton (2012) considered ethical dilemmas under five lenses: (a) ethics of justice, (b) critique, (c) care, (d) profession, and (e) local community. In the study, Wagoner commented on the lack of new research on part-time faculty needs after 2010, but indicated there were ongoing concerns regarding equity, equality, and fairness for adjunct faculty. Wagoner (2019) stated, "Leaders should seek to understand the differing needs of part-time faculty and apply that knowledge to creating differentiated policies that can better stand up to the criteria of the ethical decision-making framework" (p. 94).

Based on empirical research in higher education, Gappa et al. (2007) developed a vision for improving institutional policies and practices related to faculty. Acknowledging the changing nature of the academic workforce to include more adjunct faculty, their model outlined five

fundamental aspects of work for all faculty members. The first aspect is employment equity, described as fair treatment and access to the tools to do one's job. The second element is flexibility and balance, which allows an individual to maintain satisfying personal and professional lives. The third element is autonomy and academic freedom, which allows an instructor to control their own work. The fourth element is professional growth, defined as the ability to develop new skills and derive meaning from one's work. The fifth element is being a part of supportive and inspiring professional relationships. Gappa et al. concluded it was critical for administration and faculty members to have shared responsibility in addressing elements of policy and practice with respect as a fundamental entitlement for every faculty member. Displaying similarities to the critical elements of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability of resources described in Kahn's (1990) engagement theory, Gappa et al.'s model can be informative when considering improvements to policies and practices for adjunct faculty members in areas such as hiring practices, compensation, benefits, employment contracts, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

CCCSE (2014) reported policies and practices regarding hiring of adjunct faculty members are often haphazard and rushed. Adjunct faculty members are often hired just shortly before a term begins with lack of intentional planning. The CCCSE report stated the hiring process for adjunct faculty members can be less stringent than for full-time faculty, with some leaders indicating they assign adjunct faculty members courses without conducting formal interviews or teaching demonstrations. Roueche et al. (1995) noted the importance of having a clear purpose and consistent implementation of policies and practices for recruiting, selecting, and hiring adjunct faculty members.

Compensation

Attention to policies and practices is needed to address one of the most basic needs of adjunct faculty: adequate compensation. Adjunct faculty members typically work with significantly less pay than their tenure-track counterparts (Jones, 2019). In 2019, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) surveyed 3,076 adjunct faculty members from 2- and 4-year institutions. The AFT report indicated 25% of adjunct faculty members relied on public assistance to survive, and 40% had trouble covering basic household expenses. The AFT report showed one third of adjunct faculty members made less than \$25,000 per year, which placed them under the federal poverty guidelines. CCCSE (2009) also noted the need to include methods for compensating work taking place outside of class hours, such as orientation and professional development. Recognizing adjunct faculty pay as a pressing problem, Gappa and Leslie (1993) cited the need to establish career tracks and a salary with standards for progression. Roueche et al. (1995) also voiced the need for equitable pay schedules when they stated adjunct faculty members deserve access to merit pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and equitable pay for work performed. California State Polytechnic University, Pomona acknowledged concerns about adjunct faculty compensation and worked to overcome the problem by creating intentional opportunities to engage adjunct faculty more fully by taking measures such as compensating for adjunct orientation and offering stipends for adjunct professional development (Guthrie et al., 2019).

Benefits

Lack of benefits for adjunct faculty members has also been recognized as an area in which policies and practices need to be reviewed (CCCSE, 2014). Focus groups participating in the CCCSE (2014) survey indicated health insurance was one specific benefit that was greatly

needed. The AFT conducted a survey and reported fewer than half of adjunct faculty respondents had access to employer-provided health care, and 45% of adjunct faculty members put off needed health care due to cost (Flaherty, 2020). Community College of Philadelphia (n.d.) addressed some of the health insurance needs by allowing adjunct faculty members to receive many benefits through the college and union. Some of the benefits for adjunct faculty members at Community College of Philadelphia include medical, dental, drug, and life insurance coverage, tuition reimbursement, and professional development funds for travel. Maricopa County Community College District (2012) also made their benefits package more enticing by offering tuition reimbursement for adjunct faculty members.

Employment Contracts

Even if concerns over adequate compensation and benefits are addressed, adjunct faculty members have also expressed further concerns about the stability and nature of their employment contracts. The CCCSE (2014) report noted 75% of adjunct faculty members only had secure employment for one term at a time with little notice of future assignments, which created financial stress and uncertainty in their lives. CCCSE also indicated only 5% of adjunct faculty members had security associated with tenure compared with 86% of full-time faculty who had tenure or were in a tenure-track position that allowed them to work toward tenure status.

Six colleges participated in the 2-year ATD (2019) project titled Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement. The project goal was to develop and implement strategies to support adjunct faculty members in improving student outcomes. Of the six colleges participating in the project, some made efforts to improve the status of adjunct faculty members by offering employment contracts with longer term options and priority course selection for adjunct faculty members. One of the six colleges, Harper College, made improvements to their

contracts by creating a two-tier status in which adjunct faculty members could move to Level 2 by demonstrating ongoing professional development and institutional service. Higher status benefits adjunct faculty members by increasing compensation and guaranteeing an interview for full-time positions for which they meet minimum requirements.

Working Conditions

Beyond the needs of compensation, benefits, and employment contracts, opportunities exist for colleges to examine policies and practices related to improving working conditions of adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty members often do not have access to office space, clerical support, technical support, or space for meeting with students (CCCSE, 2009, 2014). Patrick and Henry Community College and Community College of Philadelphia were among the six colleges who worked to improve working conditions as part of the ATD (2019) project. To assist adjunct faculty members with their needs in this area, Patrick and Henry Community College delivered packages of basic office supplies to their adjunct faculty members. Community College of Philadelphia acknowledged the importance of adjunct faculty members having a designated space to work and collaborate with colleagues to refurbish underused facilities to house an adjunct center.

Ensuring employment policies and practices for adjunct faculty members are fair and equitable is important to the overall success of the institutional mission. In a study of student transcript data obtained from 2- and 4-year institutions in Arkansas, Zhu (2021) stated, “Teaching quality is sensitive to institutional treatment of instructors” (p. 3). Zhu concluded differences in teaching quality between adjunct and full-time faculty members could stem from differences in factors such as pay, benefits, working conditions, or institutional engagement. By following Gappa and Leslie’s (1993) recommendation to offer parallel but different policies and

practices addressing the same topics for both full-time and adjunct faculty members, institutions could contribute to creating positive conditions to increase adjunct faculty engagement and student success.

Investing in Human Resources

Many researchers have provided recommendations for institutions to invest in the futures of their adjunct faculty. Recommendations for engaging part-time faculty from CCCSE (2014) mirrored the guidelines from Gappa and Leslie (1993) and Roueche et al. (1995), and stated strategies to engage adjunct faculty members vary at different institutions but could include orientation, professional development, evaluations, and monetary and nonmonetary recognitions. Thirolf's (2015) research also provided guidance on including adjunct faculty members in the institutional mission. In Thirolf's study, adjunct faculty members at a community college in the Midwest reported several negative conditions, including feeling isolated, lack of professional development, and lack of engagement at the institution. Conclusions of Thirolf's research indicated effective strategies for adjunct faculty engagement include dedicated support and communication, professional development opportunities, and thoughtful recognition and reward.

ATD (2019) also noted the importance of investing in adjunct faculty in *Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement: A Practitioner's Guide*. The foundation for this publication was four principles ATD developed, including: (a) inspire faculty engagement, (b) develop a culture of engagement, (c) provide resources and recognition to inspire engagement, and (d) expect continuous engagement. From research associated with this publication, six ATD leader colleges developed strategies to create appropriate conditions for adjunct faculty members to be involved meaningfully in student success work. Strategies designed to address adjunct needs included orientation, professional development, and

recognition and reward for performance. The ATD (2019) report stated, “Investments in full-time and adjunct faculty engagement and professional learning are ultimately investments in our students’ success” (p. 19).

Orientation

An orientation process, including an introduction to the institution, employment policies, and types of academic support available to students, is important for all faculty (Kezar & Maxey, 2013). CCCSE (2019), Gappa and Leslie (1993), and Roueche et al. (1995) recommended intentional planning and inclusion of adjunct faculty members in the orientation process. Roueche et al. stated mandatory orientations are critical to convey important information to adjunct faculty members about the institution, its expectations, and its students. In addition, orientation can set the stage by encouraging ongoing professional development and collaborative mentoring relationships to provide greater insight in the teaching discipline and instructional strategies. Furthermore, Roueche et al. noted the importance of providing a faculty handbook at orientation to inform new adjunct faculty members of institutional policies, support services, and expectations.

Fischer (2020) emphasized the importance of providing adjunct faculty orientations noting orientation was a first step of introducing adjunct faculty members to the college mission. Fischer examined protocols for adjunct faculty at two institutions using either a centralized, college-wide approach for onboarding or a module-based training in a learning management system. The first university used a college-wide approach to onboard adjunct faculty members to provide a consistent learning experience while reducing the amount of time required for supervisors to orient adjunct faculty. They provided a 3-hour orientation and access to a faculty resource database. The second university used module-based training in a learning management

system. In both cases, adjunct faculty members were encouraged to meet with department faculty for further development. Fischer concluded orientations created an opportunity to engage adjunct faculty members with the mission of the college but required collaboration of faculty, chairs, human resources, and administration to determine the most effective implementation of the orientation.

Guthrie et al. (2019) examined California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's efforts to include adjunct faculty members more intentionally in student success initiatives. The university provided compensation for adjunct faculty members to attend orientation. As part of this orientation process, adjunct faculty members were included in a 1st-year experience class to learn about support systems and resources available to students. The focus of the 1st-year experience class was to develop adjunct faculty to contribute positively to student outcomes while also improving adjunct faculty members' job satisfaction. Guthrie et al. concluded adjunct faculty members play a significant role in student success but are often offered minimal guidance. By having a comprehensive orientation program for which adjunct faculty members could receive compensation, they increased adjunct faculty member participation and knowledge of student success initiatives. Guthrie et al. also noted having mandatory orientations, as Roueche et al. (1995) recommended, would strengthen the awareness of student success goals further.

Recognizing the difficulty of coordinating events at times convenient for adjunct faculty members' schedules, institutions have explored alternative formats for orientations (Kezar & Maxey, 2013). Guthrie et al. (2019) noted online orientations could be a viable option for orienting adjunct faculty members to student success goals; however, not all research supports this option. Wicks et al. (2020) researched the process of using an institution's learning

management system to meet community colleges' needs to deliver orientation online for adjunct faculty members. Wicks et al. recruited 249 adjunct faculty members from a midwestern community college to take part in a pre- and post-test intervention. Quantitative data analysis showed little change between the pre- and post-test, revealing the virtual orientation did not increase perceptions effectively of information awareness or institutional connectedness. Although some adjunct faculty members reported enhanced connection to the institution when they participated in the intervention, Wicks et al. concluded additional research was needed to implement online orientations effectively that promoted both information awareness and institutional connectedness.

Several community colleges have found alternative ways to successfully implement orientations for adjunct faculty (CCCSE, 2014). Valencia College in Florida offered orientation for all new faculty members, including adjunct faculty members, each fall semester to address strategies for teaching and learning. Their orientation process extended throughout the 1st year, with inclusion of a 6-week course for participants to gain skills in creating student-centered lessons. At Richland College, adjunct faculty members were introduced to the college's vision, mission, and values and asked to sign a confirmation of understanding outlining expectations for professional growth. At Community College of Vermont, where 100% of faculty members were part time, a new hire checklist and orientation template ensured all new faculty members received access to quality information at the time of hire. Community College of Philadelphia used a different strategy to incorporate a two-part orientation in their Adjunct Institute (ATD, 2019). The first part consisted of information related to college priorities, policies, and resources and was delivered at the start of the semester. The second part, held at the end of the semester, debriefed their 1st-semester experience and lessons learned for future terms.

Professional Development

Roueche et al. (1995) recommended all adjunct faculty members participate in mandatory professional development. Noting faculty members must be well-informed in pedagogy and their teaching discipline to ensure student success, Roueche et al. recommended expectations for teaching performance for part-time faculty members mirror expectations for full-time faculty members. To accommodate the unique teaching schedules of adjunct faculty members, Roueche et al. suggested training must be offered at times and in manners that are convenient and effective for adjunct faculty members. Roueche et al. found improvements in adjunct faculty members' teaching performance and relations with full-time colleagues when institutions required adjunct faculty members to engage in professional development.

In a report to the National Commission on Higher Education (Rhoades, 2012) commented on the lack of professional development for adjunct faculty members, stating there is “no mechanism for preparing them to teach” (p. 14). Kezar and Maxey (2013) stated professional development workshops on pedagogy and high-impact teaching practices are offered at most campuses; however, adjunct faculty members may not be encouraged or even allowed to attend. Kezar and Maxey further noted workshops are often scheduled at times when adjunct faculty members are teaching or not on campus. Just prior to the report to the NCHE, Dolan (2011) indicated adjunct faculty members felt there was a lack of opportunity for skill development in their own institution. Fain (2014) also noted adjunct faculty members feel isolated from opportunities for professional development and mentoring from full-time faculty, which contribute to their lack of familiarity with the resources available to both students and faculty.

ATD (2022) created a cohort-based pilot program to emphasize the importance of using professional development to build faculty engagement and student success. The program used

cross-functional teams to provide professional development to full-time and adjunct faculty members in the ATD network of colleges. Training focused on high-impact, evidence-based instructional practices. Teams worked collaboratively with their chief academic officers and national professional development leaders to create a framework for training aligned with their campus needs and goals. After planning and implementation was complete, the program had positive feedback with 96% of faculty participants from five cohorts agreeing or strongly agreeing the process was beneficial for identifying campus strategies to enhance student success.

Guilford Technical Community College recognized the need to implement professional development to effectively prepare adjunct faculty members for their roles (Ellis, 2012). In 1999, the college began a faculty-in-training model by creating a partnership with the University of North Carolina–Greensboro to allow graduate students to begin exploring a career as an instructor at a community college. Participants in the training received a stipend and a 2-semester appointment, contingent on successful performance. During the appointment, participants taught two classes per semester while engaging in weekly professional development and mentoring activities. In addition, participants committed to serve the college for an additional 3 hours per week in areas such as tutoring, committee work, or developing online curriculum. Due to the success of the program with graduate students, the faculty-in-training model was later expanded to allow other applicants the opportunity to gain teaching experience and an understanding of the community college environment. Participants noted the professional development was valuable to promote the development of effective teaching skills and their faculty identity in the community college (Ellis, 2012).

Kelly (2013) also reported on the success of implementing professional development for adjunct faculty at St. Louis Community College–Meramec. Having received low satisfaction

scores on a student survey, the college decided to create professional development opportunities to engage faculty in improving courses. With 16 full-time faculty members and 53 adjunct faculty members, the college experimented with training sessions at lunchtime and on the weekend, covering Bloom's taxonomy and other relevant pedagogical techniques. Faculty members responded they liked being recognized as part of a discipline team in the larger department. Kelly noted initiatives were successful primarily because they were faculty led and created a sense of community between adjunct and full-time faculty members.

Potts (2021) conducted a qualitative, single-site case study to examine the lived experiences of four adjunct faculty members participating in professional development at a large, urban university. They examined the relationship between participants' motivations, professional development, and institutional engagement. Results of the study indicated availability of resources and interactions with colleagues positively contributed to work experiences of the participating adjunct faculty members. Potts's study aligned with the framework of Kahn (1990), which emphasized the importance of availability of resources and psychological safety developed by having strong group dynamics.

Institutions have taken different approaches to designing effective professional development programs targeting adjunct faculty. William Rainey Harper College created the Center for Adjunct Faculty Engagement, which offered more than 11 workshops based on needs reported by adjunct faculty members (CCCSE, 2014). Although their adjunct faculty members did not receive compensation to participate in the training, many were later recruited to teach workshops for their peers. In contrast, Richland College required adjunct faculty members to complete 19 hours of mandatory professional development in the 1st year of employment and paid stipends of \$23 per hour for participation in training related to major college initiatives such

as ATD (CCCSE, 2014). Mandatory professional development was in alignment with Roueche et al.'s (1995) recommendations.

In the CCCSE (2014) report, adjunct faculty members reported the most valuable professional development was delivered by their peers. As one form of professional development, mentoring can serve as a socialization process, influencing how connected a faculty member feels to the institution and their colleagues. Patrick and Henry Community College implemented a mentoring program successfully for new adjunct faculty members to assist with learning college practices and culture (ATD, 2019). Coastal Carolina Community College also used a combination of strategies to engage adjunct faculty members by offering the Instructors Academy to convey practical teaching techniques and mentoring to allow adjunct faculty members avenues to set goals, review progress, and receive assistance from full-time faculty mentors (CCCSE, 2014). However, the CCCSE report also stated institutions must monitor the quality of mentoring because experiences are not consistent even in departments at the same college.

Support and Communication

Frequent and consistent communication with adjunct faculty members can ensure they have the support critical to their success in the classroom (CCCSE, 2009; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Roueche et al. (1995) stated adjunct faculty members “should not be expected to exist as a separate community, as shadows on the periphery of the institution” (p. 456). To incorporate adjunct faculty members in the life of the institution and increase communication, Roueche et al. recommended inviting adjunct faculty members to departmental meetings, college activities, and college committees. Roueche et al. further highlighted the importance of involving adjunct

faculty members in communication related to student success, such as curriculum design and student support.

Kezar and Maxey (2013) stated many adjunct faculty members communicated they do not have access to basic support and resources, such as textbooks, identification cards, computers, photocopiers, or basic office supplies. When institutions receive this type of constructive feedback from adjunct faculty, they have the opportunity to create solutions to address the needs. Ran and Sanders (2019) demonstrated the importance of communicating with adjunct faculty members to determine necessary support. Results of Ran and Sanders's faculty survey indicated part-time faculty members had less knowledge about both academic and nonacademic services, which hindered their ability to serve students effectively.

Just as institutions can benefit from understanding their adjunct faculty needs, adjunct faculty members can benefit by having a clear understanding of students they serve and initiatives at work to improve student outcomes (ATD, 2019). For this reason, it is critical institutions communicate information about student outcomes and improving student success to adjunct faculty members. A report by CCCSE (2009) noted adjunct faculty members are far less likely than full-time faculty members to spend time outside class with students; however, 58% of adjunct faculty members reported they advised or worked with students outside normal class hours. Each interaction an adjunct faculty member has with a student is an opportunity to ensure students have the support needed to be successful.

Dolan (2011) conducted qualitative research using grounded theory to study the experiences of 28 online adjunct faculty members working at a university. The study's purpose was to determine if increased communication with online adjunct faculty members would increase their motivation and job performance. Dolan demonstrated adjunct faculty members felt

they were not receiving enough communication from their institution, and they also voiced concerns they were not included in critical conversations happening at the college. Dolan concluded providing additional face-to-face communication with adjunct faculty members improved their motivation, skills, and loyalty to the institution.

Studies have demonstrated effective support and communication with adjunct faculty can lead to positive outcomes. For example, Guthrie et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of effective communication, noting providing student outcome data and resources to adjunct faculty members were linked to positive gains in student success and increased adjunct faculty member engagement with the institutional mission. In an online survey used by Reneau et al. (2018), adjunct faculty members in online nursing programs reported support and communication by administration was one of the most important factors contributing to their engagement. In addition, adjunct faculty members' engagement increased when they received clear communication regarding course objectives prior to the start of new academic terms. Patrick and Henry Community College found providing adjunct faculty members with information regarding registration procedures during peak enrollment periods improved adjunct faculty members' ability to assist students (ATD, 2019).

Institutions have used innovative methods to ensure adjunct faculty receive strong support and communication. Richland College created a work area called the Adjunct Faculty Center and Evening/Weekend Support Services (CCCSE, 2014); this area, known as ACCESS, was created to be a fully equipped center providing information, direction, and instructional support to adjunct faculty members. Being open with extended hours 6 days per week provided adjunct faculty members support even if they were assigned to teach in the evenings or weekends when other departmental employees might not be on campus. Similarly, North Central Michigan

College recognized the need for enhanced support and communication with adjunct faculty members and responded by creating a new position of director of adjunct faculty. The director of adjunct faculty position served as a universal point of contact for all adjunct faculty members by acting as a liaison or advocate to address their pressing needs (CCCSE, 2014).

Gappa and Leslie (1993) recommended promoting communication and collegiality with adjunct faculty members as one way to invest in human resources. In addition to formal modes of communication, Gappa and Leslie stated collegiality can be enhanced by encouraging participation in informal conversations and social events. CCCSE (2014) also recommended providing a variety of avenues for adjunct faculty members to build connections with a network of colleagues. Roueche (1995) noted engagement with colleagues was important to create support structures to integrate adjunct faculty members into the life of the institution.

Performance Evaluations

Periodic evaluation of adjunct faculty member performance is critical to provide support for improvement (ATD, 2019; CCCSE, 2014; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Roueche et al., 1995). Roueche et al. (1995) emphasized the importance of using a multidimensional design to evaluate adjunct faculty that could include a combination of self-evaluations, peer evaluations, student evaluations, and supervisor evaluations. Roueche et al. further noted the importance of having clear expectations communicated to adjunct faculty members at the beginning of their employment. Clear expectations serve as the basis for the evaluative criteria for faculty members; however, some adjunct faculty members reported never getting information about what their role specifically was (CCCSE, 2014). Once adjunct faculty members' performances are evaluated, professional development can be recommended to strengthen areas of weakness (Roueche et al., 1995). Gappa and Leslie (1993) came to a similar conclusion, noting

performance evaluations should be used as a tool to improve adjunct faculty members' teaching skills rather than solely used for decision making about the extension of future employment contracts.

Rhoades (2012) found student evaluations are a mechanism often used to evaluate adjunct faculty members. However, Rhoades emphasized problems may be encountered if adjunct faculty members' future assignments are based solely on opinions stated in student evaluations. Kezar (2013) found adjunct faculty members often view the performance evaluation process with skepticism knowing their job security is already unstable, and results of the evaluation process might hinder their next job assignment.

To evaluate an alternative method of performance evaluation, Simonds et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods study to determine how peer course review could be used to evaluate performance and improve collegiality. Four full-time faculty members partnered with four adjunct faculty members to gain a shared understanding of the peer-review process. All faculty members noted their relationships benefited from frequent communication transpiring during the process. Adjunct faculty members also noted they enjoyed interacting with full-time faculty members in a peer role. Simonds et al.'s findings indicated peer review was an effective method for evaluating performance but also served as a way for full-time and adjunct faculty members to interact with a structured purpose that increased collegiality, professional learning, and the adjunct faculty experience.

CCCSE (2019) concluded students' educational experiences are contingent on their instructor's level of performance, suggesting consistent and frequent use of evaluations are critical for implementing improvements in instruction. In addition to simply evaluating adjunct

faculty performance to guide improvement, ATD (2019) and CCCSE (2014) recommended institutions provide recognition and reward for performance excellence.

Recognition and Reward

Recognition and reward for performance are important tools for engaging adjunct faculty members and can be implemented through monetary or nonmonetary forms of recognition (CCCSE, 2014). Being recognized and rewarded for performance is important to adjunct faculty members; however, Dolan (2011) stated adjunct faculty members voiced concerns their work experiences were not being recognized as significant contributions in the classroom. To address this concern, several community colleges have made strides in providing recognition to adjunct faculty. Phoenix College (2022), in the Maricopa Community College system, recognizes longevity of service for adjunct faculty members who have worked a minimum of 10 semesters. Rio Salado College (2022), also in the Maricopa Community College system, recognizes adjunct faculty member excellence at a special event hosted by the college president with awards for outstanding contributions in student assessment and teaching. Similarly, Moraine Valley Community College (2022) recognizes outstanding performance through their Adjunct Professor of the Year Award.

Colleges have also found other ways to recognize the importance of their adjunct faculty. Community College of Philadelphia (n.d.) provides recognition to adjunct faculty members on their website through adjunct snapshots that spotlight different adjunct faculty members and the special value each individual brings to the college. Lone Star College (2022) has an adjunct faculty appreciation week culminating in an evening event recognizing winners of their Adjunct Faculty Excellence Awards and participants in their Adjunct Certification Program. Lone Star College also established an Adjunct Faculty Excellence Committee dedicated to ensuring adjunct

faculty member contributions are recognized in the college community. Participants in the CCCSE (2014) survey noted even small tokens of recognition, like lapel pins, were appreciated and worn as a badge of honor for their institutional service.

Summary

A review of the literature makes it clear adjunct faculty members have been a critical component in the faculty base at community colleges for decades. However, heightened focus on the need to improve student success has increased the importance of effectively engaging adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. By examining policies and practices for adjunct faculty member engagement and understanding the perceptions of adjunct faculty members in a community college system, institutions can design reforms to enhance adjunct faculty member engagement in student success initiatives.

The most influential literature on engaging adjunct faculty in student success initiatives was found in the work of ATD (2019), CCCSE (2014), Gappa and Leslie (1993), and Roueche et al. (1995). Although the earliest works provide good foundational information on the need for increased engagement of adjunct faculty members, almost 30 years had passed by the time of this study and much has changed in higher education during that time. The CCCSE (2014) report highlighted single strategies used at different colleges to engage adjunct faculty, and the ATD (2019) project focused on piloting multiple strategies in a limited number of departments at only six institutions. Although reports from ATD (2019) and CCCSE (2014) are much more current and provide quality information on current strategies for adjunct faculty engagement, a gap exists and highlights a need for additional research.

This current study addressed the identified gap by researching strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system. Data was

gathered to understand how a community college system contributes to professional growth of adjunct faculty members by engaging them in initiatives such as guided pathways, analysis of student outcomes, and implementation of teaching and learning strategies that contribute to equitable student outcomes. Adjunct faculty members' perceptions of strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives provided insight on institutional policies and practices related to adjunct faculty and student success. The next chapter provides additional information regarding the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, research questions, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding this study. The methodology used in the study is presented, including the rationale for its selection, research design, study setting and participants, and instrumentation. Information is also presented on data collection processes, sources of data, and methods for data analysis. Finally, the chapter provides information on study quality, ethical considerations, limitations, and a chapter summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies for engaging adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and to understand adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) recommended the purpose of a study reflect the recommendations of other authors for continued exploration of a topic. Thirolf (2017) recommended new research be conducted on engaging adjunct faculty in initiatives to improve student outcomes. Potts (2021) also stated it was imperative to understand the lived experiences of adjunct faculty members to improve conditions that support student success.

Research Questions

Two primary research questions informed this study:

1. What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?
2. What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework used to guide this study is Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Kahn's theory states the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability of resources influence employees' choices to engage or disengage at work. Kahn's theory has been used in many studies on adjunct faculty engagement, including topics such as mentoring (Danaei, 2018), online instruction (Mohabir-McKinley, 2020), perceptions of institutional culture (Seluk, 2020), and servant leadership (Hagan-Short, 2018). Kahn's theory was appropriate to use in this study based on the focus of the research on strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members and their perceptions of these strategies.

The conceptual framework for this study came from recommendations in *The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-Time Faculty* (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Recommendations in this influential book were grouped into three chapters categorized with the following themes: (a) using adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives, (b) developing fair and equitable employment practices, and (c) investing in human resources (see Appendix B). The conceptual framework served to inform the interview protocol and data analysis process, which included specific questions and codes related to the three themes from Gappa and Leslie (1993) and factors from Kahn's (1990) work.

Alignment Table

To conduct effective research, aligning the problem based on the literature findings with the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and methodology is critical. The research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology, and interview

questions were all designed to align and address the specific problem of interest (see Appendix A).

Research Design

This qualitative study used a multisite case study design. A case study design can provide an in-depth investigation and understanding of strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members and their perceptions of those strategies. Qualitative research is effective to understand “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). From qualitative studies, researchers can connect human behavior to environments and provide a rich, thick description by making sense of local practices (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). A qualitative study best aligned with the research questions created to address the problem of interest (see Appendix A).

Lochmiller and Lester (2017) defined a case study as “an approach to qualitative research in which a practitioner scholar focuses on a detailed study of one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 102). This approach was appropriate to study multiple colleges in the boundaries of one community college system. Studying multiple colleges in one community college system allowed for within- and cross-case analysis. Within-case analysis examined data from each college separately (Merriam, 2009). Cross-case analysis allowed for comparisons across the colleges.

Study Setting

The selection of an appropriate setting for the study included specific criteria. First, the institution must be a community college system with several colleges in the system. The second criterion was the community college system participates in a robust initiative aimed at improving student success, such as guided pathways. Finally, the institution must have programs

specifically designed to improve the effectiveness of their adjunct faculty. The community college system chosen for this study met the requirements. The system includes multiple colleges. This criterion allowed comparison of policies and practices that are system wide against those that are college specific. Similarly, it allowed for comparison of adjunct faculty member perspectives at individual colleges in the overall system. Additionally, with many colleges to choose from in the system, a variety of colleges with differing characteristics was studied in the community college system, improving transferability of the findings and conclusions (Merriam, 2009).

Purposeful sampling identified three colleges from the system as study sites based on their student enrollments, student demographics, and the colleges' focus of instruction. The study included a college with a high number of dual-credit students, a college with a focus on online education programs, and a college serving more traditional students primarily interested in earning credits to transfer to a university. A key informant provided information to assist in selecting sites that represented these characteristics found in the colleges in the system.

In addition, the community college system that was chosen is an active participant in guided pathways. Bailey et al. (2015) noted guided pathways is a framework focused on improving college completion and student success by redesigning students' college experiences. Commitment to implementation of guided pathways represents an institution-wide transformation of practices, policies, and structures to improve student success. Having initially implemented guided pathways in a few of the system's colleges, the initiative was expanded to include all colleges in the system. The institution's website demonstrated the college system tracks institutional data related to guided pathways' goals to improve student success on both a system and individual college level.

Finally, the community college system's website indicated a variety of strategies are in place to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. Although the website provided general information on professional development, compensation, and rewards for adjunct faculty members, further research provided insight on use of these strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives.

Study Participants

Study participants included adjunct faculty members from the selected colleges in the community college system who taught at least 2 full semesters in the community college system prior to January 2023. This criterion ensured the adjunct faculty members had the opportunity to experience a variety of strategies for adjunct faculty engagement that would naturally occur over the course of 2 semesters. Purposeful sampling identified participants who constituted a sample from multiple colleges in the community college system. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because it can “best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2014, p. 189).

From the institution's large population of adjunct faculty members, the chosen sample fit the selection criteria. Regarding sample size, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, “In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sample units” (p. 202). To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of study participants, colleges and participant names were identified by pseudonyms. To provide quality data for the research questions in this study, it was estimated a total of 20–30 participants would be interviewed with approximately one third of participants representing each of the three different colleges chosen from the system. Saturation in the data was achieved after 26

participants with a total of 30 participants interviewed. Participant leads were provided by the community college system, and participants were recruited through emails.

In addition, a key informant identified in the community college system assisted with the location of relevant documents and information related to adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives. Yin (2014) noted the importance of key informants in research, stating:

Key informants are often critical to the success of a case study. Such persons not only provide the case study investigator with insights into a matter but also can suggest sources of corroboratory or contrary evidence—and also initiate the access to such sources. (p. 90)

The community college system employs a manager who coordinates adjunct faculty members at the system level, so this person was a key informant.

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were the primary instrumentation. This type of interview started with a list of questions to serve as a guide for the process but also provided the flexibility to ask probing follow-up questions as necessary for clarification (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The interview questions were adapted from themes covered in the report, *Contingent Commitments: Bringing Adjunct Faculty into Focus* from the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2014). Additionally, the interview questions and protocol (see Appendix C) were audited externally by individuals who hold doctoral degrees and extensive work experience in higher education to ensure the dependability of the instrument.

Pilot Study

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) emphasized the importance of conducting a pilot study to test the instrumentation in a study. To test the study's interview protocols and questions, two adjunct

faculty members matching the study's participant criteria agreed to be interviewed for a pilot study. Each of these participants currently works as an adjunct faculty member in a community college setting and has several years' experience of teaching college-level courses. A male adjunct faculty member participated from social sciences, and a female adjunct faculty member participated from health sciences. The participants represented two different ethnicities and two different age groups.

Both participants used the Zoom platform with their cameras turned off for the duration of the recording to protect their confidentiality. In addition, each participant changed their Zoom display name to "pilot" to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity could be maintained in the recordings. Following each interview, participants reflected on the interview protocols and questions to provide feedback on the process.

One participant noted the content and flow of the interview seemed appropriate to meet the purpose of the study and obtain quality data. This participant suggested it could be beneficial to provide future participants a copy of the interview questions to refer to during their interviews. The second participant in the pilot found one question referring to "guided pathways" difficult to answer. Although the participant's institution participates in guided pathways, she was unfamiliar with the terminology. The participant was provided an explanation of the terminology, and then she was able to successfully answer the question. Overall, both participants were able to address each question highlighting their distinct lived experiences as adjunct faculty members.

Data Collection and Data Sources

Initial contact with the community college system started with the system chancellor. Based on the chancellor's recommendations, I requested permission to conduct research at the

site and contact appropriate individuals in the community college system to obtain a list of adjunct faculty members meeting the requirements described previously in the sections on study setting and study participants. Using the list provided by the institution, I used purposeful sampling to contact adjunct faculty members initially by email to invite them to participate in one-on-one interviews scheduled via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Emails stated the purpose and procedures of the interviews and stated individuals would receive a \$20 Amazon gift card for participation. Adjunct faculty members agreeing to be interviewed were sent an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D), which had to be completed and returned prior to starting the interview process. With participants' permission, interviews were recorded to produce interview transcripts that were used during the data analysis stage. During the recording of the interviews, participants had their cameras turned off and their names removed from the display to ensure their anonymity. Semistructured interviews were planned to last approximately 45 minutes, with questions that were informed by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and externally audited. I contacted participants once after the interviews were transcribed to ensure the transcription was accurate. This check provided participants with the opportunity to convey additional information regarding the interview questions that may have been missed during the initial interview time. Following the interview process, participants received a gift card as a token of appreciation.

A primary data source for this study was information obtained from participant interviews. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is intended to “achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives... and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). Semistructured interviews provided the flexibility to understand the lived experiences of the adjunct faculty members participating in the study

(Merriam, 2009). The interview questions were designed to elicit the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used by the community college system to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. Gaining insight into the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies, their motivations to participate, and the barriers they face informed the research questions.

Archival documents were another data source gathered during the data collection stage. Collecting archival documents helped to achieve convergence of evidence and triangulation in data analysis by using multiple sources of evidence to describe the same phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Items such as adjunct faculty handbooks, policies and practices relevant to adjunct faculty engagement, and evidence of adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives provided relevant information to address the research questions. In addition, the recommendations provided by Gappa and Leslie (1993) centered on utilizing adjunct faculty to achieve educational outcomes, designing fair and equitable employment practices, and investing in human resources were areas for potential exploration through archival documents (see Appendix B). The key informant identified by the community college system was critical for identifying documents relevant to the study.

Data Analysis

Coding served as the transitional process between the data collection and the data analysis stages (Saldaña, 2009). The goal for coding data in this research was to identify repetitive concepts and themes that emerged related to the research questions. Coding initially began during the collection stage after the first interview process was completed and continued until after all data collection and analyses were completed. Then, I used coding to analyze data from participant interviews, documents collected, and reflections.

Initial coding was used to note first impressions about passages of interview transcripts and documents received. Saldaña (2009) stated, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Initial codes were established in alignment with the elements of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks; however, new codes were created as additional ideas emerged that had not been previously addressed in the frameworks (see Appendix E). Creswell (2014) noted new codes can emerge when data are unexpected and conceptually interesting. In addition, memorable quotes from participants’ interviews were noted using in vivo codes, which use actual participants’ words to demonstrate their perceptions (Saldaña, 2009).

Coding for this study was an iterative process involving a first cycle and second cycle (Saldaña, 2009). During the first cycle, codes were assigned to passages in the text or interview transcripts. During the second cycle, codes were reconfigured to further refine and highlight the true essence of the data. This process helped determine relationships that exist among the data, which allowed for codes to be grouped into categories that eventually led to the overall themes discovered in the findings.

I used the Dedoose electronic coding system (<https://www.dedoose.com>) to assist with the data analysis process. Dedoose was chosen for its ability to allow documents and interview transcripts to be uploaded, stored, organized, and coded by the researcher. The system can then be queried to allow for human analytical reflection of the filtered data. Although the software is a tool for analysis, coding and analyzing the data are still the responsibility of the researcher (Saldaña, 2009).

Study Quality

I used the big tent criteria developed by Tracy (2010) to ensure the research was high quality. The big tent criteria require the researcher to confirm the study involves a worthy topic that is researched with abundant rigor, sincerity, and credibility. Tracy stated worthy topics resonate with a variety of audiences and provide significant contributions to the field. Furthermore, the study must maintain high ethical standards and provide meaningful coherence.

The topic of engaging adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system was a worthy topic because adjunct faculty members are prevalent in the faculty base and contribute to students' success in and out of the classroom. Rich rigor was accomplished in the study by using theoretical and conceptual frameworks to analyze data from the field (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Sincerity was achieved by including a reflexivity statement and acknowledgment of my biases with transparency in the research methods. Triangulation of multiple data sources, external auditing of interview questions, and a thick description of the data findings added to the credibility and transferability of the study. Finally, by maintaining high ethical standards in all aspects of the research and ensuring meaningful coherence through alignment of the research elements, the study can provide significant contributions to the understanding of practices and policies used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and adjunct faculty members' perceptions of those policies (see Appendix F).

Ethical Considerations

Lochmiller and Lester (2017) stated ethics are "foundational to the entire research process" (p. 68). In this study, I followed high standards of ethics to protect human participants. Appropriate Internal Review Board approval was obtained from Kansas State University (see Appendix G). Once this approval was complete, the community college system provided an

expedited approval process for site authorization. Informed consent forms approved by Kansas State University and the community college system were signed and obtained from all participants. The informed consent forms emphasized participation in the study was voluntary, and participants could withdraw from the study at any time with no risk of negative consequences. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected by using pseudonyms and secure methods of data storage on an external hard drive for a minimum of 5 years. The hard drive was password protected and stored in a locked safe in my home.

To prevent my experiences from skewing data collection and eliminate bias in data analysis, I used member checking, triangulation of sources, and external auditing of interview questions. Once the initial coding of data was completed, a third-party professional at a community college in another state reviewed 10% of the interview transcripts to reduce bias (see Appendix H). Additionally, Dedoose software was used to assist with organizing data and identifying patterns in coding that my biases may not have initially uncovered.

On my part, no conflicts of interest existed in which I would benefit financially from the research conducted. To add transparency to the study, I included a reflexivity statement summarizing my background and experience in the following section. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) stated, "Reflexivity is the process of intentionally accounting for your assumptions, biases, experiences, and identities that may impact any aspect of your research study" (p. 95).

Reflexivity Statement

For the last 22 years, I have worked at a community college in various capacities. For the first 12 years of employment, I worked as an adjunct faculty member in three separate departments in the institution to help support my family. As an adjunct faculty member, I worked under a total of six different supervisors with various leadership styles and department cultures.

In 2012, I transitioned to a full-time faculty position in the Department of Business Administration where I worked with adjunct faculty members teaching in my discipline. Three years later, I was selected to be chair of the Department of Business Administration. In this role, I was responsible for recruiting, selecting, hiring, and managing adjunct faculty members assigned to five different programs including business, management, accounting, court reporting, and paralegal studies. In 2019, I was promoted to dean of business, entrepreneurship, and health sciences. In this position, I approve the academic credentialing, hiring, and appointments of adjunct faculty members in four departments, including Business Administration and Entrepreneurship, Allied Health, Dental and Imaging Technology, and Nurse Education. These experiences have given me insights on policies, practices, and perceptions of adjunct faculty members in my own institution. My experiences have created biases on the topic of adjunct faculty member; however, as noted previously, the study has been designed to account for this bias.

Limitations

Limitations existed in the study that were beyond my control. One limitation was the sample size. A limited number of adjunct faculty members were interviewed in one community college system to provide examples of the perceptions of adjunct faculty members regarding strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. The study was not intended to have transferability for all adjunct faculty members or all settings.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine strategies for engaging adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and understand adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. This chapter reviewed the research

design for this study, including participants, site, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The study quality, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study were also explained in this chapter. The next chapter provides a discussion of the research results through the lens of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings and Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the data collected from institutional documents and interviews with adjunct faculty. The chapter begins with a review of the research questions and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. A description of the methodology, participating institutions, and participating adjunct faculty is included. Using the structure from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, findings from each college are described individually followed by a cross-case analysis. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and to understand the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Two primary research questions informed this study:

1. What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?
2. What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks chosen for this study were used as tools during the data analysis stage. The theoretical framework was Kahn's (1990) engagement theory, which concluded employees engage in or disengage from situations based on the strength of three conditions: (a) experienced meaningfulness of work, (b) perceived psychological safety, and (c) having the resources needed to personally engage. Gappa and Leslie's (1993) recommendations for improving the status of adjunct faculty in higher education provided the conceptual framework. Gappa and Leslie's recommendations were grouped into three chapters

categorized into broad themes: (a) using adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives, (b) developing fair and equitable employment practices, and (c) investing in human resources.

Data Collection and Analysis

Seeking answers for the two research questions, I included two sources of data: (a) a document analysis and (b) interviews with adjunct faculty within a community college system. A key informant identified by the institution recommended relevant documents, which could be located on the institution's website. The document analysis included reviewing items such as an annual faculty agreement, an adjunct faculty handbook, and institutional webpages. Additionally, 30 adjunct faculty members participated in semistructured interviews conducted on Zoom, which allowed for an open dialogue to explore their perceptions.

Following the interviews, I transcribed the participants' responses and emailed them to each adjunct faculty member to allow for member checking. After incorporating the responses from member checking, I began the process of coding the collected documents and interview transcripts. To identify recurrent themes, I coded each transcript and institutional document in the Dedoose software system, looking for similar elements found in Kahn's (1990) theoretical framework and Gappa and Leslie's (1993) conceptual framework. I reviewed each document and transcript multiple times and used an iterative process during coding to determine the true essence of the data and uncover emerging themes. To reduce personal bias in the coding process, a third-party professional with extensive knowledge of higher education and research methods reviewed 10% of the coded transcripts. The audit review stated the coding decisions were visible, clearly explained, and comprehensive (see Appendix H). As noted in the audit, summary keywords were included at the top of each transcript. These keywords provided a quick overview of the topics on which the participants focused. This assisted with confirmation of the sufficiency

of the selected codes for data analysis and served as a quick reference guide when searching transcripts for data.

Institution and Participant Descriptions

The selection of the institution followed specific criteria identified in Chapter 3. First, the institution was a community college system with several colleges. The institution participated in the guided pathways initiative aimed at improving student success. Furthermore, the institution had programs designed to improve their adjunct faculty members' effectiveness. After identifying the community college system to be studied, I used purposeful sampling to select three colleges from the system based on student enrollments, student demographics, and focus of instruction. The study included a college with a high number of dual-credit students, a college with a focus on online education programs, and a college serving more traditional students primarily interested in earning credits to transfer to a university. To protect the anonymity of the community college system and individual colleges, the colleges are referred to as College A, B, and C.

In selecting participants, I also followed specific criteria identified in Chapter 3. I used purposeful sampling to select 30 adjunct faculty members to participate in the interview process with 10 individuals representing each of the three selected colleges. Each adjunct faculty member taught at their college for at least 2 full semesters before January 2023. The length of service for the adjunct faculty members ranged from 1 to 20 years. The participants represented instructional adjunct faculty teaching academic and occupational courses and service adjunct faculty teaching library instruction. Appendix I provides details about the participating adjunct faculty including the discipline they teach and their number of years teaching as an adjunct faculty member at their college. To maintain anonymity for participants, each adjunct faculty

member is identified with a letter and number (i.e., A–C for the college where they worked and 1–10 for their participant number).

Findings from Document Analysis

In two main documents, the community college system communicated system-wide employment policies and practices related to adjunct faculty. A faculty agreement for the academic year 2022–2023 covered policies and practices related to both full-time faculty and adjunct faculty, referred to as “All Faculty.” An adjunct faculty handbook also existed, covering topics specific to part-time employment.

Terms of the faculty agreement stated adjunct faculty participated in creating a college plan. According to the faculty agreement:

The College Plan is a document developed by each college’s Residential Faculty, in collaboration with its Adjunct Faculty and Administration, and approved by the College President. It describes the selection, evaluation, duties, and responsibilities of the Department/Division Chair and the duties and responsibilities of other Faculty roles, including the occupational program director. Colleges with both divisions and departments will also describe the allocation of reassigned time and Chair pay.

Similarly, the faculty agreement noted that adjunct faculty participated in the development of a department/division charter. According to the faculty agreement:

The Charter is a document developed by each college’s Departments and/or Divisions that reflects how the Department/Division has determined to organize itself and make decisions. The purpose of the Charter is to allow Departments and Divisions flexibility in their self-governance while ensuring transparency and participation as appropriate by all Residential and Adjunct Faculty within the unit.

The involvement of all faculty in these decisions was designed to allow each college to create innovative solutions to local challenges.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

The community college system's mission was to provide access to higher education for learners from diverse backgrounds. The institution worked toward its mission by embracing the institutional values of community, inclusiveness, honesty and integrity, innovation, learning, excellence, stewardship, and responsibility. Each college within the system had its own mission statement that focused on providing high-quality, student-centered learning experiences to support student success. The faculty agreement stated, "Adjunct Faculty contribute to student success through excellence in instruction, ongoing professional development, and organizational service/engagement." In addition, the agreement noted both full-time (also called residential faculty) and adjunct faculty "undertake leadership roles to promote student success and advance the missions of the colleges."

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

The faculty agreement encouraged the participation of adjunct faculty in educational policy making: "Policy and administrative regulations affecting All Faculty shall be discussed, before implementation, with All Faculty at the appropriate level." Within the community college system, there was an adjunct faculty association, which provided representation for the voice of all adjunct faculty members. The association recommended ideas, policies, and procedures related to the adjunct faculty role and responsibility in facilitating student success. The faculty agreement noted leadership from the institution's adjunct faculty association could speak at all governing board meetings to present the view of adjunct faculty members. Similarly, leadership

from the adjunct faculty association participated in the budget development process as part of an advisory council to the system's chancellor.

Hiring Practices

The community college system employed instructional adjunct faculty for academic teaching fields and occupational teaching fields. In addition, the system also employed service adjunct faculty who worked in areas such as library instruction and counseling. Criteria for selection to adjunct faculty positions included an applicant's skills, abilities, education, and experience relative to the available position. Individual colleges within the system established selection processes to fill adjunct faculty vacancies. Individuals interested in applying for adjunct faculty positions at the colleges had to submit an application, resume, and copies of transcripts with proof of academic credentials. Prior to employment as a new adjunct faculty member, individuals also had to complete a background check, an oath of loyalty, and mandatory annual acknowledgements and disclosures. In addition, adjunct faculty had to complete a course on teaching and learning in the community college environment (EDU 250) within 2 years of their initial hire date.

To allow sufficient time for adjunct faculty members to prepare for the duties required as part of an instructional assignment, employment for each semester was considered to begin 1 calendar week before the 1st day of classes. Occasionally, an instructional assignment could be cancelled after the 1st day of class. In this case, the adjunct faculty member's compensation would be prorated based on the classes taught prior to the cancellation of the course.

Compensation/Benefits

The community college system established five goals for their compensation model. The first goal was to build a talented workforce with career mobility. The second goal was to ensure

stewardship of public resources. The third goal was to account for innovative practices and market trends. The fourth goal was to offer fair and equitable pay. Finally, the model valued achievements in a high-performance culture.

For the academic year 2022–2023, the base pay for adjunct faculty members was established in board policy as \$1,012 per semester credit hour. Variations to this structure existed in specialized situations such as courses with labs and courses in the arts. Additionally, one college within the community college system prorated compensation based on the number of students enrolled in a course during the respective pay period. This pay structure could result in a reduction in adjunct faculty pay if students dropped a course during the course of the semester.

If adjunct faculty members served in governance roles within the community college system, their time was compensated for representative activities. These activities could include but were not limited to board meeting attendance; budget formulation; participation in hiring committees; and maintenance of a network of communication between adjunct faculty and the chancellor, executive council, and governing board. These activities were viewed as important to “develop a climate that allows all students, Residential Faculty, adjunct faculty, and employees to succeed.”

Encouraging professional growth to enhance instruction and student success, the community college system implemented a tier progression program in which adjunct faculty members could voluntarily participate in preapproved professional growth activities to increase their compensation. There were three tiers for instructional adjunct faculty: (a) Tier 1 paid the base rate set by board policy for the academic year, (b) Tier 2 paid 5% above the base rate when an adjunct faculty member had completed 25 clock hours of preapproved professional development, and (c) Tier 3 paid 10% above the base rate when an adjunct faculty member had

completed 50 clock hours of preapproved professional development. Practices were in place to track the completion of clock hours and define how adjunct faculty apply for tier progression. Compensation changes were updated annually during the subsequent fall semester.

Representatives from the adjunct faculty association participated in a system-wide employee benefits advisory council. One benefit available to adjunct faculty was the Adjunct Faculty Professional Growth Fund, which was separate from the tier progression program. This fund allowed adjunct faculty members to apply for reimbursement for eligible costs of attending approved professional development events, up to \$750 per year. There was no reduction in pay for adjunct faculty members who missed class while attending preapproved professional development. Additional benefits for adjunct faculty included the ability to accrue paid sick leave, tuition waivers, paid voting leave, and employee discounts at various establishments. Adjunct faculty members could also participate in a tax-sheltered retirement system available through the community college system. Adjunct faculty members became eligible to participate in the state retirement system if they worked 20 hours per week for 20 or more weeks in a fiscal year. The maximum clock hours for adjunct faculty members with additional duties was 25 hours per week determined by multiplying each teaching load hour by 2 and adding all additional work hours. Similarly, service adjunct faculty such as librarians and counselors could work a maximum of 25 clock hours per week.

Working Conditions

The faculty agreement stated, “A working environment that is supportive of All Faculty in advancing student success, is essential for the achievement of organizational goals.” The faculty agreement’s terms noted all faculty were encouraged to participate in meetings and grievance hearings. All faculty had access to district facilities and equipment for use in

conducting official district business. Each college within the community college system established offices where adjunct faculty members could meet with students, prepare course materials, grade papers, and have computer and telephone access. In addition, adjunct faculty members had access to other equipment and facilities as granted by the policies of individual colleges within the system.

Adjunct faculty members in the community college system were considered “at-will” employees. No contractual rights existed between the community college system and adjunct faculty members. The community college system or the adjunct faculty member could terminate employment at any time, with or without notice or cause. Adjunct faculty members were not guaranteed employment for any set time. While employed, adjunct faculty members were supervised by division chairs, department chairs, or a designated employee of the college unit. Adjunct faculty working in an instructional capacity were not required to conduct office hours, attend meetings, or perform duties other than those related to the instructional assignment.

Adjunct faculty members were limited to teaching a maximum of 9 load hours; however, they could teach 12 load hours with preapproval from the appropriate vice president. Adjunct faculty with instructional assignments could also be compensated for other duties such as committee work, tutoring, or substituting. These additional duties could not exceed the maximum clock hours for adjunct faculty members, which was set at 25 hours per week.

The faculty agreement described the role of faculty. All faculty had the right to instructional freedom when they were teaching their assigned subject. In addition, adjunct faculty worked in consultation with full-time faculty to determine curriculum, appropriate pedagogy, and relevant teaching materials. As part of their teaching responsibilities, adjunct faculty members determined student grades and other evaluations of student performance. The adjunct

faculty handbook noted the importance of keeping students informed of their status during a course: “Accurate and helpful instructor feedback is directly correlated with student engagement and success over the timeline of a course.”

The working conditions at College B differed from the other two colleges because College B focused primarily on asynchronous online classes offered with over 40 start dates throughout the year. At College B, predesigned online courses were created by instructional designers and lead faculty. These courses were fully developed for instructors and included syllabi, lessons, and assessments following the philosophy of one course design with many sections available. No similar information on online course development was found on the websites for College A or C.

Investing in Human Resources

The document analysis provided information on ways the community college system invested in human resources. The following sections describe information found relating to adjunct faculty orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward.

Orientation

The community college system offered a QuickStart course for new adjunct faculty. This course was designed to prepare new adjunct faculty for their first semester of teaching. The website for College B noted new adjunct faculty participated in an online orientation with supplemental in-person training conducted by the department, when applicable. At College B, new online instructors also received training in the college’s online learning management system. The website also described a 3-semester onboarding process that included workshops on

orientation, classroom management, and student services. No similar information was found on the websites for College A or C.

Professional Development

According to the faculty agreement, all faculty were expected to provide exceptional instruction and/or service by continuing to strengthen their knowledge and practices within their discipline and by attending trainings required by district, state, or federal mandate. The community college system committed to providing professional development to advance the mission of student success. The system offered professional development centered on five competencies: (a) design of instruction and classroom management, (b) learner-centered practice, (c) assessments to inform teaching and learning, (d) diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and (e) professional commitment to the district, college, and discipline.

Professional development was available from the colleges and the district on many topics that contributed to student success. The adjunct faculty handbook stated, “Programs may be available through the college’s teaching and learning, training and employee development, faculty development or employee development divisions/departments.” Adjunct faculty could attend any professional development offered by the community college system unless the program specifies otherwise.

Some professional development was required for all adjunct faculty; other training was optional. For example, each adjunct faculty member had to complete training on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) within 30 days of hire and repeat the training annually during every year of employment. Optional training was also provided on topics such as improving teaching and learning, using technology, and classroom management. The community college system used two learning management systems at their colleges, which could be used by

adjunct faculty as a tool to organize course content, manage student rosters, and enhance student communications. Beginning and advanced training on these systems was available at multiple teaching and learning centers located at the colleges within the community college system.

Support and Communication

Each college within the community college system had different support systems for adjunct faculty members. The adjunct faculty handbook noted the centers for teaching and learning “are often the adjuncts best resource for improving instruction and meeting the needs of students.” The website for College B described an employee resource center offering multiple programs and activities to support adjunct faculty. The programs included employee relations, culture building, and wellness. No similar information was found on the websites for College A or C.

Performance Evaluations

The faculty agreement stated the purpose of performance evaluations for adjunct faculty members was to “verify demonstrated proficiency in the adjunct faculty’s instruction and/or primary work responsibilities within an environment of support and encouragement.” The objectives of the evaluation included ensuring teaching efficacy and advising adjunct faculty members “regularly and specifically of their strengths and opportunities for growth, progress, and overall status.” The faculty agreement did not specify how the evaluation must be conducted; however, supervisors were required to document performance data and results of the adjunct faculty member’s student course evaluations. The faculty agreement also noted adjunct faculty members would be evaluated in their first semester and then once a year after or any time they have a new teaching assignment. These evaluations were to be reviewed with the adjunct

faculty member within 15 workdays with written copies provided to the adjunct faculty member and the system's human resources office.

In contrast, the adjunct faculty handbook described that the community college system intended to evaluate adjunct faculty members at least once during each of the first 3 semesters employed, excluding the summer terms. Thereafter, adjunct faculty members could be evaluated as deemed appropriate by their supervisors. Leadership within the faculty had the authority to determine appropriate evaluation models for their disciplines. The division or department chair would conduct the evaluation or delegate the responsibility to an assigned person. When an adjunct faculty member taught online, the supervisor would be given limited access to observe the online course according to division or college policies.

Students also completed anonymous course evaluations. Student feedback was most often available to instructors in the learning management system after grades were final; however, policies on viewing student feedback varied by individual college within the system.

Recognition and Reward

The website for College A noted that the college recognized longevity of service for adjunct faculty members who had worked a minimum of 10 semesters. The website from College B described an annual process for faculty chairs to nominate outstanding adjunct faculty members for recognition in the categories of assessment of student learning and contributions to teaching and learning. The nominees were honored at a special event hosted by the college president and senior leadership. Additionally, the nominees were recognized at the annual meeting for all faculty. No similar information was found on the website for College C. In addition, no information was found on recognition and reward in the faculty agreement or adjunct faculty handbook. Figure 4.1 summarizes highlights from the document analysis.

Figure 4.1

Findings from Document Analysis



Findings from Participant Interviews at College A

A total of 10 adjunct faculty members from College A participated in the interview process. The participants taught in nine different subject areas including both academic and occupational disciplines. A summary of their experiences and perceptions related to their employment and student success is included below.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

During the interviews, participants discussed their involvement in the mission as it related to their role in their courses at College A. One participant emphasized, "It's really just

taking into account our students' needs, their thoughts, their perspectives as we're building our curriculum and figuring out what do we do next." This participant noted the importance of seeking the student voice to create a vision related to instruction.

Two participants discussed their roles in connecting students with resources such as services for students with disabilities, tutoring, and counseling. One of these participants noted students attending at night often arrived after many of the resources have closed for the day, so they would make a concerted effort to make sure students had what they need to be successful. A third participant discussed involvement in initiatives aimed at advancing the mission by creating renewable assessments for students and work-based learning experiences.

Three participants said their work in the mission and student success included promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participant A4 stated, "I see myself in a fairly narrow role," but also went on to say part of that role was to make sure students felt connected to the college and valued as people and students. Participant A8 said promoting diversity was on their mind every time they entered their classroom and interacted with their students. Participant A9 expressed a similar sentiment, stating, "It's important to make students understand their importance, their worth, their ability, their future." Participant A10 concluded, "Having my students feel good about themselves is probably my number one priority; I want them walking away feeling successful."

Participants also discussed their involvement in advancing the college's mission through activities outside their courses. One instructor discussed her involvement on college committees and councils, grant writing, and creating work-based learning experiences for students. Another instructor noted they made themselves available to students "24 hours a day" by responding to texts from students needing assistance. A third instructor noted they had served as an adjunct

faculty representative to enhance shared governance and advance student success initiatives.

Another participant discussed working with students in activities sponsored by their department and through the student union.

When asked specifically about the college's work in guided pathways, participants had a wide range of exposure to the framework. One participant noted they had served as a subject matter expert to help choose appropriate courses for designated pathways. Two participants stated they were familiar with guided pathways but did not see their connection to the initiative as an adjunct faculty member. Another participant was excited about opportunities with the designation of fields of interest and the potential to begin offering baccalaureate degrees. Finally, another participant said they were totally unfamiliar with guided pathways at their institution.

Participants also had varied opinions about their level of involvement in the mission and student success initiatives. Participant A9 stated, "Student success is why I am here, period." Although one participant stated their regret that they were not as involved as they would like to be, another participant felt there were excessive requests for adjunct faculty members to volunteer their time in initiatives. This instructor stated:

I have definitely pulled back from doing any outside class or extracurricular work with the students. I don't see any feasible way that we could be encouraged to engage more, especially when the residential faculty are not doing anything to demonstrate that they're templating that behavior. They're not doing it. And they're being paid more, and they're being recognized, and they're being accoladed and awarded.

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

The interview process included questions designed to seek the participants' perceptions on employment practices at College A. Participants commented on areas including hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

Throughout the interviews, adjunct faculty members described how they came to be employed at College A. Participant A1 noted they were onboarded at their college about 2 weeks before the semester started. In contrast, Participant A6 described receiving a call from an instructor who had just resigned asking if they would take over the class. They never had considered teaching previously and had only 1 hour to decide if they wanted to take the job. Participant A6 described their onboarding process as corporate like, with time spent with the human resources department verifying whether licensures and credentials were documented. Participant A2 noted their onboarding process was expedited because they had worked at other colleges within the community college system. Participant A8 also described a very quick hiring practice. One week after completing a master's degree, they were hired as an adjunct faculty member and assigned to teach a class.

Compensation/Benefits

When participants discussed compensation and benefits at College A, they focused on the new tier progression program established by the community college system. One participant stated:

Right now, I'm trying to meet my hours. So, if we get 25 hours of PD, we get a 5% raise. If we get another 25, we get another 5% raise. And none of the great amounts of PD that I have done through the college actually counts towards that tier system.

Another participant had mixed feelings about the initiative, stating clarification was needed to explain the program. This participant stated, “When I looked at what the tier program payout would be versus the amount of hours of continuing education that had to be done, it was quite a turn off.” Another participant also said they were confused about the conditions of the tier progression program and had needed someone to explain it more clearly.

One participant noted they were interested in the benefit that allowed adjunct faculty members to attend professional development conferences. This participant stated:

I’m looking to do a couple things with that, hopefully later this year. There’s a conference I’m interested in, and then, like a training review course that I’m interested in that I thought I might be able to use those funds towards.

Two participants commented on the need for greater compensation and benefit options. One participant commented on their compensation, stating, “I cannot fathom if I did not have other sources of income trying to survive on an adjunct faculty wage. And I think this is something that’s very, very painful.” The participant further added, “Teaching as an adjunct is not financially viable or feasible.” Another participant noted if the college could provide health insurance for adjunct faculty members, they would be able to quit a full-time job and devote more energy to the adjunct faculty position.

Working Conditions

When describing working conditions at College A, Participant A1 stated, “It was just very much a lot of support and guidance and structure.” This participant said the resources on campus were helpful, noting there were shared office spaces available for adjunct faculty and access to equipment and technology support. Another participant appreciated the autonomy allowed to provide differentiated instruction to address the needs of diverse learners in their

courses. Participant A9 commented on the physical environment at their campus: “They renovated it and updated it, and it’s still very beautiful.” Participant A10 commented on their working conditions, stating, “So this is like, you know, the Magic Kingdom of opportunities in my opinion.”

One participant, describing the working conditions, stated, “I’m really just obligated to go in to prepare for my classes, go in and teach them.” A second participant voiced a similar thought: “It’s an evening course. And so, when, you know, the course is over, I head out and so that’s mostly the extent of my interaction with the college.” Another participant also commented on the isolation in the workplace: “The building is pretty empty when I’m there. And so outside of my class, I really rarely see anyone else there.”

Investing in Human Resources

The interview protocols included questions designed to help me understand participants’ perceptions of the investment in human resources at College A. Participants commented on areas including orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognitions and rewards.

Orientation

During the interview process, each participant described the orientation they received as a new adjunct faculty member at College A. Participant A1 spoke of a very thorough orientation process held within the department. The course lead and department chair distributed information. Four participants discussed completing online course modules as part of their orientation process; however, one participant noted modules were not tailored for adjunct faculty or a specific discipline. Three participants described the orientation process as “self-driven” or “on their own volition.” One of these participants had never taught and requested a mentor from

the department. Another one of the three participants stated they were asked if they could just jump in, so they scheduled themselves for training. Another participant said the orientation consisted of a faculty meeting at the beginning of the semester to introduce new faculty and departmental expectations.

In contrast, four participants stated they did not receive any type of orientation. One of these participants noted the orientation was “glossed” over in part because of previous work experience at another college within the community college system. This participant stated:

There is nothing that’s being done to sort of embed the person. They obviously say, you know, pick up your keys. We encourage you to go to the room and look at the room and such, but the residential faculty are usually not that proactive, at least in my department, of taking the new hires under their wing, showing them the campus, doing anything to really formally embed them. Instead, they just say, here’s your documentation. Good luck.

A participant who was hired with no previous teaching experience stated:

I basically was plunged into it with a rough outline from the previous instructor.

And I made it through the first semester. And I thought, well, if they call me back to teach again, I will rewrite the lesson plan.

Professional Development

Interview participants described the professional development available to adjunct faculty members at College A. Participant A3 noted participating in online training for Canvas, creating asynchronous courses, and designing renewable assessments. Participant A3 also noted “almost all of the things that are offered to full-time faculty are available for adjuncts. I tended to participate in ones that also came with some sort of stipend.” Participant A5 noted they took

several asynchronous online training courses, which they felt were extremely helpful.

Additionally, they stated the supervisor was “a great mentor.” Participant A6 stated they received 1-hour training sessions on convocation day.

Three participants noted they had participated in a 9-month college-sponsored program, offered by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), on evidence-based teaching strategies. Participant A10 stated the ACUE training improved their teaching by providing a “new refreshing way of looking at interacting with people.” Another participant enjoyed the ACUE program; however, they were unable to complete the program due to time conflicts.

Participants A9 and A7 noted professional development opportunities had improved for adjunct faculty over the last few years. Both referenced the ability for adjunct faculty to obtain credits for professional development that could be applied in the tier progression program. Participant A9 stated professional development in past years was focused on legal aspects of working as an adjunct, such as required FERPA training, but newer training had been implemented that was more focused on improving teaching and learning. Participant A7 was appreciative of the ability of adjunct faculty members to obtain funding to attend preapproved conferences.

Two participants had not received a significant amount of professional development from their colleges. One participant of the two stated:

I know that there are some opportunities available for professional development. But a lot of the ones that I looked into were during the school day, which I work full time. So, it was always kind of just difficult to be able to do those.

The second participant stated, “I’m sort of left to my own devices. I can do as I see fit, which is both good and bad. There’s virtually no supervision.”

Support and Communication

As part of the interview protocols, participants described the support and communication they received from College A as adjunct faculty members. Four participants focused on the support within their department. Participant A1 praised the department, stating, “They are wonderful, I get as much support as I could possibly imagine.” They also noted feeling supported by the adjunct faculty organization, which provided information related to the adjunct experience. They said, “There is so much support there, as long as you know where to look and who to ask.” Participant A7 noted support is provided by her college in an online portal for adjunct faculty but also noted she relied more on the strength of support received from department faculty. Another participant discussed feeling supported by their disciplinary team because they would forward tips and topics to incorporate into their teaching. Participant A10 said, “I’ve never worked someplace where there’s that many people that are completely supportive.”

Four participants stated they receive additional support from people outside their department. Participant A3 recognized the library staff, lab technicians, and counseling center provided support. Participants A4 and A8 stated the center for teaching and learning had been supportive by offering training and assistance with issues related to the learning management system. Participants A6 and A8 also reflected on the high level of support provided by the representatives from the adjunct faculty association. Participant A8 said they received support and resources from employees at a success fair designed to introduce a variety of student

services to faculty. In addition, they noted all-faculty meetings were beneficial to gaining information on ways to improve student success.

Three participants indicated they had support from partnerships and collaborations. Participant A1 noted they frequently collaborated with an interdisciplinary team to improve curriculum for occupational fields of interest. Participant A3 stated they collaborated with other faculty as part of a learning community. Participant A7 stated their discipline collaborated with faculty in the same discipline at sister colleges to provide consistency in the curriculum and student experience across campuses. Participant A6 saw the opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration on future projects.

In contrast, six adjunct faculty members described feeling less supported at times. One adjunct felt there were no support structures and reported a lack of interaction between employees. Participant A6 also noted a lack of interaction with employees because when they taught at night, no other employees were around. Another adjunct stated, “As far as just being an adjunct in my department, there hasn’t been anything specifically geared towards collaboration or working with others. So, you kind of have to create the opportunity.” Participant A5 conveyed a similar sentiment, noting they do not really collaborate with anyone. Participant A4 summarized their adjunct experience by saying, “It is kind of a lonely thing.” Finally, Participant A9 concluded, “There’s a significant number of adjuncts, and because of that, I can see the importance of creating a community that embraces us a little bit more.”

Participants also discussed communication at their college. Time conflicts made it difficult to attend on-campus meetings, so two adjunct faculty members appreciated the ability to meet virtually with their departments. Participant A5 noted department meetings were held at inconvenient times and not recorded for viewing later. Two participants noted emails did not feel

personalized for adjunct faculty members to understand the communication clearly. One participant stated, “If I’m not proactively reaching out, I will go, sometimes weeks or months without hearing from anybody else in the department.” In contrast, another participant commented they received too much communication via email because they previously worked at multiple colleges in the district and messages from those institutions continued to pile up in their inbox.

Performance Evaluations

Interview participants discussed how their performance was evaluated at College A. Several participants noted their courses were observed in person or online by either a course lead or a department chair. The frequency of these visits varied. Participant A1 noted the observations were handled formally during their first year as an adjunct, and after that the evaluations were more casual “pop ins” to the classroom. Participant A6 described being evaluated every semester for the first couple of years and then once every 2 years after that. Participant A7 stated they had been observed but never received any feedback from the supervisor. Participant A8 received feedback from a supervisor through a debriefing process following an observation of their online course. Participant A2 noted:

I teach multiple classes, and they’re not all the same class. I will say that, in the last 12 months, I think one class was checked on once. And by checked on, I mean that for the online class, the one time that happened, they logged in for a few minutes, flipped through a few of the pages, made sure that the links were working or such, saw the students were interacting, and said, “Okay, we’re good.” And that was it.

In contrast to other participants who stated they had been observed periodically for purposes of performance evaluation, two participants felt they had no performance evaluations

from their supervisor. One participant stated, “I’m not sure I’ve ever been evaluated as an adjunct.” Another participant said, “I don’t really have a direct evaluation . . . or feedback outside of student surveys.” Commenting on the lack of substantive feedback received from a supervisor, one participant concluded by saying, “We’re not really reviewed. Nobody knows what we’re doing.”

Participants also noted students evaluated their courses on an online survey every semester. Participant A9 noted they had received a detailed survey with student feedback. However, Participants A1 and A3 noted they were not certain when students completed this survey and sometimes received no feedback from students. Participant A2 stated, “I think there is an extraordinary bias in student evaluations because students only seem to say something if it’s either really good or really bad.” Participant A5 noted receiving feedback from only one student in the course. Participant A6 discussed students used to evaluate their courses on paper; however, once the evaluations were moved online, students did not participate as often. Participant A7 acknowledged students evaluated her class, but the participant never received any feedback from students.

Recognition and Reward

During the interviews, participants discussed how adjunct faculty members’ achievements and contributions were recognized and rewarded at College A. Several participants described a nomination process in which adjunct faculty members’ achievements were recognized by peers, administration, and students. Participant A8 noted all full-time and adjunct faculty members were eligible for a distinguished teaching award. Participant A6 discussed an awards banquet used to recognize the contributions of adjunct faculty members who were

nominated. One participant commented that even with this award process in place, there was no real incentive to make contributions:

I was, quite frankly, pretty proud when I won the outstanding adjunct faculty award against everyone else in the district. And I felt really good about that. At the end of the day, it meant nothing. I have a piece of paper.

Several participants noted other types of recognition. Participant A7 described adjunct faculty being recognized through awards tied to the health care industry. Participant A8 described smaller tokens awarded to employees on campus for achievements and verbal recognitions given during department meetings. Participant A10 noted achievements were announced during college-wide faculty meetings. Additionally, three participants stated adjunct faculty could move to a higher tier of compensation in recognition of completion of certain levels of professional development requirements.

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources

Throughout the interviews, participants described their motivation to engage in or disengage from student success initiatives at College A. These conditions can be tied to the presence of meaningfulness of the work, psychological safety at work, and the availability of physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage.

Meaningfulness of Work

Employees experience meaningfulness when they feel their efforts are valued and valuable (Kahn, 1990). Several participants reflected on the meaningfulness of their work. Participant A4 stated they were an instructor who “enjoys what they teach and enjoys the students and classroom experience” and went on to say, “I feel a personal motivation that contributes to success.” Participant A6 described finding meaningfulness in work because “now

adjuncts have a greater say in things and more opportunities.” This participant described the fulfillment of serving as an adjunct faculty representative working toward improving working conditions for adjunct faculty members. Participant A1 also described the meaningfulness of work, stating:

It’s just understanding what my job description is and what my responsibilities are as an instructor. And that really comes down again to that shared thought of our focus is student success, making sure our students have the resources available to them, and how do we work collectively alongside our students to make sure that they’re being successful.

Participant A6 stated, “Honestly, it was the engagement with other administration and other faculty that gave me a great motivation because I realized how much everybody cared for the students and what they were trying to do in their classes.” For Participant A8, meaningfulness came from their students being employed in the community. They commented, “I’m looking at these students as my coworker next year. And I want to groom them to be the person I want to work alongside.” Participant A10 described their motivation:

It’s important for me being here in that I’m encouraging the students to understand the importance of education, using the community college as the gap for them. It’s not a place to stop, but definitely a steppingstone to get them certified in various subject areas.

Psychological Safety of Work

Psychological safety is experienced when employees can be their authentic self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). Leaders enhance psychological safety by being supportive, creating positive group dynamics, and defining cultural norms. Participant A1 expressed psychological safety at work: “Everybody has input,

and everyone's perspectives are being really utilized." This participant also noted, "I don't feel as an adjunct that I'm separated from everyone else. I don't very much feel like there's that separation or that they put us into this category as an adjunct." Participant A4 felt comfortable in their position as an adjunct, stating, "They support us. I've got a good system." Participant A10 conveyed a similar sentiment: "Literally, everywhere I turn, I'm being supported. And what's even better is that I feel like it is a complete collaboration with each other to be supportive for our students." This participant also noted, "The best is definitely drawn out of everybody. And so, then if you have instructors like that, that are happy to go to work and happy to be there, it overflows into their students."

In contrast, one participant expressed concern over the status of adjunct faculty members: "The lack of recognition, the lack of pecuniary reward, the lack of oversight, lack of engagement, the lack of collaboration, lack of pretty much everything, makes it such a challenge." Another participant had a similar sentiment, stating, "No one outside of the people I directly interact with for any of these types of things ever acknowledges my contribution. So, for me, I guess some sort of acknowledgement or positive reinforcement might be nice." A third participant also noted, "When I first started participating in the adjunct faculty convocation, I still felt kind of unknown and unseen in that I didn't know how the college worked in a lot of ways."

Availability of Physical, Emotional, or Psychological Resources

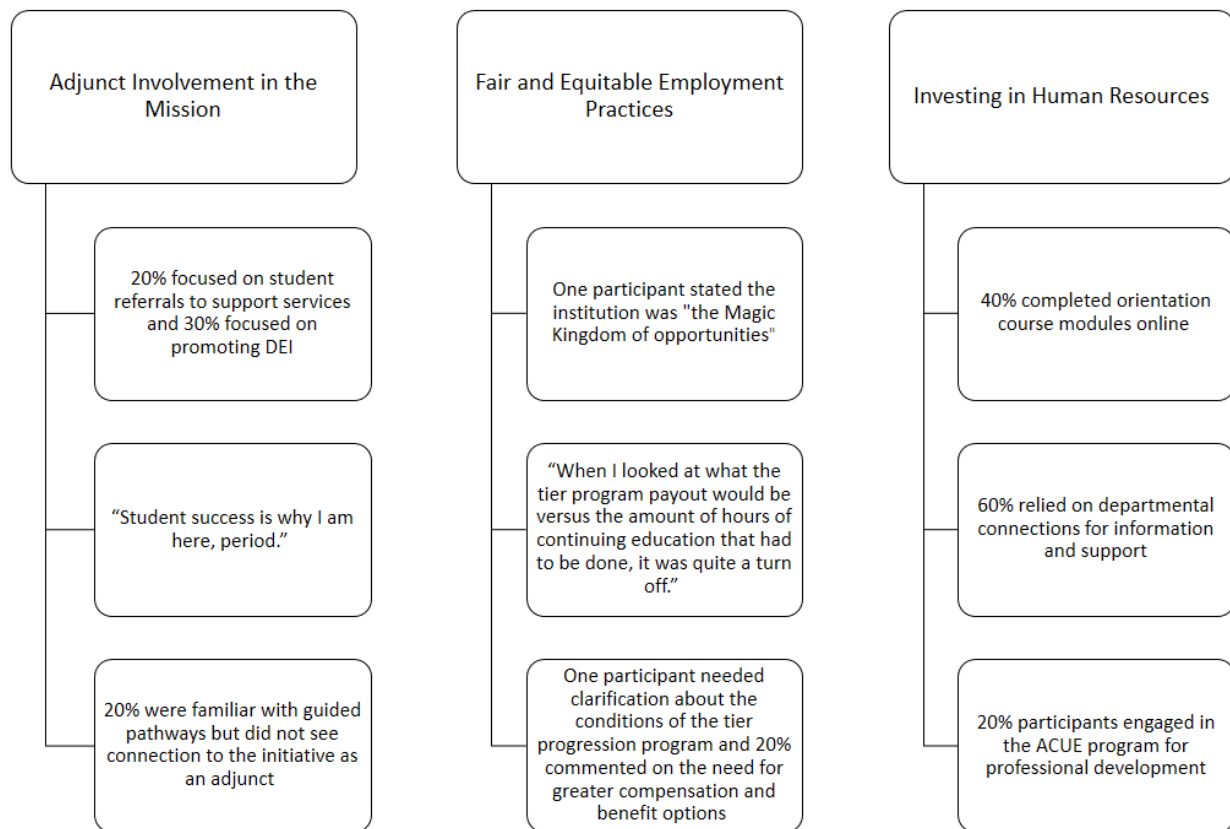
Availability of resources is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage. Leaders ensure employees have availability of resources by being aware of employee needs and seeking solutions to address those needs (Kahn, 1990). Regarding availability of resources, Participant A1 stated, "The support I received as an adjunct is perfect."

This gives me more than enough information and support that I need to be the best instructor that I can for my students.” Participant A9 agreed, stating, “The availability of resources is huge. We have the flexibility to work with our students in whatever way is necessary to help them be successful. And that’s important.” In contrast, several participants noted the availability of resources for them was sometimes limited because they worked full-time jobs outside the college, which prevented them from taking full advantage of campus resources.

Participant A2 described how their attitude regarding participating in success initiatives changed after being passed over for a full-time faculty position. This participant stated, “My attitude became, ‘Why am I going to put forth literally hundreds of hours to develop the program for you for the very, very low pay that I’m going to be getting?’” Figure 4.2 highlights findings from participant interviews at College A.

Figure 4.2

Findings from Participant Interviews at College A



Findings from Participant Interviews at College B

A total of 10 adjunct faculty members from College B participated in the interview process. The participants taught in nine different subject areas including both academic and occupational disciplines. A summary of their experiences and perceptions related to their employment and student success is included below.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

During the interviews, two adjunct faculty members discussed their involvement in the mission as it related to their role in their courses. Participant B9 noted the unique online model at College B:

From my particular college, it's only adjuncts. There are no faculty teachers there. So, we really are the managers of students' success by making sure they're staying engaged, and they're being able to complete the work that's needed of them.

Participant B8 reflected on their involvement in the mission, stating, "I try to make sure that I'm bringing that industry relevancy to the classroom: real case studies, examples, anecdotal feedback, just so that they are focused on applying the learning in a contextual setting that's relevant to industry." This participant also stated:

Part of the mission is to anticipate the student needs and the needs of our industry. And so, as an adjunct faculty member, my focus is really on course level success. And so, what I tried to do through active outreach to my learners and formative feedback loops, is make sure that I'm providing—first identifying, and then providing—that individualized support.

Two participants described their involvement in the mission through their daily interactions with students. One participant described their contribution toward the mission as:

Grading assignments within 48 hours, doing roster management, and checking in with my students once a week via our internal messaging or via email. Ensuring that I'm grading for the rubric, so the students can really understand where they're succeeding or failing.

Another participant expressed a similar understanding of their role:

I contribute to the college mission and student success by just being a hardworking instructor to the students, meeting all the expectations of an adjunct faculty from my college. So, one of our expectations is communicating with our students. If they send an email, answering within a 24-hour timeframe, and then grading their assignments within three days.

Three participants described their involvement in the mission and student success outside of their teaching assignment. One participant noted they supported students' scholarships and the United Way campaign sponsored by the community college system. Participant B5 noted they participated in the college's first-year experience program: "It was to help with that first year of every college student to make them more successful." Participant B1 stated, "The way I really contribute to the success of the students is I serve on the district scholarship committee. I serve as a mentor/advisor for the college as well. I serve on the veterans board."

When asked specifically how they contributed to student success initiatives such as guided pathways, one participant stated, "Referring students to the student support coordinator who works with students to keep them on track for graduation." Another participant saw their role in the guided pathways initiative as giving students ideas about what careers the students might be suited for and referring them to advisors for more assistance in entering and following their educational path. Finally, Participant B8 discussed their involvement in guided pathways:

I was involved in a student Ed Tech project. It relates to guided pathways because we were trained, and we built, successfully piloted, and studied virtual communities that could be used either to pair with the course, or more broadly, to be a digital field of interest.

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

The interview process included questions designed to seek the participants' perceptions of employment practices and involvement in student success initiatives at College B. Participants commented on areas including hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

Throughout the interviews, adjunct faculty members described how they came to be employed at College B. One participant received a phone call inquiring whether they would like to return to the institution to teach after having a break in service. They stated, “I sat down with them, and they interviewed me, and then they hired me pretty much on the spot.”

Participant B8 discussed requirements for employment, stating, “Within a 2-year period, you also had to complete teaching at the community college level, which was a district-level course, EDU 250.” In contrast, another adjunct faculty member with many years of service at College B noted they had never taken the EDU 250 course required for employment in the community college system.

Two participants expressed frustration about a recent request for faculty to demonstrate they were still qualified for their current teaching assignments. One participant stated:

We had to submit another questionnaire to demonstrate our qualifications required by the Higher Learning Commission. And of course, I’ve had to do that at a few institutions. And it just comes with like a little bit of trepidation, like, “Oh, I gotta go and defend that I’m qualified to teach.” I’ve been teaching here for a long while. I hate that.

Another participant had a similar comment about the college’s request:

They’re going to go through accreditation, and so they’re going to send an email to all of the faculty within the colleges. And you have to self-declare what your degrees are and how you’re highly qualified and all that. And, you know, they talked about some people don’t really have all the qualifications. They’re going to have a year to get qualified.

Compensation/Benefits

When participants discussed compensation and benefits in the interviews, there was a focus on how compensation at College B was different due to their unique asynchronous online model. Participant B8 stated:

I can have students being added each week, and each student is in a different lesson of the same course. And I'm their primary, you know, teaching and learning and formative feedback guru, but it's not very cohorted. So, I'm paid in relation to the number of students in my section. And that kind of motivates, I think, me as an adjunct to retain those learners too. Because if I lose half of my class, then my pay also shrinks in proportion to the number of learners in my section.

Another participant described how their compensation was calculated at College B:

I get paid \$400 a semester per student. That's for brand new students. And then when they're in their second year, I get \$375 per student. And then if they accelerate something, do two semesters at once, I get \$775 per student, so I don't get paid that flat rate.

Participants discussed their understanding of the impact of the new tier progression program established by the community college system. One participant stated, "I've been paying attention to it. I don't know if I will be positively impacted by it. I'm trying to understand what it says. Honestly, it just feels a bit convoluted to me right now." Another participant stated, "The tier program doesn't motivate me with money. I'm not hurting for that. It's not a badge of honor, like, 'I'm Tier 3.' Who cares? So, really, I don't find any incentive." One participant noted the requirements for the tier progression program only recognized certain preapproved classes and commented, "It is sort of a joke." Finally, one participant noted they were completely unfamiliar

with the new tier progression program that would allow for increases in compensation tied to completion of professional development.

When discussing their current compensation, one participant stated, “I’m going out of my way, spending time that I’m not being paid for or compensated for, even really recognized or known for, to make the student successful.” This participant also noted, “You can’t support yourself on an adjunct salary.” Another participant asked rhetorically:

You’re not here for the pay, right? Because it’s not enough of a reason. So, it’s usually just the intrinsic reward of giving back to the community college. Like most adjuncts, I don’t think they are just able to be adjuncts. They have other jobs, right?

Two participants reflected on the benefits available to adjunct faculty. One participant noted that the adjunct faculty professional growth funds were beneficial in allowing individuals to attend conferences for educational growth. Another participant described the benefit of tuition waivers:

We are allowed to take a free class within the district once a quarter or semester. I guess any class we want. Some people take guitar lessons, one on one. Some take home cooking, one on one. But it’s also an opportunity. I could take a class at another college to learn that instructor’s methods.

Working Conditions

The working conditions for participants at College B included remote work because this college had a high percentage of students taking asynchronous courses online. Participants reported they enjoyed the flexibility of being able to work remotely and at times convenient to their own schedules. One participant noted that even though they worked remotely, the

instructional help desk and technology help desk provided valuable resources for adjunct faculty members needing assistance.

Participant B4 commented on the teaching model used by the college, saying, “We have a different model: one course, many sections. So, all the instructors teach the same curriculum for the same course.” Another participant along with Participant B4 commented on this model:

The thing about my college that’s different is we don’t do lectures, or the actual teaching of content. The content is already created for us by instructional designers, and so they really look at our weekly engagement with students, our communications with them through emails, and looking to see what feedback we give them on the assignments.

Participant B8 also discussed the working conditions created under the model at College B:

The adjunct model feels smaller than other adjuncting experiences in that we have one course design, many sections. So, I don’t have the amount of work in designing my own syllabus or my own assessments, for example. They’re kind of pre-designed.

When describing the working conditions at College B, Participant B1 chose to describe their experience working in an “at-will” state, commenting, “You know I can quit whenever. I don’t have to give notice. They can fire me whenever, and they don’t have to give notice, and being the adjunct, you have less rights than you would have full time.” Another participant commented on the status of adjunct faculty:

Let adjuncts have more of a voice in the planning process. Because we have such a unique model, our faculty chair pretty much has most of the things to do with anything because they are the full-time person in the building, but I feel like adjuncts have a unique perspective.

Investing in Human Resources

The interview protocols included questions designed to help me understand participants' perceptions of the investment in human resources at College B. Participants commented on areas including orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward.

Orientation

During the interview process, each participant described the orientation they received as a new adjunct faculty member at College B. Participant B8 reflected on their orientation, stating, "There was an interpersonal orientation to the department specific policies and where to find the resources. And then I also had to complete an online orientation that was more general to the institution." This participant further added, "I was honestly impressed with it." Participant B1 stated they completed the orientation with an instructor and coordinator: "They walked me through student grading issues, student advisement, and how to engage with them on different levels." Participant B2 noted, "My orientation was face to face with the department chair. And she went over all the policies that we should know as an adjunct faculty." Finally, Participant B4 described their orientation experience:

I feel like our college has a really good orientation program. We take I think it's two or three online classes at the beginning when we're first hired so that we kind of know how the system works. We know the college policies and student management policies. We learn about the learning management system. And then for our first section, we're staffed just with a smaller number of students—like 10 to 15 students—and then we have a mentor during that section.

In contrast, three participants described a different type of orientation experience. One participant said they had no formal orientation but noted there was an adjunct portal to explore for information. Another participant stated for their orientation they were assigned to complete online course modules, but they noted that the modules were not useful because they did not relate to the experiences from their first semester of teaching. Finally, when asked about their orientation experience, one participant stated, “There must have been something. If there was anything, it wasn’t much.”

Professional Development

Interview participants described the professional development available to adjunct faculty members at College B. One participant noted they were required to complete 8 hours of professional development each year; however, this requirement could be satisfied by attending the all-faculty and department meetings held once each fall and spring semester. Participant B8 described their experience with professional development at the all-faculty meeting, stating, “We’re usually learning about a specific topic or something relevant to our discipline. There tends to be a bit of cross-pollination with other faculty who teach in other departments.”

Three participants spoke about professional development beyond what was available at the all-faculty meetings. Participant B9 stated, “One recent professional development class that I personally completed was an inclusion class and how to go through and recognize impostor syndrome and creating an inclusive teaching environment.” Participant B2 stated they had participated in a 2-week online course covering pedagogy for teaching and learning online. Participant B4 said, “We have a specific pot of money every year for adjunct development, which is so nice, and that allows us to seek out professional development.”

Three participants also noted they had participated in the college-sponsored program on evidence-based teaching strategies offered by ACUE. One participant noted they enjoyed participating in the ACUE class and learned beneficial information for their position. Participant B4 stated, “We had a cohort for ACUE for inclusive teaching and learning. And that was amazing—I really got so many good ideas of how to help my students, and, you know, seeing where they’re coming from.” In contrast, one participant who completed the ACUE sessions stated they felt the course was too basic and not helpful for instructors who had previous teaching experience.

Support and Communication

As part of the interview protocols, participants described the support they received from College B and individual departments. Participant B8 stated support came from “the requisite engagement and attendance at these all-faculty meetings. There’s usually an emphasis on student success initiatives as tied to our strategic plan and my role in that.” Participant B1 noted that their department conducted meetings to discuss “student learning outcomes, critical thinking, information literacy, you know, reading the rubrics, writing rubrics.” This participant also noted they “talked a lot about first-time-in-college students and use a program called IPEDS—the integrated postsecondary education data system.”

Participants also discussed the modality of communication and meetings at their college. Participant B4 said, “I just enjoy that networking and, you know, seeing what works with other people, and it’s really helpful.” Two participants stated they appreciated meetings being held virtually because it saved the participants the time involved in a long commute. One person discussing the problem of communicating at in-person meetings noted, “The barriers are

basically just the times of the meetings. And then sometimes you have to go in person.”

Participant B8 commented on communication at meetings:

They try to schedule carefully. They do a pretty good job. They’ll do an evening, and they’ll always record it, but they also do a daytime option on the weekend. So, they try to be mindful that most of our adjuncts are working full time.

Four participants discussed support received from departments and individuals outside their teaching discipline. Participant B8 noted that pedagogical subject matter experts assisted adjunct faculty members: “I have that instructional help desk to help be another line of support for me, but also for my students.” Participants B1, B2, and B4 mentioned also receiving support from areas including the counseling center, tutoring center, financial aid, technology helpdesk, library, disabilities service office, center for teaching and learning, and instructional design.

Participant B5 reflected on support received through the adjunct faculty association:

That actually has been really helpful because now that I’m participating, I know a lot more about things that are helpful for adjuncts being part of that. But I decided to do that so that I could, you know, figure out things and then get connected to others.

Participants also commented on support systems customized for their college or department. Participant B8 commented on the power of the support provided by the college’s predictive analytics early alert model. They stated, “Maybe it’s because I’m a visual learner. But it’s putting that red light, green light, yellow light in my face, and then it’s putting some metadata behind the why. So, I feel like that is actionable.” Participant B3 described an adjunct portal that contained precreated lessons, templates for reference letters, and a semester schedule. Participant B4 noted, “Our faculty chair sends out a Friday FAQ. So, every Friday, we get a little

reminder about a policy, or you know, information, which has been also super helpful to kind of jog your memory about certain things.”

Not all participants had the same view of the support they received as adjunct faculty members. Participant B1 noted, “It is a really good system of how to balance resources for both the instructor as well as the student.” In contrast, another participant stated, “I think we’re very ill prepared. Very, I mean, the support is not there. The system is super archaic.” Finally, a third participant noted there had been turnover in his department and said, “The support structure right now for me individually within the department is a little fractured.”

Performance Evaluations

Interview participants discussed how their performance was evaluated at College B. Several participants noted their courses were observed in person or online by either a course lead or a department chair. Participant B1 noted experiencing two “mini” performance reviews each year and stated:

That means by the time it is your annual review, you’ve already been kind of shown the right path to take. If you’re really going the wrong way, the mini evaluation can correct you. And if it corrects you, and you’re on the right path, then for your final annual evaluation, it shows that improvement.

Participant B8 described their experience with feedback on their performance provided throughout the semester:

I’ve been here six years and still every beginning, mid, and end of course I get formative feedback from my lead faculty. So, there’s a rubric of practices that they know are good practices and expectations. And they continue to keep that quality assurance loop. So, if I’m not meeting the expectation for turnaround time for assignments, or I’m supposed to

be at four days, and I'm averaging five, I know that because they're paying attention, and they're giving me formative feedback.

Participant B2 confirmed that instructional coordinators evaluated their online courses based on predetermined metrics such as, "Are we grading the students fairly? Are we using the rubrics? Are we providing substantive feedback? Are we sending out the emails for weekly engagement with the students?" This participant also stated, "They also evaluate us based on if we were grading our assignments within a three-day period turnaround time, and if we're answering questions, answering student emails within 24 hours turnaround time." In contrast, another participant stated, "Now, because I've been doing it for a while, they don't observe me as much because I guess they trust me." In addition, three participants stated their performance had not been evaluated. When asked if their supervisor evaluated their performance, one of these participants stated, "Not that I know of. If they do, they didn't tell me."

Participants also discussed student surveys of the instructor's performance. One participant described a process in which students evaluated courses each semester on a scale of 1–5 through an anonymous survey. This participant stated, "If I get anything from a 4 below, I'm supposed to have a meeting with my department chair to work on areas that could improve my teaching methods or instruction methods." In contrast, one participant said, "We receive our students' surveys from students who have taken our courses. We get those whenever they get around to giving them to us." Three participants commented on the validity of student surveys, noting only a small percentage of students completed the survey and responses may not have been representative of the opinions of the whole class. One of these participants stated, "I think most of the time when I get reviews from students, they're not positive because I am one that

expects that they need to do their work,” and another participant said, “I am telling you that 99.9% of those who do the survey are the ones who hate me.”

Recognition and Reward

During the interviews, participants discussed how adjunct faculty members’ achievements and contributions were recognized and rewarded at College B. Five participants described a nomination process in which adjunct faculty members’ achievements were recognized by peers, administration, and students. One participant stated:

We have an outstanding adjunct faculty annual award every year. The department chair nominates an adjunct faculty from their department. And so that’s when they nominate that person—they are the outstanding adjunct faculty for the year for that department. And they do an award ceremony to award all the adjunct faculty who were named outstanding adjunct faculty.

One of the participants who had received this recognition stated, “I received a recognition. It was like a little wooden thing. I would have preferred some money, but it’s okay.”

Participants also described other ways that adjunct faculty were recognized or rewarded for their achievements and contributions. Participants B3 and B6 stated that verbal recognition was provided to adjunct faculty during department meetings and all-faculty meetings. Participant B8 commented, “When someone accomplishes something like a publication or an award or recognition, it’s shared out to the community of adjuncts.” Two participants noted gift cards had been included in this recognition. Participant B4 noted that achievements and contributions were also highlighted in a weekly college newsletter.

Two participants had a different way of thinking about rewards and recognition. One participant said, “I guess you just feel blessed that you get to stay with them. If they didn’t like you, they get rid of you.” Another participant reflecting on recognition stated:

They do give you incentives, and they can give you additional classes if you are really doing well and take care of your students. If you’re doing the bare minimum, and students are complaining about you on their evaluations, they are probably going to give you one class, maybe, and that’s kind of like a hint. Then it’ll be noted on your evaluation, and eventually you’ll just be not brought back.

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources

Throughout the interviews, participants described their motivation to engage in or disengage from student success initiatives at College B. These conditions can be tied to the presence of meaningfulness of the work, psychological safety at work, and the availability of physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage.

Meaningfulness of Work

Employees experience meaningfulness when they feel their efforts are valued and valuable. Reflecting on the meaningfulness of their work, Participant B9 stated, “So the college’s mission statement is obviously to make every student as successful as possible. In that case, I think an adjunct is a major cog in that wheel.” Participant B9 went on to describe their passion for working with students who are incarcerated, saying, “My cap is getting full by helping these people turn their lives around with addiction problems and giving them a purpose and a vision for themselves.” Participant B8 found meaning in student evaluations, noting, “I also get student end-of-course survey feedback, which is very meaningful to me and usually, really helps be intrinsically rewarding.” Participant B4 reflected on a cohort experience that was meaningful: “I

really kind of got motivated, I guess, after that, and it helped me to reach out to my students in a few different ways that I hadn't thought of before."

In contrast, three participants offered thoughts about how their employment situations could be more meaningful. One participant stated, "I want to, you know, let people know who I am and what I can do." A second participant noted they would like more time for their team to see each other in person "so [they] can kind of just work together as a team, but you're still working on a goal." Another participant stated:

I believe student success and teaching go hand in hand. And so, it'd be nice to feel more ownership of being part of the college, more involved in being part of the college if we were given more information about how we could contribute to student success for the college outside of our teaching.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is experienced when employees can be their authentic self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career. Leaders enhance psychological safety by being supportive, creating positive group dynamics, and defining cultural norms. Participant B1 spoke of psychological safety: "My department chair, she is awesome. She is one of the reasons I continue to stay at the college." This participant went on to say, "She is somebody that's always giving feedback. If it is negative feedback, it would be in a very constructive, positive, professional way." Participant B2 stated that the positive environment in their department "helped [them] ease [their] worries or anxiety about teaching a different kind of model."

In contrast, four participants demonstrated a lack of psychological safety. One participant stated, "I sometimes wonder if I am helping students out successfully. I feel like I have a lot of

students start and withdraw or drop or whatever along the way.” One participant referred to the college’s request for faculty to resubmit credentials, stating, “Are you justifying that I’m still qualified to teach the thing I’ve been teaching for a long while?” While discussing communication and support, one participant stated, “Just acknowledge that we are educated people. Please have a conversation with us as adults.” Finally, another participant reflected on their lack of job stability as an adjunct faculty member: “Adjunct is not like a traditional teaching job where you’re having to renew every year. You’re kind of just an employee until you’re not good at it anymore. And they will sever ties with you.”

Availability of Resources

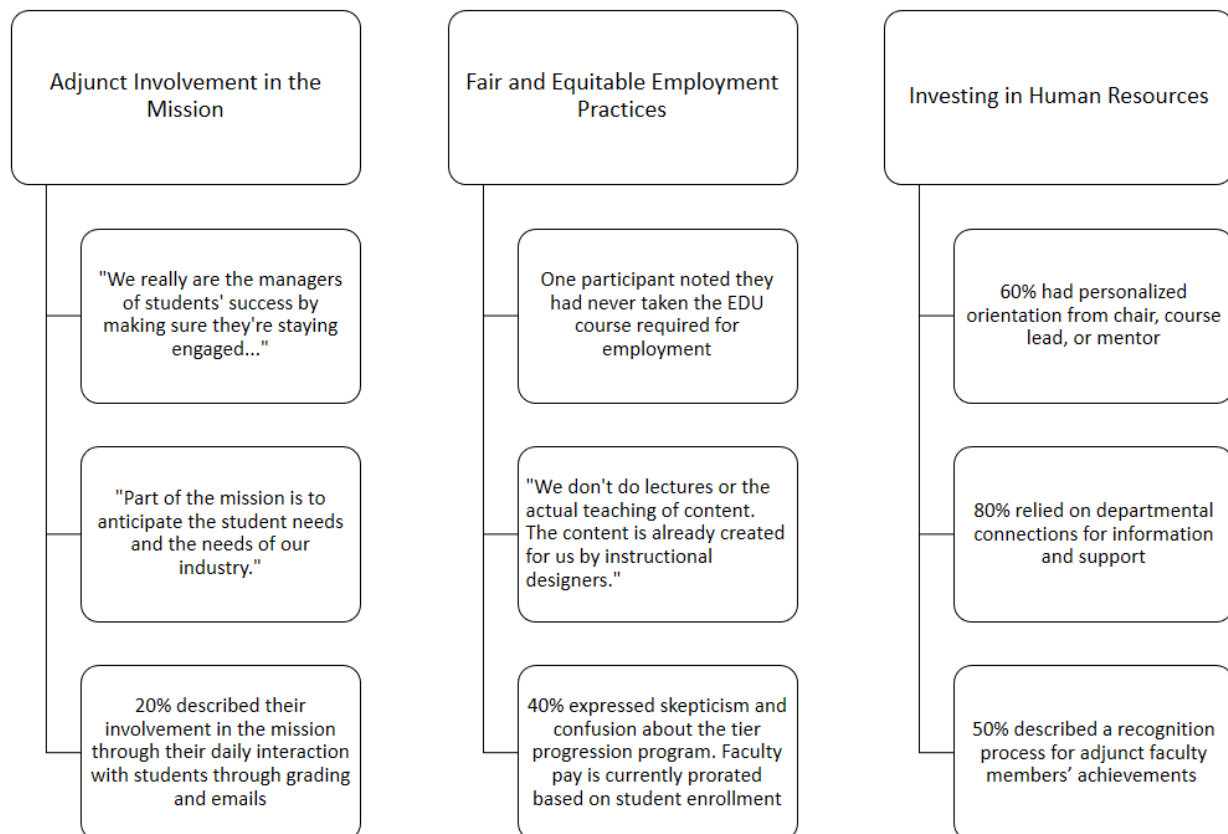
Availability of resources is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage (Kahn, 1990). Leaders ensure employees have availability of resources by being aware of employee needs and seeking solutions to address those needs. When asked about the availability of resources and support for adjunct faculty at College B, one participant noted, “It’s a lot based on if the students have questions or needs. We give them information. I usually get the information from the website, or from our policy manual, or from a department chair.” Participant B2 voiced a similar thought, stating, “If I need a resource, I just go straight to my department chair.”

In contrast, four participants expressed a lack of available resources. One participant stated, “I think what’s lacking is maybe not informing us enough of student success initiatives that we could be involved with. Or how can we be involved in student success at our college as an adjunct faculty.” Another participant stated, “I just feel like, as an adjunct, maybe I don’t have as much information as I might need at times to help students with the different things they did.” One participant recognized the adjunct faculty association could be a resource; however, they

also noted, “We have an adjunct faculty representative, but I don’t feel like it’s really optimized in a way. I’m not part of a community of practice with that person.” Finally, one participant commented on their physical resources: “I have to provide all my own everything at this point. So, whether it’s computer or software or what have you, I do not have any workspace at a facility since I am fully online.” Figure 4.3 highlights findings from participant interviews at College B.

Figure 4.3

Findings from Participant Interviews at College B



Findings from Participant Interviews at College C

A total of 10 adjunct faculty members from College C participated in the interview process. The participants taught in eight different subject areas including academic disciplines, occupational disciplines, and library instruction. A summary of their experiences and perceptions related to their employment and student success is included below.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

Participants discussed their involvement in the mission and student success at College C. Five participants focused on their role within their teaching assignments. Participant C4 stated, “My participation is usually relegated to the classroom and educating students in the discipline that I’ve been hired to do.” Participant C8 stated, “If I notice a student hasn’t been turning in their assignments, I try to connect with them and try to get them back into the class, try to find ways to help them out.” One participant noted, “I think we are very involved in student success. Basically, just kind of in a practical day-to-day.” In teaching in an occupational discipline, Participant C7 emphasized that their “job is to prepare the students to take their FAA tests, which is written and oral tests, general airframe powerplant.” Finally, Participant C3 focused on creating “an environment where I give everyone an opportunity to get their best performance and the best grade even though they may have various challenges either with confidence, completing homework, or wanting to ask for help when they need it.”

Participants also commented on other ways they were involved in the mission and student success. One participant noted they served on the idea governance council, and another served on a scholarship committee. Participant C1 focused on giving students real-life experiences so the “learning experience and growth helps them self-advocate in the future.” Participant C10 noted

their discipline “ties into the goal of the campus, being forward minded, looking towards more of how to just incorporate more of today’s cultural and societal aspects that these kids can then apply.” Another participant noted that they made a concerted effort to represent diversity in their courses and activities, including all genders, races, and ethnicities. Participant C8 helped a student resolve a barrier to success: “One student had a problem with her book at the bookstore. And I actually met her over there at the bookstore so that we could figure it out because they have a policy, and she got the wrong one.”

In contrast, two participants discussed they were less involved in the mission and student success at College C. One participant stated, “I think you can be as involved as you want. It’s just 9 times out of 10, I can’t do any of it, you know.” Another participant stated the restructuring from guided pathways impacted her involvement: “I was involved in student success initiatives before guided pathways, and now I’m not.” The participant further stated when she was able to provide library research within courses, “it did teach them a lot of useful student success skills. And now it is no longer a component of those courses. And so, I think that’s one of those unfortunate side effects of streamlining the system.”

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

The interview process included questions designed to seek the participants’ perceptions of employment practices and student success at College C. Participants commented on areas including hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

Throughout the interviews, four participants described how they came to be employed at their colleges. Participant C4 recalled, “The primary way to get hired was to have a degree. That’s my recollection: availability and a degree. And once those two things were in place, I was

slotted into the positions.” One participant remembered their process, saying, “We have to get this affidavit notarized that we’re going to be upstanding citizens.” One participant stated they were hired after the first week of class and missed participating in orientation with other new faculty. Another participant said:

I was brought on by somebody I had worked with at the other institution. We had seen each other at an event, and they said, “Would you like to come and teach for me?” Then I was just given access to the different materials, the Canvas courses, the things that other instructors have done.

Participants also commented on areas in which they noticed weaknesses in the hiring process at College C. One participant noted new adjunct faculty members were not made aware of available benefits during the hiring process. One example included a new hire who “didn’t realize he could get free classes.” Another participant noted:

People don’t realize that if you work 20 hours or more, you get retirement. That’s not said either. I imagine it’s probably in the magic handbook, but nobody reads the handbook. So yeah, there are things out there that you could get more money, but they don’t tend to . . . and that seems to be, you know, common because it comes out of their budget.

Compensation/Benefits

When participants discussed compensation and benefits in the interviews, one area of focus was the topic of the new tier progression program established by the community college system. One participant described the tier program, stating, “Adjunct faculty can have their pay tied to extra activity. The activities would be learning workshops, presentations, that type of thing.” Another participant said, “So that’s a huge motivation. But I came to it late; I’m now

thinking in order to get the time in that I would need, I would have to take vacation.” One participant stated, “I’m automatically approved because I have the ACUE certificate.” In contrast, one participant noted there were unintended consequences in the requirements of the program, stating, “I’ve taken all these classes, but I don’t get credit for the classes I took. I can’t take it again.” Another participant commented on the program, saying:

I have seen the chart. I am hesitant to increase my pay because I am worried that if I were to do that, I would be less desirable to hire. I don’t know if that’s true or not. But I have a sneaking suspicion that once you go to those higher tiers, you’ve kind of dug yourself in a hole.

Two participants stated there had been recent discussions at their college about the disparity of pay between instructional adjunct faculty and service adjunct faculty. One participant described how service adjunct faculty members felt: “They kind of felt like they attacked us to reduce our pay by 43%.” Another participant stated:

I think the big thing is that we may be getting our pay decreased next year by a significant amount, and I think that’s really going to decrease motivation across the board. I think we are paid very well right now, especially service adjuncts. Instructional adjuncts are not paid well. And there’s a specific pay disparity that they are attempting to rectify, but they did it clumsily this year, and everybody got very angry.

Participants also mentioned benefits available to adjunct faculty members. One participant mentioned, “You also have credits to take classes as well if you want to within the district.” This participant added, “Most of them, obviously, because it’s a community college, are at a lower level. But it is an interesting way to gain new skills and learn different things, too.” Another participant also commented on this benefit:

They have a weird rule, just so you know. To take a class for free, you have to do a certain number of hours. Now that I'm thinking about this, this should be a suggestion to somebody. You have to do a certain number of hours at one campus. You can't combine both campuses.

Finally, Participant C3 described a benefit available to adjunct faculty members who are approved to teach 12 credit hours in a semester. This participant stated:

Now, an interesting thing is if you teach four courses, which I have done for almost all of the seven years, you do pay into and are given state retirement. Okay, so the school withholds from your pay, and then they pay into the state teachers retirement fund. If you teach less than four courses, you're not eligible for state retirement benefits.

Working Conditions

Participants were asked to describe how their working conditions at College C influenced their engagement in student success initiatives. Two participants focused on their physical spaces. Participant C8 commented on the configuration of the classroom, stating:

I'm not sure that I like the four tables. The way they have them set up is there are four people to a table, and they put them together that way. There's not a lot of room to move around in the room.

Participant C3 focused on office space, stating, "I have both an office work room where students are not allowed because of what are called FERPA regulations. And then I have a space to meet and work with students."

Two participants focused their answers on the strength of their relationships within their work environments. Participant C1 stated, "I love my working conditions. My team lead, the

department chair, they're very supportive contacts, you know, my classes fill up. So, they always give me a lot of classes." Participant C10 commented:

My supervisor was very kind in being able to work with my schedule and working in a time where he could have me come in and teach this particular course when I first started. And because of how limited my schedule sometimes is, I'm glad to at least have one set time every week to come in and do that.

In contrast, one participant described the relationships in their work environment, stating, "I still don't understand all of it. But it feels like people fighting over a toy, and I'm gonna go home because I didn't get my way."

Participants also discussed the nature of their work assignments as an adjunct faculty member. Participant C9 said, "My schedule stays pretty straightforward now, but there is definitely some flexibility." One participant stated, "There's no guarantee that we'll be asked back another semester. I'm reasonably confident in my job security. But it's never a guarantee that we will be there from one semester to another." Another participant expressed a similar sentiment, saying:

I don't know if I'm working next semester, so from one semester to the next, I have no idea. Thankfully, I keep getting hired, but that's just mainly because I'm good. But, you know, they want us at arm's reach.

Investing in Human Resources

The interview protocols included questions designed to help me understand participants' perceptions of the investment in human resources at College C. Participants commented on areas including orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward.

Orientation

During the interview process, each participant described the orientation they received as a new adjunct faculty member at College C. There was a wide variety of experiences, with three participants describing little to no orientation. One stated, “As far as orientations on the school values or mission statements, none of that was presented to me. It didn’t seem relevant. I mean, the only relevant thing was, can you teach this course?” Another participant stated there was no formal orientation; however, adjuncts from the discipline decided to meet weekly to support each other. A third participant mentioned meeting with a course lead, saying, “I went to her office, and I sat down with her, and she went through, I’ll say, maybe 20, maybe 30, minutes. And we talked face to face, one on one, about the setup.”

Five participants described a more structured process for their orientation. Participant C1 stated, “There was an adjunct day of learning. And so, I did participate in that. And then it was a mid-semester start. It was an eight-week class. And so then in January, there was a week of accountability.” Participant C2 described their orientation as “a mandatory session that you basically spent a weekend, Friday, Friday evening, all day Saturday, and a piece or part of Sunday. Then they paid you.” Another participant described shadowing a mentor and “becoming familiar with the kind of pedagogical skills that were used, accepted in the class, learning some of the dos and don’ts in a classroom setting.” This participant went on to say what they learned involved “becoming familiar with the way that you go about developing lesson plans and content.” Participants C8 and C9 also acknowledged a very structured process for orientation at their college; however, they both noted being unable to attend due to work conflicts.

Professional Development

Interview participants described the professional development and mentoring available to adjunct faculty members at College C. One participant enjoyed working with an assigned mentor during their first semester. Participant C1 mentioned participating in several different training courses including sessions by ACUE, Franklin Covey, the African American Leadership Institute, and their center for teaching and learning. Participants also noted courses available on accessible course design, supporting students who are veterans, FERPA responsibilities, and preventing sexual harassment. Describing the professional development opportunities, Participant C5 stated:

I would say it's actually a pretty robust system that they have. There are a lot of things that come across my email on a regular basis that our training department is constantly putting on—different short-term and, you know, one-hour trainings and two-hour trainings and a good chunk of your summer trainings. Really, anything you want to learn in terms of how to help students, how to understand the technology, how to deal with things like a pandemic. They are constantly putting out those availabilities or those classes. So, that's pretty cool.

In contrast, one participant stated, “All I can say is I don't really know, specifically, my educational opportunities or developmental opportunities. I know there's a budget for that. I've heard of that. But that's kind of secondhand and vague to me.” Another participant noted, “There's always opportunities, but the timing is just awful for me.” One participant commented on the relevance of the professional development, stating, “A lot of the orientation and the different methods that they have of giving us ways of developing our skills are very focused but

not on service adjuncts.” Finally, one participant commented on the repetitiveness of training opportunities:

I went to quite a few trainings for the first three years, and they covered everything that I needed to know that had anything to do with me. After that, I haven’t gone to any in two years. I’ve already gone over everything that they go over. Because, you know, there’s so much churn with adjuncts that they just sort of cycle through these workshops, over and over again.

Support and Communication

As part of the interview protocols, participants described the support and communication they received from College C as adjunct faculty members. One area that participants focused on was the individuals and departments they relied on for support. Participant C4 stated, “The people above me have always been helpful whenever I’ve run into questions or situations that I didn’t know how to proceed.” Participant C2 found support from their lead faculty member and from staff in their center for teaching and learning. Participant C2 noted, “They will teach adjunct faculty how to use all of the technology tools needed for their classes.” Participant C2 also stated, “They do a really good job here. Literally, I have an adjunct landing page so that if I really don’t remember anything, then I can click here to figure out what I need to do.”

Four participants focused on the effectiveness of support provided at meetings. One participant stated, “We have biyearly online Zooms, which I participate in. They’re more like ‘Hi, how are you?’ And so, as far as I know, there aren’t any other meetings, and adjuncts aren’t invited to anything beyond that.” One participant noted, “I get mad every year when I go. So, I stopped going.” This participant added, “Just tell me if there’s anything new. Don’t go through all the policies again. I’m well aware of the policies.” In contrast, one participant stated, “I

wouldn't have a clue about anything going on if I didn't go to every faculty meeting I could, which I'm one of the only adjuncts that does that." Participant C5 discussed their feelings about faculty meetings, stating, "I think it's really important to have at least one semester with a really good check in. Now, they are a little later in the evening and virtual, and it's amazing." This participant further added:

We do have every semester a whole college meeting. And then immediately following that is a department meeting, and then immediately following that is your specialty meeting. So, you know, kind of a lot of making sure we're all on the same page, but also a chance to just say hi to people that you maybe only see at the beginning of every semester. It used to be in person, but now it has been virtual. So really, most of my interaction with anybody is through all of these different trainings and those opportunities when I can attend them.

Other participants discussed communication with the college through emails. One participant stated, "They bombard us with emails a lot. That's just the easiest way to put it." Another participant talked about the volume of emails received from their college, saying, "One of the problems is because I'm attached to so many schools, my inbox. I'm reading it right now. It's at 24,000." Another participant discussing emails said, "So you are kind of inundated with a lot of emails, and all I do is try to play catch up on emails because any campus you work at, now you're getting their emails."

Participants had a few final thoughts on things they appreciated about support and communication at College C. One participant noted the value of having open educational resources, and another participant valued the early alert system for risk assessment to support

their courses. Finally, one participant stated, “What’s nice with a community college is they do put out a newsletter for all the colleges.”

Performance Evaluations

Interview participants discussed how their performance was evaluated at College C. Eight participants noted their courses had been observed in person or online by either a course lead or a department chair. The frequency of these visits varied. Participant C1 stated, “The first three semesters you work at a college, you have a formal observation. I won’t have to be evaluated again for three years. That’s because I’ve been there so long.” Participant C2 indicated that periodically the instructional lead showed up to the class: “He’s got a form that he fills out to see if there is any room for improvement.” Participant C5 stated, “When you’re first there, for the first couple of years, every semester, somebody observed your class. Now, it’s every two years.” This participant added:

I think there’s a lot of, ‘We’re all professionals, and we’ve been doing this for a while.’

So, I see it more looking at just the interaction with the students, how the students seem to be doing, how the students seem to be responding to the class.

In contrast, one participant commented on his course, saying, “Hypothetically, it is supposed to be evaluated each semester by one of the residential faculty. In reality, I have never officially had a performance review.” Finally, one participant acknowledged their class was evaluated but was uncertain what qualities were being evaluated. This participant stated:

I don’t know exactly what she does, because as an adjunct, the template is already there.

So, you don’t actually create the class. So, she’s not evaluating your class creation capabilities. She’s evaluating . . . so I imagine she looks at announcements, any kind of correspondence between me and the students.

Participants also commented on student surveys to evaluate adjunct faculty performance. One participant stated, “The college emails the students a questionnaire for every class they take after the semester. And usually, I just throw it in the file.” When asked about whether students evaluated classes, a second participant commented, “Not to my knowledge. That’s a good question. That would be good.” Another participant who worked at multiple colleges in the district stated, “Student evaluations are a thing. They’re more a thing at some schools than they are at other schools.” Finally, a participant commented on the whole evaluation process:

I had one observation about a year after I was hired. It was the only observation. And other than that, our only evaluation is student evals. We get a student eval for every course. And they look very, very closely at the student comments. And then the only other thing I’ve seen is sort of unofficially. And I’ve been involved in this a little bit myself. Unofficially, they’ll ask other instructors, “Well, how are they doing? Do you see anything that concerns you?”

Recognition and Reward

During the interviews, participants discussed how adjunct faculty members’ achievements and contributions were recognized and rewarded at College C. Seven participants described a nomination process in which adjunct faculty members’ achievements were recognized by peers, administration, and students. One participant proudly stated, “I got to receive an award. I was named outstanding adjunct, and they’re going to take my picture and hang it up in the president’s office.” Participant C1 described a biweekly newsletter from the president and digital high fives that were given to people who had done something above and beyond expectations. Participant C1 also appreciated a personal recognition they received, stating, “When I got accepted to that leadership academy, the president emailed me, he’s like,

‘Oh, I’m so glad you’re representing us there.’ And I’m like, ‘Wow. How cool is that?’”

Participant C3 noted that adjunct faculty members had been recognized for “contributions to workshops, and especially turning those workshops into what they call, for instance, high impact learning practices.” One participant viewed recognition in a different way, simply stating, “I get rehired. It is my primary recognition.”

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources

Throughout the interviews, participants described their motivation to engage in or disengage from student success initiatives at College C. These conditions can be tied to the presence of meaningfulness of the work, psychological safety at work, and the availability of physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage.

Meaningfulness of Work

Employees experience meaningfulness when they feel their efforts are valued and valuable (Kahn, 1990). Several participants reflected on the meaningfulness of their work. Participant C1 reflected on the sense of belonging they felt in their department and stated, “I want my students to have that same sense of community that I do.” Participant C3 valued the small class sizes at their college: “That gives me the opportunity to engage the students on a more intimate level.” Participant C4 commented, “I’ve had free rein. They’ve had trust in me, and they’ve had trust in the students to learn in a free environment. And like I said, without any pressure one way or another for some sort of dogmatic nonsense.” Participant C6 told the story of a student they helped pursue a scholarship. They commented, “Those little success stories really make it worthwhile.”

Other participants conveyed a different attitude about meaningfulness at work. One participant reflected on the status of adjunct faculty and commented, “We certainly should feel

used.” Another participant stated, “I’ve worked there almost six years, and nobody in my department got a pat on the back.” Finally, one participant commented on the fact that adjunct faculty were not compensated for some of their efforts: “That’s kind of a demotivator to going to those because you donate the time. And then you don’t get any compensation for your time for taking the initiative.”

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is experienced when employees can be their authentic self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). Leaders enhance psychological safety by being supportive, creating positive group dynamics, and defining cultural norms. Participant C1 stated, “They keep giving me classes, hey, they put me on overload and give me that fourth class. Because they know I can handle it.” Participant C3 had a similar comment, saying, “Normally, I teach a full load. I teach four courses every semester. And that’s tied to being willing to participate in faculty meetings, faculty contributions, and things like that.” Participant C4 expressed psychological safety in a different way: “The policy of putting students first, which I feel happens at the school, helps me get to a place where I feel comfortable educating students without any other, you know, concerns besides education.” A participant also stated:

I’m the type of instructor that I don’t do well when I’m told what to do. And by entrusting me, that has given me a lot of confidence to engage my students, as I would see fit. And apparently that’s a good match.

In contrast, three participants expressed sentiments demonstrating a lack of psychological safety. One participant stated, “They know we’re expendable. They know we’re cheap. Any type

of engagement or assistance is almost an affront.” A second participant stated, “I don’t feel like I’m part of a group of anything in power on the campus.” A third participant stated:

I feel like I get cross messages, and I’m not 100% sure what we’re supposed to be doing. You know, so I just kind of do the best I can with what I know, and try to ask questions when I can because I feel like I’m the only one at the meeting that will ask questions.

Participants also commented on their perceived levels of respect as adjunct faculty members. One participant stated, “It’s always been like a pecking system, a caste system, where you’re thought of as less than.” This participant added:

As I worked with more faculty, I began to realize that it was really important in just getting them to realize that I have teaching skills and instructional skills as well. And that I am also faculty, and they should approach me as such not as necessarily a staff person, which it’d be nice if they’d approach everybody in the same way. But sometimes there’s a little bit of a mental categorization happening.

Availability of Resources

Availability of resources is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage. Leaders ensure employees have availability of resources by being aware of employee needs and seeking solutions to address those needs. Two participants noted they had an abundance of available resources at College C. For example, one participant commented, “Being able to participate on committees has really given me an idea of how both committees and the entire institution as a whole works just by listening.” Participant C7 stated:

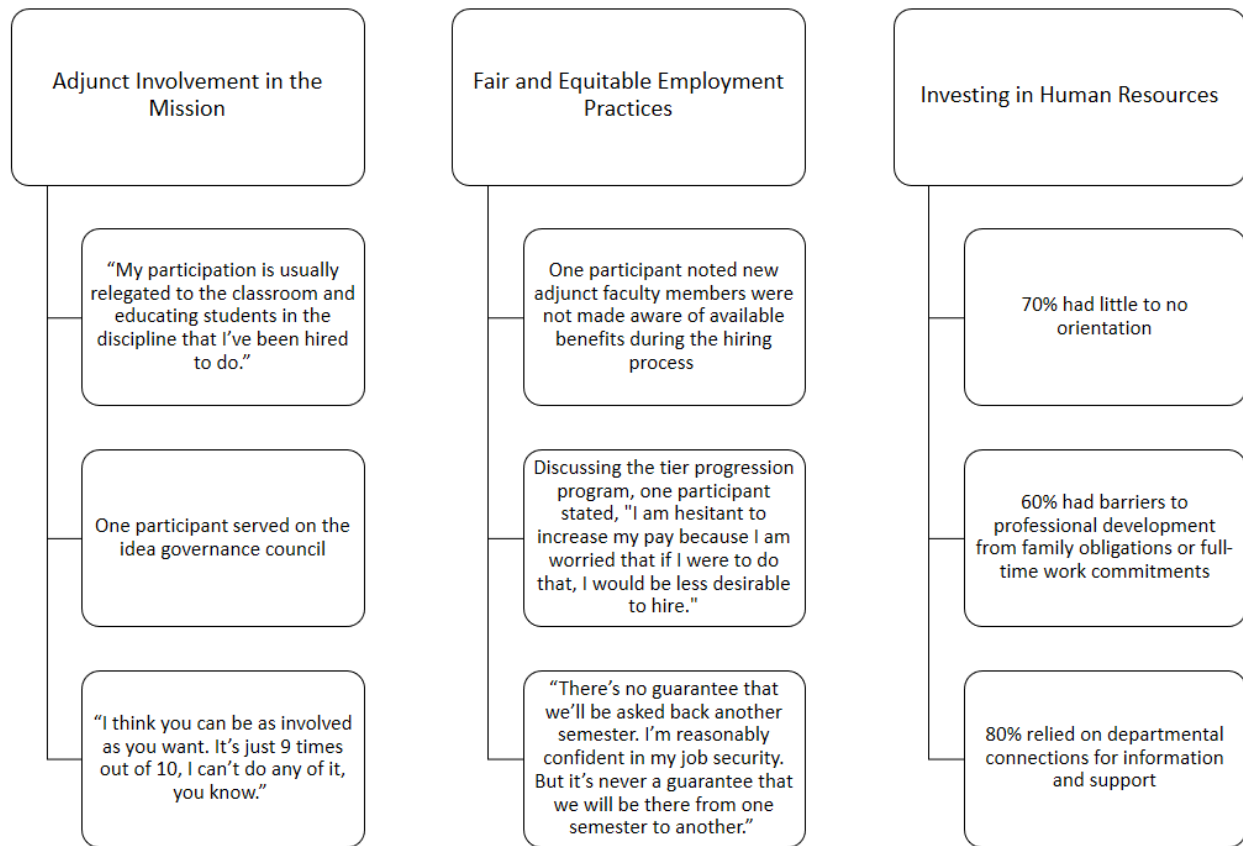
We have a really good help desk. And so, anytime we have an issue, we can call the help desk. And they are normally really good. We have an IT support person right in the building. And if he is there, he can solve the IT problems. And then we also have CTLA,

which is a center for teaching, learning, and assessment department. That office basically acts as the mentor for full-time and adjunct faculty.

In contrast, six participants commented on feeling they had a lack of resources. One participant stated, “I don’t really know anybody in any of the other departments, truthfully, other than the CTL.” One participant commented on trying to find assistance but noted, “Trying to find the right person to talk to and have them get back to you—I’ve hit a wall every single time.” Another participant stated, “Adjuncts are out of the loop. We’re not even on the email threads for almost anything. I’ve been trying since a month after I started working there to get them to put the adjuncts on the email threads.” One adjunct faculty member working in a service capacity noted, “A lot of the orientation and the different methods that they have of giving us ways of developing our skills are very focused but not on service adjuncts.” Two participants commented on the need for more collaboration, with one stating that more collaboration would “create a space to kind of share more openly some of those resources.” Figure 4.4 highlights findings from participant interviews at College C.

Figure 4.4

Findings from Participant Interviews at College C



Cross-Case Analysis

In the previous sections, I provided findings from document analysis and participant interviews from College A, B, and C. This section provides cross-case analysis by comparing data from the document analysis with participant interviews across all three colleges.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

The faculty agreement stated, "Adjunct Faculty contribute to student success through excellence in instruction, ongoing professional development, and organizational service/engagement." Every participant at all three colleges identified their primary involvement in the mission as providing instruction through their courses. Twelve participants identified

additional ways they contributed to the mission and student success, including participating in professional development, creating work-based experiences, providing information on student support services, and serving on committees. A theme emerged when participants discussed specifically how they participated in student success initiatives such as guided pathways. A total of 11 participants were unable to connect their role as an adjunct faculty member to student success work. A sentiment expressed by one participant included, “I don’t even know what a pathway is, so that would make me believe I am not involved.” Another participant stated, “As far as student success initiatives, we don’t have any that I’m aware of.” Finally, a participant stated, “I don’t see any of those activities connected to my team.”

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

The document analysis and interview process were designed to help me understand how the colleges sought to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and the participants’ perceptions of those strategies at their respective colleges. This section concentrates on areas including hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

The faculty agreement described the hiring practices, which included following criteria for selection to adjunct faculty positions. These criteria included verifying an applicant’s skills, abilities, education, and experience relative to the available position. The documents further stated, prior to employment, selected applicants had to complete a background check, an oath of loyalty, and mandatory annual acknowledgements and disclosures. In addition, adjunct faculty had to complete a course on teaching and learning in the community college environment (EDU 250) within 2 years of their initial date of hire. To allow sufficient time for adjunct faculty

members to prepare for the duties required as part of an instructional assignment, employment for each semester was considered to begin 1 calendar week before the 1st day of classes.

Six participants described elements of their hiring process that matched the description from the document analysis. In contrast, two participants from two different colleges expressed concern that adjunct faculty members who had been at their colleges for years were being asked to justify again how they were properly credentialed to teach their existing course assignments and that not all faculty were properly credentialed prior to starting employment at the colleges. One participant noted that they had never taken the EDU 250 course, which was required as a condition of employment. In addition, one participant said they were hired after the first week of class, which did not allow enough time for the adjunct faculty member to prepare for the duties required for the instructional assignment.

Compensation/Benefits

The community college system established five goals for their compensation model. The first goal was to build a talented workforce with career mobility. The second goal was to ensure stewardship of public resources. The third goal was to account for innovative practices and market trends. The fourth goal was to offer fair and equitable pay. Finally, the model valued achievements in a high-performance culture.

When participants discussed compensation and benefits in the interviews, they focused on the topic of the new tier progression program established by the community college system. This program allowed for adjunct faculty to become more educated in innovative practices in higher education. The program was intended to improve fairness and equity in pay for adjunct faculty members. However, based on participant comments, one theme emerged in that there were elements of the program needing additional clarification. For example, participants from

College B were uncertain how the tier program would impact their pay because they were paid on a prorated system by number of students enrolled rather than a flat rate by load hour.

Participants who had previously completed significant professional development hours in sessions such as the ACUE program had conflicting opinions about whether those hours would apply to the tier progression requirements. Additionally, one participant expressed concern that adjunct faculty members participating in the tier progression program might lose course assignments if they were more expensive for departments to employ.

Working Conditions

The faculty agreement stated, “A working environment that is supportive of All Faculty in advancing student success, is essential for the achievement of organizational goals.”

Participants at all three colleges expressed favorable and unfavorable perceptions about their working conditions in terms of facilities, work relationships, and nature of work. One participant described their working conditions as the “Magic Kingdom of opportunities,” but another voiced a contrasting opinion, describing an “archaic” system. In discussing support systems, a theme emerged in that 23 participants from across the three colleges described being supported by a network of colleagues. Three participants described having infrequent conversations and support with colleagues at their colleges. Two participants also mentioned they appreciated the “autonomy” of their work. Others, though, described it as “lonely” or “working in isolation.”

Investing in Human Resources

The document analysis and interview process were designed to help me understand how the colleges sought to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and the participants’ perceptions of those strategies at their respective colleges. Areas covered in this

section include orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward.

Orientation

Document analysis indicated that orientation for new adjunct faculty was handled in a variety of ways. Orientation included a training course designed to prepare faculty for their first semester teaching. This course was supplemented by departmental in-person orientation. During the interview process, participants described the orientation they received as new adjunct faculty members. Across the three colleges, five participants described attending meetings for their orientations. These meetings included an all-faculty meeting at the beginning of each fall and spring semester, department meetings, and discipline-related breakout sessions. Six participants across the three colleges described completing online modules as part of their orientation process. Two themes emerged regarding orientation. First, 10 participants from the colleges stated there was little to no orientation process when they were hired; seven of these 10 participants were from College A. Second, 10 participants across the colleges received a personalized introduction to the college from a department chair, course lead, or mentor; six of these participants were from College B.

Professional Development

The document analysis indicated the community college system committed to providing professional development to advance the mission of student success. The system offered professional development centered around five competencies: (a) design of instruction and classroom management; (b) learner-centered practice; (c) assessments to inform teaching and learning; (d) diversity, equity, and inclusion practices; and (e) professional commitment to the district, college, and discipline.

Interview participants described the professional development available to adjunct faculty members. Of the 30 participants across the three colleges, 29 confirmed that the system offered a robust schedule of professional development opportunities including the topics identified in the five competencies. Participants described professional development including mandatory sessions on topics such as FERPA, technology sessions related to the learning management systems, and courses related to pedagogy. Only one participant, an adjunct faculty member from College C, noted they were unaware of current professional development opportunities. A theme that emerged from participants from all three colleges included 10 participants noting family obligations and time commitments from their full-time jobs made it difficult to participate in professional development opportunities. Six of these participants worked at College C.

Support and Communication

Document analysis indicated several different support structures for adjunct faculty members, such as the centers for teaching and learning, the adjunct faculty association, and departmental employees within the teaching discipline. At all three colleges, a common theme emerging from 23 participants was that they received high levels of support from members of their disciplinary teams, support departments, and physical and digital resources. Six participants from College A, eight participants from College B, and eight participants from College C discussed people they relied on for information and support within their departments. In contrast, one participant from each college discussed the lack of support from their colleges, noting a lack of effectiveness and efficiency in meetings and communication.

Performance Evaluations

The faculty agreement stated the purpose of performance evaluations for adjunct faculty members was to “verify demonstrated proficiency in the adjunct faculty’s instruction and/or

primary work responsibilities within an environment of support and encouragement.” The faculty agreement also noted adjunct faculty members would be evaluated in their first semester and then once a year after or any time they had a new teaching assignment. These evaluations were to be reviewed with the adjunct faculty member within 15 workdays with written copies provided to the adjunct faculty member. In contrast, the adjunct faculty handbook described that the community college system intended to evaluate adjunct faculty members at least once during each of the first 3 semesters they were employed, excluding the summer terms. Thereafter, adjunct faculty members could be evaluated as deemed appropriate by their supervisors.

When interview participants discussed how their performance was evaluated, 25 participants noted their courses have been observed at least once in person or online by either a course lead or a department chair. The frequency of these visits varied within and across campuses. In addition, more than one participant from different campuses noted they had been observed; however, feedback from the observation was not shared within 15 days as described in the faculty agreement. One participant stated their performance had never been evaluated by a supervisor.

Participants from all three campuses confirmed students completed anonymous online surveys to evaluate their classes, with 27 participants stating they had received written feedback from the student surveys. This feedback included a Likert scale rating system and students’ qualitative comments. Two participants stated they did not know if their college used student surveys because they had never received any student feedback.

Recognition and Reward

In the document analysis, little information was found regarding recognition and reward except for websites from College A and College B. The websites described an annual process for

faculty chairs to nominate outstanding adjunct faculty members for recognition in the categories of assessment of student learning and contributions to teaching and learning. The nominees were honored at a special event hosted by the college president and senior leadership. Additionally, the nominees were recognized at the annual meeting for all faculty.

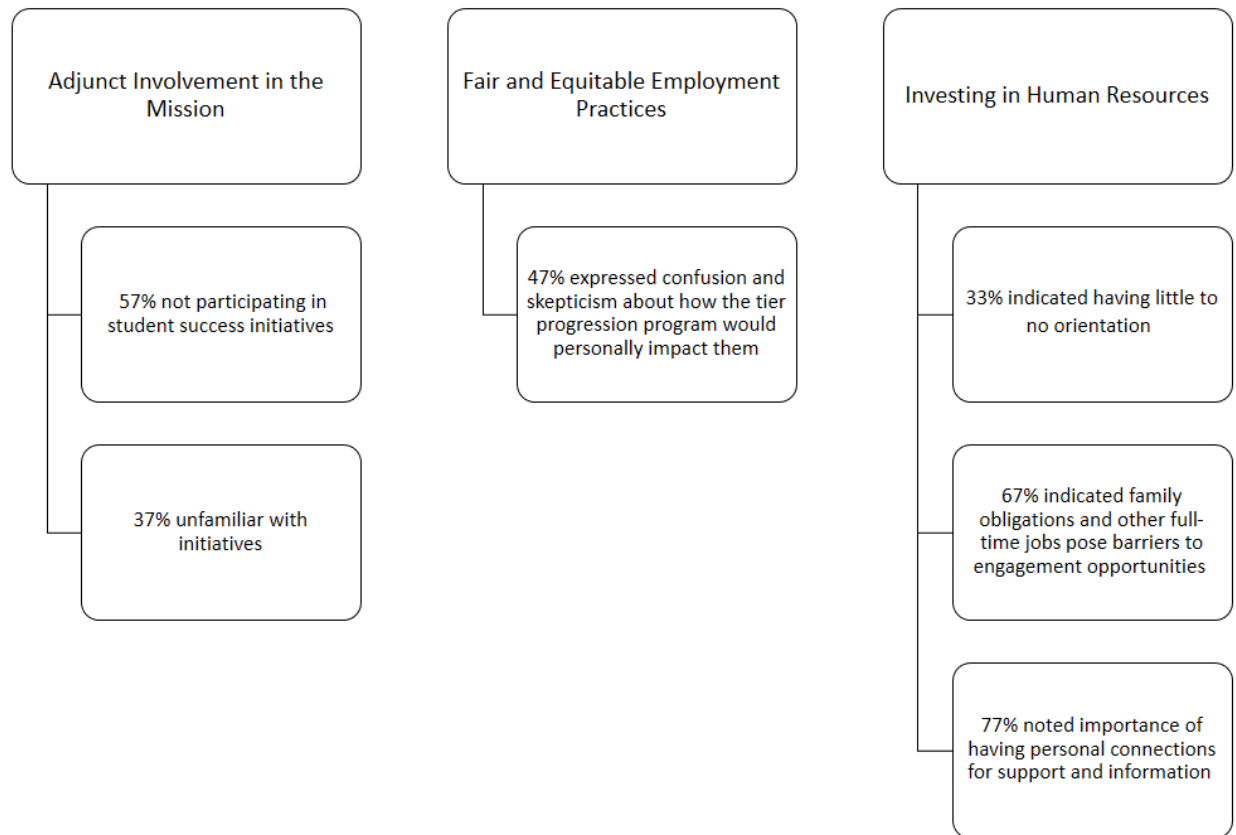
During the interviews, 17 participants from across the three colleges discussed a similar process described on the websites. The accounts from participants had variations concerning who was allowed to make the nominations, how the awards were distributed, and the perceived value of the awards. Three award winners described being proud of their accomplishment and appreciated the recognition. Two award winners stated they would have preferred to receive additional compensation and that the recognition did not improve their standing within the faculty ranks.

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources

Throughout the interviews, participants described their motivation to engage in or disengage from student success initiatives at their respective colleges. These conditions can be tied to the presence of meaningfulness of the work, psychological safety at work, and the availability of physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage. A theme that emerged from participants across all three institutions was that having a personal connection or network of colleagues enhanced the conditions of meaningfulness of work, psychological safety, and availability of resources. Based on participant interviews, the colleges contributed to these three conditions by establishing contacts for adjunct faculty members in their discipline, in the adjunct faculty association, and in support departments such as the centers for teaching and learning. Figure 4.5 highlights findings from the Cross-Case Analysis.

Figure 4.5

Findings from Cross-Case Analysis



Summary

This chapter included a review of the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, data collection and analysis, and descriptions of the institutions and participants. I presented findings from document analysis and participant interviews using the theoretical framework from Kahn's (1990) engagement theory and conceptual frameworks from Gappa and Leslie's (1993) recommendations for improving the status of adjunct faculty in higher education. Within-case analysis included findings from each individual college. Cross-case analysis

compared the document analysis to findings from all three colleges. Chapter 5 summarizes the entire study and includes conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter reviews the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study. These sections are followed by a description of the study methodology and data collection and analysis. The chapter ends with findings from the research, implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and a summary.

Statement of the Problem

Community colleges rely heavily on their adjunct faculty to provide instruction; however, institutions often fail to fully engage and support adjunct faculty in the work of student success. Although adjunct faculty represent approximately two thirds of all faculty at community colleges (American Association of University Professors, 2018), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2020) indicated they work under challenging conditions with limited support from their institutions. Despite the disadvantages adjunct faculty may face, the role they play as the majority in the faculty base is critical to support student learning and the overall student experience at community colleges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and understand adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) recommended the purpose of a study reflect the recommendations of other authors for continued exploration of a topic. Thirolf (2017) recommended new research be conducted on engaging adjunct faculty in initiatives to improve student outcomes. Potts (2021) also stated it was imperative to understand the lived experiences of adjunct faculty members to improve conditions that support student success.

Research Questions

Two primary research questions informed this study:

1. What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?
2. What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework used to guide this study was Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Kahn's theory states the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability of resources influence employees' choices to engage or disengage at work. Kahn's theory has been used in many studies on adjunct faculty engagement, including studies on topics such as mentoring (Danaei, 2018), online instruction (Mohabir-McKinley, 2020), perceptions of institutional culture (Seluk, 2020), and servant leadership (Hagan-Short, 2018). Kahn's theory was appropriate to use in this study based on the focus of the research on strategies used to engage adjunct faculty members and their perceptions of those strategies.

The conceptual framework for this study came from recommendations in *The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-Time Faculty* (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Recommendations in this influential book were grouped into three chapters categorized into the following themes: (a) using adjunct faculty to achieve educational objectives, (b) developing fair and equitable employment practices, and (c) investing in human resources (see Appendix B). The conceptual framework served to inform the interview protocol and data analysis, which included specific

questions and codes related to the three themes from Gappa and Leslie (1993) and factors from Kahn's (1990) work.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology with a multisite case study design to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a large community college system. The study was designed to increase understanding of adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) stated, "A case study is an approach to qualitative research in which a practitioner scholar focuses on a detailed study of one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 102).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study included two primary sources of data: (a) participant interviews and (b) document analysis. Participant interviews included 30 adjunct faculty members from three participating colleges within the community college system. Interviews followed interview protocols (see Appendix C), which included semistructured interview questions with additional probing questions as needed to gain clarity in the responses. The interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom with the participants' names and identities hidden. The document analysis included a review of a faculty agreement, adjunct faculty handbook, and institutional websites.

Following the interviews, I transcribed the participants' responses and emailed them to each adjunct faculty member to allow for member checking. After incorporating the responses from member checking, I began the process of coding the collected documents and interview transcripts. To identify recurrent themes, I coded each transcript and institutional document in the Dedoose software system, looking for similar elements found in Kahn's (1990) theoretical framework and Gappa and Leslie's (1993) conceptual framework. I reviewed each document and

transcript multiple times and used an iterative process during coding to determine the true essence of the data and uncover emerging themes. To reduce personal bias in the coding process, a third-party professional with extensive knowledge of higher education and research methods reviewed 10% of the coded transcripts. The audit review stated the coding decisions were visible, clearly explained, and comprehensive (see Appendix H).

Discussion of Findings and Related Literature

This study explored the strategies used by a community college system to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and adjunct faculty members' perceptions of those strategies. This study's findings have been interpreted as relating to existing literature and are discussed below following the structure of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Additionally, a section has been included to discuss the key takeaways from the findings.

Adjunct Faculty Involvement in the Mission

In a report to the National Commission on Higher Education, Rhoades (2012) described the lack of faculty engagement in student success initiatives. Rhoades stated, "Broader faculty engagement is required to realize higher levels of educational quality, student attainment, and college completion" (Rhoades, 2012, p. 19). The work of improving student outcomes cannot be completed without broad engagement of adjunct faculty members who teach a substantial portion of community college classes nationwide.

A review of archival documents indicated the community college system had taken actions to encourage broad engagement of adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. The faculty agreement noted that adjunct faculty contributed to student success through excellence in instruction, ongoing professional development, and organizational service/engagement. The institution had created policies and practices that enhanced excellence

in instruction by providing orientation, professional development, salary tier progression, and performance evaluations for adjunct faculty. In addition, adjunct faculty had representation on committees and councils focused on improving student outcomes.

In the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2014) document, adjunct faculty reported never getting information about what their role specifically was. Within this study, there were examples of adjunct faculty members who were highly knowledgeable about their role in student success initiatives; however, a theme emerged when participants discussed specifically how they participated in student success initiatives such as guided pathways. A total of 11 participants were unfamiliar with student success initiatives and unable to connect their role as an adjunct faculty member to student success work. In addition, 17 out of 30 participants in the study indicated they were not currently participating in student success initiatives and saw their role in the mission limited to teaching their assigned courses.

Developing Fair and Equitable Employment Practices

With pressures to maximize student outcomes, CCCSE (2014) noted, “College leaders who want to better serve their students should closely examine the expectations of and their support for their part-time faculty—and how both are shaped by the institution’s culture, policies, and practices” (p. 8). For the study’s purposes, data were collected on hiring practices, compensation/benefits, and working conditions.

Hiring Practices

Roueche et al. (1995) noted the importance of having a clear purpose and consistent implementation of policies and practices for recruiting, selecting, and hiring adjunct faculty members. The study sites had clear hiring practices identified in their faculty agreement, which stated hiring procedures, preemployment conditions, and mandatory obligations for new hires.

Only three participants from the study identified inconsistent implementation of stated policies and practices from their lived experiences. For example, the faculty agreement stated new hires would complete a course on teaching and learning in the community college environment (EDU 250) within the first 2 years of employment, and one participant noted they had taught at their college for several years without completing the mandatory course. In a second example, two participants from two different colleges expressed concern that adjunct faculty members who had been at their colleges for years were being asked to justify again how they were properly credentialed to teach their existing course assignments and that some faculty were not properly credentialed prior to starting employment at the colleges.

Compensation/Benefits

Gappa and Leslie (1993) cited the need to establish career tracks for adjunct faculty members and a salary with standards for progression. Roueche et al. (1995) also voiced the need for equitable pay schedules when they stated adjunct faculty members deserved access to merit pay increases, cost of living adjustments, and equitable pay for work performed. The study sites implemented a tier progression program that provided adjunct faculty members with an avenue for salary progression when adjunct faculty members completed preapproved professional development courses. Successful progression through the tier program would allow adjunct faculty members to increase their board-approved rate for adjunct faculty teaching load hour by 10%. In addition, adjunct faculty members with instructional assignments could also be compensated for other duties such as committee work, tutoring, or substituting. However, there was no current mechanism in place for merit increases.

One theme emerged in the participant perceptions regarding compensation in that there were elements of the program needing additional clarification. For example, participants from

College B were uncertain how the tier program would impact their pay because they were paid on a prorated system by number of students enrolled rather than a flat rate by load hour.

Participants who had previously completed significant professional development hours in sessions such as the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) program had conflicting opinions about whether these hours would apply to the tier progression requirements. Additionally, one participant expressed concern that adjunct faculty members might not be assigned as many courses if a departmental supervisor viewed their increased salary as a budget concern.

Working Conditions

The CCCSE (2014) report noted 75% of adjunct faculty members only had secure employment for one term at a time with little notice of future assignments, which created financial stress and uncertainty in their lives. This study found participants at the study sites were considered “at-will” employees. No contractual rights existed between the community college system and adjunct faculty members. Through the interview process, three participants acknowledged they were “at-will” employees but also stated it was not a source of stress for them, as they had been employed at their colleges for an extended period of time.

Bickerstaff and Chavarin (2018) noted it is common for adjunct faculty to have unequal access to institutional resources and a limited network of colleagues to call on for assistance. In this study, a theme emerged in that 23 participants from across the three colleges described being supported by a network of colleagues. However, there were also three participants who noted having infrequent conversations and support from colleagues at their colleges.

Investing in Human Resources

CCCSE (2014), Gappa and Leslie (1993), and Roueche et al. (1995) stated strategies to engage adjunct faculty members varied at different institutions but could include orientation, professional development, evaluations, and monetary and nonmonetary recognitions. For this study's purposes, data were collected for each of these areas as well as support and communication.

Orientation

An orientation process, including an introduction to the institution, employment policies, and types of academic support available to students, is important for all faculty (Kezar & Maxey, 2013). CCCSE (2019), Gappa and Leslie (1993), and Roueche et al. (1995) recommended intentional planning and inclusion of adjunct faculty members in the orientation process. Roueche et al. noted the importance of providing a faculty handbook at orientation to inform new adjunct faculty members of institutional policies, support services, and expectations. In my study, an adjunct faculty handbook was available to all adjunct faculty members through the community college system's website.

At the study sites, the faculty agreement and the adjunct faculty handbook did not have descriptions about practices related to orientation. Limited information was available on the college's websites describing a QuickStart class to prepare adjunct faculty members for their first teaching assignment and practices specific to College B. Based on participant interviews, orientation appeared to be one of the most inconsistent practices among the study sites. In the interviews, 13 out of 30 adjunct faculty members described participating in a structured process led by a member of their department who discussed topics such as an introduction to the institution, employment policies, available resources, and types of support available to students.

Other orientation activities were discussed by seven participants who engaged in all-faculty and department meetings at the beginning of the semester and eight participants who completed online orientation modules. In contrast, 6 out of 30 participants described having no orientation, with one participant stating they “just kind of muddled through.” This is an area that could be strengthened by the system and college sites.

Professional Development

Roueche et al. (1995) recommended all adjunct faculty members participate in mandatory professional development. According to the faculty agreement at the study sites, all faculty were expected to provide exceptional instruction and/or service by continuing to strengthen their knowledge and practices within their discipline and by attending trainings required by district, state, or federal mandate. The system offered professional development centered on five competencies: (a) design of instruction and classroom management; (b) learner-centered practice; (c) assessments to inform teaching and learning; (d) diversity, equity, and inclusion practices; and (e) professional commitment to the district, college, and discipline. The system provided mandatory professional development for adjunct faculty and a robust offering of optional courses.

Participants across the three colleges confirmed the system offered a robust schedule of professional development opportunities including the topics identified in the five competencies. In addition, participants confirmed the availability of courses that could be taken to earn credits for the tier progression program. Participants engaged in diverse types of professional development, including mandatory sessions on topics such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), technology related to the learning management systems, and courses related to pedagogy.

Roueche et al. (1995) suggested training must be offered at times and in manners that are convenient and effective for adjunct faculty members. Participants who had not engaged as much in the professional development opportunities noted time conflicts often prevented them from engaging in the training. Providing professional development opportunities in different modalities and at times convenient for adjunct faculty members will be key for increasing participation in these strategies.

Support and Communication

Extant and current literature emphasized the importance of providing frequent and consistent communication with adjunct faculty members to ensure they have the support critical to their success in the classroom (CCCSE, 2009; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Roueche et al. (2015) recommended inviting adjunct faculty members to departmental meetings, college activities, and college committees. Roueche et al. further highlighted the importance of involving adjunct faculty members in communication related to student success, such as curriculum design and student support.

The document analysis provided limited information about support and communication for adjunct faculty. The adjunct faculty handbook noted the centers for teaching and learning “are often the adjuncts best resource for improving instruction and meeting the needs of students.” Within the community college system, there was an adjunct faculty association that provided representation for the voice of all adjunct faculty members and one method for support and communication.

Results of a faculty survey conducted by Ran and Sanders (2019) indicated part-time faculty members had less knowledge about both academic and nonacademic services, which hindered their ability to serve students effectively. Participant interviews indicated there was

inconsistent communication and support for adjunct faculty, which impacted student support in the community college system. Although participants noted they received informative emails, participated in department meetings, engaged in committee work, and used the centers for teaching and learning, a total of 11 participants were unable to connect their role as an adjunct faculty member to student success work. Achieving the Dream (ATD, 2019) noted adjunct faculty members can benefit from having a clear understanding of the students they serve and the initiatives at work to improve student outcomes. This is an area that could be strengthened across the study sites.

Performance Evaluations

My review of the literature indicated periodic evaluation of adjunct faculty members' performance was critical to providing support for improvement (ATD, 2019; CCCSE, 2014; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Roueche et al., 1995). Roueche et al. (1995) emphasized the importance of using a multidimensional design to evaluate adjunct faculty that could include a combination of self-evaluations, peer evaluations, student evaluations, and supervisor evaluations.

The faculty agreement from the study sites stated the purpose of performance evaluations for adjunct faculty members was to “verify demonstrated proficiency in the adjunct faculty’s instruction and/or primary work responsibilities within an environment of support and encouragement.” One method of performance evaluations used by the study sites was evaluations completed by a supervisor or course lead who observed the instructor’s course. When interview participants discussed how their performance was evaluated, 25 participants noted their courses had been observed at least once in person or online by either a course lead or a department chair. The frequency of these visits varied within and across campuses. In addition, more than one participant from different campuses noted they had been observed; however,

feedback from the observation was not shared within 15 days as described in the faculty agreement. One participant stated their performance had never been evaluated by a supervisor. There seemed to be more consistency in the second method of performance evaluation, which was conducted by student surveys; however, there were 2 participants out of 30 who noted they had not seen any feedback from student surveys during their time at the colleges. Consistency in conducting performance evaluations will be critical to verify demonstrated proficiency in adjunct faculty members' performance and recommend professional development for potential areas of growth.

Recognition and Rewards

The literature review indicated recognition and reward for performance were important tools for engaging adjunct faculty members and could be implemented through monetary or nonmonetary forms of recognition (CCCSE, 2014). Limited information was found on recognition and reward during the document analysis. The only evidence found was from the websites for College A and College B which, described an annual process for faculty chairs to nominate outstanding adjunct faculty members for recognition in the categories of assessment of student learning and contributions to teaching and learning. The nominees were honored at a special event hosted by the college president and senior leadership. Additionally, the nominees were recognized at the annual meeting for all faculty.

Participants in the CCCSE (2014) survey noted even small tokens of recognition, like lapel pins, were appreciated and worn as a badge of honor. Interview participants confirmed the colleges provided recognition such as award ceremonies to honor outstanding adjunct faculty. In addition, participants discussed several types of informal recognition they appreciated, such as

digital high fives from the college president, a newsletter providing adjunct spotlights for achievements, and verbal and monetary recognitions of contributions at department meetings.

Meaningfulness, Psychological Safety, and Availability of Resources

In the interview process, participants were asked which institutional strategies were most successful in increasing their motivation to engage in student success initiatives. Sources of motivation were personal for each participant; however, themes emerged in the data. Employees experience meaningfulness when they feel their efforts are valued and valuable (Kahn, 1990). Of the 30 participants, 9 individuals indicated that the meaningfulness of their work was their greatest source of motivation. These participants responded they enjoyed their work, had a commitment to education, and wanted to help students achieve their goals.

Psychological safety is experienced when employees can be their authentic self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety was indicated as a source of motivation for two participants, with both stating they increased their engagement in student success initiatives to maintain their current employment with the hope their efforts would one day be rewarded with a full-time faculty position.

According to Kahn (1990), availability of resources is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage. Leaders ensure employees have availability of resources by being aware of employee needs and seeking solutions to address those needs. The availability of resources was noted by 18 participants as their greatest sources of motivation. This finding aligns with research by Potts (2021), which indicated availability of resources and interactions with colleagues positively contributed to work experiences for adjunct faculty members. For participants in my research, 11 specifically stated a valuable resource for them was interpersonal relationships and support from colleagues in their departments, in administration,

and in support services. Other participants commented on the availability of resources from specific initiatives, such as the early alert system, the tier progression program, library instruction, and opportunities for professional development.

For participants at the study sites, when they could identify positive conditions of meaningfulness of work, psychological safety, and availability of resources, they indicated they were more motivated to engage in the work they perceived to impact student success. When participants identified one or more of these conditions was not present in their work environment, the potential existed for participants to disengage from the work of student success. For example, two participants from two different colleges commented they had a mentor in their first semester; however, they no longer had that mentor and had lost some connection to the institution and student success goals. Two other participants commented there was not anything in their current work environment that was motivating them to engage in student success initiatives.

Key Takeaways From the Findings

Based on the findings from the document analysis and participant interviews, key takeaways have been summarized below. These key takeaways focus on the areas of communication, consistency, and connections.

Key Takeaway 1: Communication

The community college system had successfully documented policies and practices to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. The faculty agreement, adjunct faculty handbook, and websites communicated the adjunct faculty role in the mission, professional development opportunities to enhance excellence in instruction, and compensation and recognition strategies designed to encourage professional growth. A theme emerged in the

participant interviews when 11 participants were unable to connect their role as an adjunct faculty member to student success work.

Communication was key to ensuring adjunct faculty members understood expectations for involvement in the mission. Formal communication could start at the system level in formal documents such as the faculty agreement and adjunct faculty handbook. Additional communication of these policies and practices was needed during orientation, professional development, and performance evaluation processes to maintain focus on the expectations for adjunct faculty involvement in the mission. Modes of communication had to be examined to ensure adjunct faculty members had options for participating in college initiatives that were convenient and effective. In addition, as changes were made at the institution, such as the introduction of the salary tier progression program, communication became even more important in bringing clarity to how changes would impact adjunct faculty.

Key Takeaway 2: Consistency

As stated previously, the community college system had successfully documented policies and procedures to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. The faculty agreement and adjunct faculty handbook described policies and practices for hiring, compensation, professional development, and performance evaluation. Consistency was key to ensure these policies and practices were implemented properly to achieve the mission and improve student success outcomes. Consistency in policy and practice could be improved at the community college system while still allowing flexibility at the individual colleges to create innovative solutions to local challenges.

Consistency in implementation seemed to be most problematic in orientation and performance evaluation. Two themes emerged regarding orientation. First, 10 participants from

the colleges stated there was little to no orientation process when they were hired; seven of these participants were from College A. Second, 10 participants across the colleges received a personalized introduction to the college from a department chair, course lead, or mentor; six of these participants were from College B. In addition, consistency in implementation of the new salary tier progression program based on the completion of professional development hours will be critical for the success of the new program. Policies and practices for these areas could be strengthened system wide to improve consistency in the adjunct faculty experience.

Key Takeaway 3: Connections

A theme that emerged from participant interviews across all three institutions was having a personal contact or network of colleagues enhanced the conditions of meaningfulness of work, psychological safety, and availability of resources. Of the 30 participants, 23 participants from across the three colleges described being supported by a network of colleagues. They indicated they received high levels of support from members of their disciplinary teams and support departments. Six participants from College A, eight participants from College B, and eight participants from College C discussed people they rely on for information and support within their colleges and the community college system. The colleges contributed to the conditions of meaningfulness of work, psychological safety, and availability of resources by fostering meaningful connections for adjunct faculty members within their discipline, the adjunct faculty association, and support departments such as the centers for teaching and learning.

Unexpected Findings

Throughout the research process, there were several unexpected findings. In the community colleges studied, strategies for orienting adjunct faculty to the mission of the college and student success initiatives varied across colleges and even within colleges. No specific

orientation template was found in the document analysis, and no participants referred to following a specific template. CCCSE (2014) noted the presence of a new hire checklist and orientation template ensured all new faculty members received access to quality information at the time of hire.

A second unexpected finding related to the implementation of the salary tier progression program for adjunct faculty. In the document analysis, this program seemed clear and beneficial for adjunct faculty. However, when participants spoke of this program, they indicated they had unanswered questions and confusion about how it applied to their positions at their respective colleges. To be an effective strategy to increase adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives, this program must be communicated clearly and implemented with consistency.

Practical Implications

ATD (2019) noted the importance of engaging adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. To accomplish increased engagement, ATD recommended four principles: (a) inspire faculty engagement, (b) develop a culture of engagement, (c) provide resources and recognition to inspire engagement, and (d) expect continuous engagement.

To inspire adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives, adjunct faculty members must first have awareness of the available student success initiatives that provide a complete experience for the student. Orientation processes, professional development sessions, and effective communication can be used to keep adjunct faculty members current on initiatives to support student success; however, consistency in implementation of these strategies at the department level is critical. With adjunct faculty members on the front lines engaging with students through their courses, they should be familiar with student success initiatives to be able to connect students with critical support services. For example, for community college systems

participating in guided pathways, adjunct faculty should be aware how their role supports students in the four pillars of the initiative: (a) mapping pathways to student end goals, (b) helping students choose and enter a pathway, (c) keeping students on their path, and (d) ensuring students are learning.

Developing a culture of engagement requires institutions to have regular and substantive communication with their adjunct faculty. In this study, adjunct faculty members had the strongest connection to their institutions through their supervisor or lead faculty member. The strength of that interpersonal relationship can influence how the adjunct faculty member perceives their meaningfulness of work, psychological safety, and availability of resources. These three conditions often influence whether an individual chooses to engage in or disengage from the workplace (Kahn, 1990).

Providing resources and recognition to inspire engagement can be hampered by ineffective communication. Participant interviews showed the importance of the community college system having clear, actionable, and intentional communication with adjunct faculty members regarding their role and resources related to student success initiatives. Communication on this significant role should start during the orientation process, continue through daily interactions and professional development, and be emphasized through the performance evaluation process.

Expecting continuous engagement requires consistency. On the part of the community college system, more consistency is needed within and across campuses to provide all adjunct faculty an effective orientation that clarifies their role in student success initiatives. In addition, consistency is needed in performance evaluations to recognize adjunct faculty members'

contributions and provide recommendations for areas that could be improved through additional professional development.

Recommendations for Further Research

The focus of this study was to understand how a community college system engages adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of those strategies. Many opportunities exist for further research to make additional contributions to this body of knowledge. One recommendation would be to conduct the same study but delimit participants to adjunct faculty members who started at their institutions during the same semester. That would provide consistency about the established policies and practices in effect at the time of participants' hire dates. Another recommendation for further research is to structure a study on the same topic using multiple community college systems. This study was delimited to one community college system. Further research could explore this topic across two or more community college systems to compare the results of different systems. A final recommendation for future research is to structure a study on the same topic using a mixed methods study including both a survey and interviews with adjunct faculty members. This would provide additional quantitative data to add to the participants' perceptions obtained through the interview process.

Summary

This research studied strategies used by a community college system to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives and adjunct faculty members' perceptions of those strategies. Recommendations from Gappa and Leslie (1993) stated community colleges should offer parallel but different policies and practices addressing the same topics for both full-time and adjunct faculty members to create positive conditions to increase adjunct faculty engagement

and student success. The information that follows provides a summary of the findings related to this study's two research questions.

Research Question 1

What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system? The findings from this study indicated the community college system and selected study sites created strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives. Policies and practices were documented in the faculty agreement and adjunct faculty handbook. The faculty agreement stated, "Adjunct Faculty contribute to student success through excellence in instruction, ongoing professional development, and organizational service/engagement." In addition, the agreement noted both full-time and adjunct faculty "undertake leadership roles to promote student success and advance the missions of the colleges."

Policies and practices were designed to onboard qualified adjunct faculty members who provided excellence in instruction to improve student success. The compensation system promoted adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives by allowing for a tier progression program related to completion of professional development hours. Adjunct Faculty Professional Growth Funds were available as a benefit to encourage upskilling that enhanced student success. Tools provided in the working conditions such as Dropout Detective software and guidelines for substantive interaction in online courses provided tangible ways for adjunct faculty to engage in actions that promoted student success. In addition, the community college system adopted the guided pathways model and provided data on their website to communicate student outcomes related to this initiative.

In addition, it was evident from the document analysis the community college system had practices in place to invest in human resources through orientation, professional development, support and communication, performance evaluations, and recognition and reward. Orientation practices existed to educate adjunct faculty about each college's mission. A robust offering of professional development courses from the community college system and study sites was available to educate adjunct faculty about successful pedagogical techniques, using technology to improve student outcomes, and effectively serving adult learners. Communication and support for adjunct faculty was provided through all-faculty meetings, department meetings, online portals, and email messages. Policies defined that performance evaluations verified the effectiveness of adjunct faculty through course observations and student surveys. Finally, adjunct faculty members' outstanding contributions to student success were recognized through formal award ceremonies, newsletters, and verbal recognition at meetings. These strategies promoted adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives and desired behaviors to improve student outcomes.

Research Question 2

What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system? Understanding adjunct faculty members' perspectives of faculty engagement was critical for leadership to refine policies and practices that prepare these instructors to reach their full potential as quality educators who could support their students' needs. Participant interviews at the study sites provided the voice of adjunct faculty members regarding their engagement in student success initiatives. From these interviews, it became evident that although policies and practices were defined in the faculty agreement and adjunct faculty handbook, adjunct faculty engagement in student success

initiatives could be further enhanced by improving communication, implementing policies and practices consistently, and fostering connections for adjunct faculty members.

Although the community college system and study sites had policies and practices designed to improve adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives, the implementation of these strategies was not consistent among colleges and departments. Study participants described inconsistent communication about their role in student success initiatives and a lack of quality feedback through performance evaluations. It was critical for adjunct faculty members to have a connection within their discipline who can communicate their role in engaging in student success initiatives, carry out an effective orientation, recommend appropriate professional development, and strengthen adjunct faculty skills through consistent performance evaluation.

In conclusion, the community college system has made tremendous strides in creating strategies to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives by documenting policies and practices in the adjunct faculty handbook and faculty agreement. Further work can be done to ensure that the implementation of these policies and practices is consistent and focuses on improving student outcomes. Continuing to seek the voice of adjunct faculty members will be critical as the institution works toward greater student success outcomes.

References

- Achieving the Dream. (2019). *Engaging adjunct faculty in the student success movement: A practitioner's guide*. <https://www.proquest.com/encyclopedias-reference-works/engaging-adjunct-faculty-student-success-movement/docview/2459015598/se-2>
- Achieving the Dream. (2020). *Teaching and learning toolkit: A research-based guide to building a culture of teaching & learning excellence*. https://achievingthedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/atd_teaching-learning-toolkit_2020-6.pdf
- Achieving the Dream. (2022). *Report from the field: ATD's support for capacity building in teaching and learning*. <https://achievingthedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ATD-Support-Capacity-Building-Teaching-Learning.pdf>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2016). *What is the pathways model? Pathways institutes resources*. <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PathwaysModelDescription1021.pdf>
- American Association of Community Colleges. (2022). *AACC competencies for community college leaders* (4th ed.). Community College Press.
- American Association of University Professors. (2018). *Data snapshot: Contingent faculty in U.S. higher education*. <https://www.aaup.org/news/data-snapshot-contingent-faculty-us-higher-ed#>
- American Federation of Teachers. (2020). *An army of temps: AFT adjunct faculty quality of work/life report*. https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/media/2022/qualitylifereport_feb2022.pdf
- Bailey, T., Jaggars, S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success*. Harvard University Press.

- Banachowski, G. (1996). *Perspectives and perceptions: A review of the literature on the use of part-time faculty in community colleges* (ED398943). ERIC.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED398943.pdf>
- Bates, S. (2004). Getting engaged. *HR Magazine*, 49(2), 44–51. <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/Pages/0204covstory.aspx>
- Bettinger, E. P. (2010). *Does cheaper mean better? The impact of using adjunct instructors on student outcomes*.
https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/btl/files/bettinger_long_2010_does_cheaper_mean_better_-_impact_of_using_adjuncts_-_restat.pdf
- Bickerstaff, S., & Chavarin, O. (2018). *Understanding the part-time faculty at sic community colleges*. Community College Research Center.
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/understanding-part-time-faculty-community-colleges.pdf>
- Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *Making connections: Dimension of student engagement*.
https://www.ccsse.org/publications/national_report_2009/CCSSE09_nationalreport.pdf
- Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2014). *Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus*. https://www.ccsse.org/docs/PTF_Special_Report.pdf
- Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2019). *Teaching and learning within a guided pathways framework*. <https://cccse.org/ESAL/framework>
- Community College of Philadelphia. (n.d.). *Employee benefits and union resources*.
<https://www.myccp.online/faculty-center-teaching-and-learning/employee-benefits-and-union-resources>

- Community College Research Center. (2021). *Investing in student success at community colleges: Lessons from research on guided pathways*.
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/policy-brief-guided-pathways.pdf>
- Crawford, E. R., LePine, J. A., & Rich, B. L. (2010). Linking job demands and resources to employee engagement and burnout: A theoretical extension and meta-analytic test. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(5), 834–848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019364>
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Danaei, K. J. (2018). *Mentoring and adjunct faculty* (Publication No. 10807760) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Wyoming]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/mentoring-adjunct-faculty/docview/2068551063/se-2>
- Dedoose. (n.d.). <https://www.dedoose.com>
- Dolan, V. L. B. (2011). The isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on their performance. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 12(2), 62–77. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v12i2.793>
- Ellis, M. (2012). Teaching associate faculty-in-training program. In J. E. Roueche & S. D. Roueche (Eds.), *Rising to the challenge: Lessons learned from Guilford Technical Community College* (pp. 23–34). Community College Press.
- Eney, P. R., & Davidson, E. (2014). Improving supervision of part-time instructors. In S. L. Armstrong, N. A. Stahl, & H. R. Boylan (Eds.), *Teaching developmental reading: Historical, theoretical, and practical background readings* (pp. 527–542). Bedford/St. Martin's.

- Fain, P. (2014, April 6). Low expectations, high stakes. *Inside Higher Ed*.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/04/07/part-time-professors-teach-most-community-college-students-report-finds>
- Fischer, K. (2020). Onboarding adjunct faculty: Two institutional models and lessons learned. *The Department Chair*, 31(1), 8–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dch.30328>
- Flaherty, C. (2020, April 20). Barely getting by: New report says many adjuncts make less than \$3,500 per course and \$25,000 per year. *Inside Higher Ed*.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/20/new-report-says-many-adjuncts-make-less-3500-course-and-25000-year>
- Gallup. (2022). *2020 Gallup report – Employee engagement and performance: Latest insights from the world’s largest study*. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/321032/employee-engagement-meta-analysis-brief.aspx>
- Gappa, J., Austin, A., & Trice, A. (2007) *Rethinking faculty work: Higher education’s strategic imperative*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gappa, J. M., & Leslie, D. W. (1993). *The invisible faculty: Improving the status of part-timers in higher education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Guthrie, R., Wyrick, C., & Navarette, C. (2019). Adjunct faculty can increase student success: Create opportunities for them to lift graduation and retention rates. *Planning for Higher Education Journal*, 48(1), 1–8. <https://www.scup.org/resource/adjunct-faculty-can-increase-student-success/>

- Hagan-Short, M. L. (2018). *Servant leadership as a determinant of engaged community college adjunct faculty: A quantitative correlation study* (Publication No. 10784939) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
<https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/servant-leadership-as-determinant-engaged/docview/2029883678/se-2>
- Harter, J. (2022). *Is quiet quitting real?* Gallup.
<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/398306/quiet-quitting-real.aspx>
- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2), 268–279. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.2.268>
- Hendricks, P., & Voight, M. (2022). *They need to be connected: Furthering college completion including through adult reengagement through degrees when due*. Association of Community College Trustees. <https://perspectives.acct.org/stories/they-need-to-be-connected-furthering-college-completion-including-through-adult-reengagement-through-degrees-when-due>
- Jones, L., Jr. (2019). Growing proportion of part-time faculty portends problems. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. <https://www.diverseeducation.com/faculty-staff/article/15105155/growing-proportion-of-part-time-faculty-portends-problems>
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692–724. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256287>
- Kahn, W. A. (1992). To be fully there: Psychological presence at work. *Human Relations*, 45(4), 321–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679204500402>

- Kahn, W. A. (2010). The essence of engagement: Lessons from the field. In S. L. Albrecht (Ed.), *Handbook of employee engagement: Perspectives, issues, research, and practice* (pp. 20–30). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849806374.00008>
- Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability, and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15(2), 257–272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600902875332>
- Kelly, R. (2013). Adjunct professional development improves teaching, builds community. *Academic Leader*, 28(4), 8. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/professional-development-for-adjunct-faculty-improves-teaching-builds-community/>
- Kezar, A. (Ed.). (2012). *Embracing non-tenure track faculty: Changing campuses for the new faculty majority*. Routledge.
- Kezar, A. (2013). Examining non-tenure track faculty perceptions of how departmental policies and practices shape their performance and ability to create student learning at four-year institutions. *Research in Higher Education*, 54(5), 571–598. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9288-5>
- Kezar, A., & Maxey, D. (2013). *Dispelling the myths: Locating the resources to support non-tenure track faculty*. Pullias Center for Higher Education.
- Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2010). Special issue: Understanding the new majority of non-tenure-track faculty in higher education--demographics, experiences, and plans of action. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 36(4), 1–133. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3604>

- Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2013). Institutionalizing equitable policies and practices for contingent faculty. *Journal of Higher Education*, 84(1), 56–87.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2013.0002>
- Lach, P. A., Russell, L. M., & Morgan, R. K. (2021). All aboard! Getting faculty mobilized for emergency online teaching. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology*, 10, 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.14434/jotlt.v10i1.31374>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Lochmiller, C. R., & Lester, J. M. (2017). *An introduction to educational research: Connecting methods to practice*. SAGE Publications.
- Lone Star College. (2022). *Adjunct central*. <https://www.lonestar.edu/adjunctcentral>
- Maricopa County Community College District. (2012). *Adjunct faculty employee handbook*.
https://cdn.maricopa.edu/documents/pdf/hr/handbooks/Adjunct_Faculty_Handbook.pdf
- Masri, T. I. (2018). The professional identity of adjunct faculty: Exploratory study at a private university in the UAE. *English Language Teaching*, 11(10), 16–29.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ELT.V11N10P16>
- Maxey, D., & Kezar, A. (2015). Revealing opportunities and obstacles for changing non-tenure-track faculty practices: An examination of stakeholders' awareness of institutional contradictions. *Journal of Higher Education*, 86(4), 564–594.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2015.0022>
- May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 77(1), 11–37.
<https://doi.org/10.1348/096317904322915892>

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.

Mohabir-McKinley, S. (2020). *The age of the online adjunct: Teaching remotely and faculty engagement* (Publication No. 27836042) [Doctoral dissertation, Fielding Graduate University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/aa20eab83a660e2c7e7584822f054a19/1>

Moraine Valley Community College. (2022). *Adjunct professor of the year award*.

<https://www.morainevalley.edu/applause/employee-awards/adjunct-professor-year-award/>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022a). *Graduation and retention rates: What is the full-time retention rate in postsecondary institutions?*

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/trend-table/7/32>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022b). *Graduation and retention rates: What is the graduation rate within 150% of normal time at 2-year postsecondary institutions?*

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/trend-table/7/32>

O'Banion, T. (2010). The completion agenda: To what end? *Community College Journal*, 81(2), 44–47. <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/completion-agenda-what-end/docview/761141081/se-2?accountid=11789>

PeopleElement. (2022). *Report: 2022 employee engagement trends*.

<https://peopleelement.com/resources/download-2022-employee-engagement-report/>

Phoenix College. (2022). *Recognizing the service of adjunct faculty*.

<https://www.phoenixcollege.edu/employees/marketing-pr/recognizing-service-adjunct-faculty>

- Potts, B. A. (2021). An exploratory study of adjunct faculty professional growth experiences. (Publication No. 2572583829) [Doctoral dissertation, Portland State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2572583829>
- Ran, F. X., & Sanders, J. (2019). *Early academic outcomes for students of part-time faculty at community colleges: How and why does instructors' employment status influence student success?* (ED598947). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598947.pdf>
- Ran, F. X., & Xu, D. (2018). *How and why do adjunct instructors affect students' academic outcomes? Evidence from two-year and four-year colleges*. Center for Postsecondary Education and Employment. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/how-and-why-do-adjunct-instructors-affect-students-academic-outcomes.pdf>
- Reneau, M., Wallace, C., Claywell, L., Price, J., Burdi, M., & Trybulski, J. (2018). Factors influencing part-time faculty engagement with online nursing programs. *Nurse Educator*, 43(6), 297–301. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NNE.0000000000000517>
- Rhoades, G. (2012). *Faculty engagement to enhance student attainment*. National Commission on Higher Education Attainment. <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Faculty-Engagement-to-Enhance-Student-Attainment--Rhoades.pdf>
- Richman, A. (2006). Everyone wants an engaged workforce how can you create it? *Workspan*, 49(1), 36–39. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/194722445>
- Rio Salado College. (2022). *Outstanding adjunct faculty*. <https://www.riosalado.edu/outstanding-adjunct-faculty>.
- Roberts, C. & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Corwin.

- Roueche, J. E., Roueche, S. D., & Milliron, M. D. (1995). *Strangers in their own land: Part-time faculty in American community colleges*. Community College Press.
- Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(7), 600–619. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940610690169>
- Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2014). What do we really know about employee engagement? *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 25(2), 155–182.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21187>
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Seluk, M. L. (2020). *Adjunct business faculty perceptions of institutional culture* (Publication No. 27739271) [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/5f5ee76f0d011cb9bc266a2a1348c9c6/1>
- Simonds, T. A., Brock, B. L., & Engel, M. T. (2016). Peer course review as a means to support adjunct faculty in an online program. *International Journal of Educational Organization & Leadership*, 23(3), 29–38. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2329-1656/CGP/v23i03/29-38>
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (n.d.). *Building a talent strong Texas*.
<https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/talent-strong-texas/>
- Thirolf, K. Q. (2013). How faculty identity discourses of community college part-time faculty change over time. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(3), 177–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.739511>
- Thirolf, K. Q. (2015). *Community college faculty identities* (Publication No. 3722089) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Thirolf, K. Q. (2017). Reconceptualizing a more inclusive faculty engagement model: Including and engaging part-time faculty at community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 41(4–5), 303–310.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.1251357>
- Thirolf, K. Q., & Woods, R. S. (2017). Contingent faculty at community colleges: The too-often overlooked and under-engaged faculty majority. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2017(176), 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20244>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V., & Pusser, B. (2006). *Moving from theory to action: Building a model of institutional action for student success*. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.
https://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Tinto_Pusser_Report.pdf
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837–851.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Tracy, S. J., & Hinrichs, M. M. (2017). Big tent criteria for qualitative quality. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0016>
- Tucker, A. (1993). *Chairing the academic department*. American Council on Education.
- Wagoner, R. L. (2019). Ethics of employment: The new adjunct majority. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2019(185), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20341>

- Wicks, J., Greenhow, C., & Tyler, A. (2020). Adjunct faculty onboarding: Is social media a solution? *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 44(7), 544–548.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2019.1616007>
- Witt, P. A., & Gearin, C. A. (2021). An exploration of the challenges faced by traveling adjuncts. *Research in Education*, 110(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523720939992>
- Wood, J. L., & Hilton, A. A. (2012). Five ethical paradigms for community college leaders: Toward constructing and considering alternative courses of action in ethical decision making. *Community College Review*, 40(3), 196–214.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552112448818>
- Wyner, J. (2021). *The role of presidents, trustees, and senior leaders in student success*. College Excellence Program: Aspen Institute. <https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Role-of-Senior-Leaders-in-Student-Success-20210302.pdf>
- Xu, D. (2019). Academic performance in community colleges: The influences of part-time and full-time instructors. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(2), 368–406.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218796131>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zhu, M. (2021). Limited contracts, limited quality? Effects of adjunct instructors on student outcomes. *Economics of Education Review*, 85, Article 102177.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2021.102177>

Appendix A - Alignment Table

Problem based on literature findings	Research questions	Theoretical and conceptual frameworks	Methodology	Interview questions
Institutions often fail to fully engage and support adjunct faculty in the work of student success (AFT, 2020; Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018).	RQ1: What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system? RQ2: What are the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?	“Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work” (Kahn, 1990) <i>The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-time Faculty</i> (Gappa & Leslie, 1993)	Case study using 1) Interviews of adjunct faculty 2) Analysis of documents, policies, and practices related to adjunct faculty engagement	1,2,3,4 5,6,7,8 9,10 (see Appendix C)
Adjunct faculty work in challenging conditions with limited institutional support (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Kezar & Sam, 2013).	RQ1: What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?	<i>The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-time Faculty</i> (Gappa & Leslie, 1993)	Case study using 1) Interviews of adjunct faculty 2) Analysis of documents, policies, and practices related to adjunct faculty engagement	2,3,4,6,7,8,9, (see Appendix C)
The role of adjunct faculty is critical to support student learning and the overall student experience (AFT, 2020; ATD, 2020).	RQ1: What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?	<i>The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-time Faculty</i> (Gappa & Leslie, 1993)	Case study using 1) Interviews of adjunct faculty 2) Analysis of documents, policies, and practices related to adjunct faculty engagement	1,5,9,10,11,12 (see Appendix C)
Not fully integrating adjunct faculty in the student success agenda compromises faculty engagement in student attainment (CCCSE, 2014)	RQ1: What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system? RQ2: What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?	“Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work” (Kahn, 1990)	Case study using 1) Interviews of adjunct faculty 2) Analysis of documents, policies, and practices related to adjunct faculty engagement	1,5,9,10,11,12 (see Appendix C)

Appendix B - Improving Status of Part-time Faculty

Summary of Recommendations from <i>The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-Timers in Higher Education</i> (Gappa & Leslie, 1993)

Using Adjunct Faculty to Achieve Educational Objectives

1. Develop goals for adjunct faculty tied to the college mission.
2. Include adjunct faculty in the overall staffing plan.
3. Consult adjunct faculty during the development of the staffing plan.
4. Assign responsibility, develop policy, and monitor compliance for the staffing plan.
5. Gather and analyze data on adjunct faculty characteristics for decision-making.
6. Survey adjunct faculty on their perceptions of work conditions.
7. Assess the costs and benefits of using adjunct faculty.
8. Review and evaluate the staffing plan on a regular basis.

Developing Fair Employment Policies and Practices

1. Establish campus-wide body to create adjunct faculty employment practices.
2. Publish and distribute adjunct faculty employment practices.
3. Make department chairs responsible for consistent implementation of practices.
4. Offer a range of employment options for adjunct faculty.
5. Provide part-time tenure options for adjunct faculty.
6. Provide job security and due-process rights for adjunct faculty with seniority and proven effectiveness.
7. Appoint continuing adjunct faculty for longer terms beyond one semester.
8. Establish career tracks for adjunct faculty with rewards and incentives for long-term service.
9. Identify qualifications for adjunct faculty tied to job description.
10. Proactively recruit, select, and hire adjunct faculty.
11. Diversify adjunct faculty through affirmative action in hiring.
12. Provide timely and early notification of appointments to adjunct faculty.
13. Develop a salary scale for adjunct faculty.
14. Ensure consistency of employment practices for adjunct faculty within departments and institutions.
15. Set standards for progression through the salary scale.
16. Provide benefits to continuing part-time faculty.
17. Develop performance criteria to evaluate adjunct faculty to be used in decisions for re-appointment.
18. Provide support services to adjunct faculty.

Investing in Human Resources

1. Communicate that adjunct faculty are important to the institution.
2. Give department chairs responsibility and incentives for supervising adjunct faculty.
3. Orient chairs to good supervisory practice.
4. Invite adjunct faculty to share their perceptions of effective supervisory practices.
5. Use teams to develop new faculty members' teaching skills.
6. Provide faculty mentors to inexperienced adjunct faculty.
7. Engage all faculty in course coordination.
8. Involve adjunct faculty in the assessment of student learning.
9. Appoint adjunct faculty to committees.
10. Involve adjunct faculty in informal talk.
11. Invite adjunct faculty to social events.
12. Recognize adjunct faculty for their achievement and contributions.
13. Orient adjunct faculty to the institution and expectations.
14. Conduct frequent workshops on good teaching practices.
15. Provide in-service professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty.
16. Provide incentives for good performance.
17. Use teaching evaluations to help adjunct faculty improve.

Appendix C - Interview Protocols

Introductory Narrative: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research on the engagement of adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. My name is Jennifer Sramek. I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University. Our interview is designed to take approximately 45 minutes. Please let me know if you have any questions as we continue. Before we start the recording, could you please confirm your full name, your institution's name, number of years you have taught as an adjunct faculty member there, and the discipline you teach in? Thank you.

To facilitate documentation of your responses to the interview questions, the interview will be recorded. To protect your confidentiality and anonymity in the recording, please remove your name from the Zoom display and disable your camera for the duration of the interview. When you have completed those two steps, we will begin the recording.

Your institution uses a number of strategies and programs to welcome, orient, support, train, and engage you in college-wide activities. Specifically, I'm interested in how the college tries to get you to participate and engage in the many student success initiatives here, and how your participation helps these initiatives be successful. I have 13 questions to ask about your experiences as an adjunct faculty member. As you answer, I may ask follow-up questions if needed to clarify meaning.

Questions adapted from themes in <i>Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-time Faculty into Focus</i> by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2014)
Q1 How do you contribute to the college mission and student success?
Q2 Describe the orientation you received as a new adjunct faculty member.
Q3 What professional development and mentoring opportunities are available to you?
Q4 What other resources and support are available to you?
Q5 Describe how you are involved in student success initiatives such as guided pathways.
Q6 How is your performance evaluated?
Q7 Describe how the institution supports collaboration and partnerships between you and other college employees.
Q8 Describe how adjunct faculty's achievements and contributions are recognized and rewarded.
Q9 Describe how your employment contract and working conditions are related to your participation in student success initiatives.
Q10 What other institutional policies, practices, or factors are related to your participation in student success initiatives?
Q11 Which institutional strategies were most successful in increasing your motivation to engage in student success initiatives?
Q12 What barriers prevent you from participating in professional development or departmental/college meetings?
Q13 What else could the college do to further engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives?

Conclusion: Thank you for your time and responses to the questions. Your insights are valuable to this research. Before we conclude, is there anything else that you would like to share? For next steps, I will transcribe the interview and email you a copy to verify that the content is correct and complete. I will also send you a \$20 gift card as a token of appreciation for your participation.

Appendix D - Informed Consent Form

Note: This template is provided by Kansas State University.

PROJECT TITLE:

Exploration of adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives within a community college system

**PROJECT
APPROVAL
DATE:**

**PROJECT
EXPIRATION
DATE:**

**LENGTH OF
STUDY:**

1 hour

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Dr. Martha Ellis

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

Jennifer Sramek

**CONTACT DETAILS FOR
PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:**

Dr. Martha Ellis
xxxx@ksu.edu

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT
INFORMATION:**

Dr. Lisa Rubin
(xxxx) xxxx-xxxx

PROJECT SPONSOR:

Not applicable.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to examine strategies for engaging adjunct faculty in student success initiatives within a community college system and understand the adjunct faculty's perceptions of these strategies.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

As a participant, you will participate in one-on-one semistructured interviews conducted via the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Your identity will be protected by keeping your camera off and your display name removed. You will be discussing your participation in and perception of strategies designed to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives. After the completion of the interviews, you will be asked to verify that the transcripts of the interviews have accurately captured the content of the interviews.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

There are no anticipated risks involved in this research. Care will be taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participants' identities and responses.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

Participants will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in the one-on-one interviews. Additionally, participants will be able to provide their perceptions of strategies used to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives which may contribute to meaningful changes to policies and practices in higher education.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

The information that will be collected as part of this research will not be shared with any other investigators. Care will be taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participants' identities and responses. Pseudonyms will be used for college and participant names. Data will be stored on an external hard drive and maintained for a period of 5 years. The external hard drive will be password protected and locked in a safe in my home.

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

The Principal Investigator will maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant.

PARTICIPANT NAME:**PARTICIPANT
SIGNATURE:****WITNESS TO
SIGNATURE:
(PROJECT STAFF)****DATE:****DATE:**

Appendix E - Map of Initial Codes

Key for Map of Initial Codes

Elements from Theoretical Framework – “Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work” (Kahn, 1990)

- 1 = Meaningfulness
- 2 = Psychological Safety
- 3 = Availability of resources

Elements from Conceptual Framework – *The Invisible Faculty: Improving the Status of Part-time Faculty* (Gappa & Leslie, 1993)

- A = Using Adjunct Faculty to Achieve Educational Objectives
- B = Developing Fair Employment Policies and Practices
- C = Investing in Human Resources

Questions adapted from themes in <i>Contingent Commitments: Bringing Part-time Faculty into Focus</i> by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2014)	Map code for theoretical/ conceptual framework
Q1 How do you, as an adjunct faculty, contribute to the college mission and student success?	1 A
Q2 Describe the orientation you received as a new adjunct faculty member.	1 2 3 C
Q3 What professional development and mentoring opportunities are available to you as an adjunct faculty member?	1 2 3 C
Q4 What other resources and support are available to you as an adjunct faculty member?	1 3 C
Q5 Describe how you as an adjunct faculty member are involved in student success initiatives such as Guided Pathways, or other college-wide student success initiatives.	1 A C
Q6 How is your performance as an adjunct faculty member evaluated?	1 2 B
Q7 Describe how the institution supports collaboration and partnerships between you as an adjunct faculty member and other college employees.	2 3 C
Q8 Describe how adjunct faculty’s achievements and contributions are recognized and rewarded.	1 3 A B C
Q9 Describe how your employment contract and working conditions as an adjunct faculty member are related to your participation in student success initiatives.	2 3 B C
Q10 What other institutional policies, practices, or factors are related to your participation as an adjunct faculty member in student success initiatives?	A
Q11 Which institutional strategies were most successful in increasing your motivation to engage in student success initiatives?	1
Q12 What barriers prevent you from participating in professional development or departmental/college meetings?	1 2 3
Q13 What else could the college do to further engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives?	C

Appendix F - Study Quality

Big Tent Criteria (Tracy, 2010)	Measures taken to address criteria
Worthy topic	Importance of adjunct faculty contribution to student success initiatives is defined in the study.
Abundant rigor	Rigor is accomplished by using theoretical and conceptual frameworks to analyze data from the field.
Sincerity	Sincerity is achieved by including a reflexivity statement and acknowledgement of the researcher's biases with transparency in the research methods.
Credibility	Triangulation of multiple data sources and external auditing of interview questions adds to the credibility.
Resonance with a variety of audiences	Thick description of the data findings increases transferability.
Significant contributions	The research contributes to the understanding of practices and policies used to engage adjunct faculty in student success initiatives and the adjunct faculty's perceptions of those policies.
High ethical standards	Study will represent honest, accurate, and objective work. Participants will have confidentiality and informed consent. Data will be secured for 5 years.
Meaningful coherence	Alignment of the problem based on the literature findings with the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodology, and interview questions

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837–851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>

Appendix G - Institutional Review Board Approval



TO: Martha Ellis
Educational Leadership
363
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number IRB-11519
Bluemont Hall

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 02/27/2023

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Exploration of adjunct faculty engagement in student success initiatives within a community college system."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 02/27/2023

EXPIRATION DATE: 02/26/2026

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 02/27/2023 10:05 PM ET

Appendix H - Audit Report

Audit Report of Coding

Prepared by Donna M. Jovanovich, Ph.D.

An audit was conducted April 2023 to review Ms. Sramek's data coding of interviews conducted for her study. The purpose of the study was to examine strategies to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system and to understand the adjunct faculty members' perceptions of these strategies. Her two primary research questions were:

1. What strategies are used to engage adjunct faculty members in student success initiatives in a community college system?
2. What are adjunct faculty members' perceptions of the strategies used to engage them in student success initiatives in a community college system?

In order to ensure the quality of qualitative research in the data analysis phase, this audit process included reviewing transcripts from three interviews (representing 10% of the interviews conducted) and the coding used in analyzing the interviews. The first three chapters of the dissertation, the coding scheme, and a sample of three transcripts with coding by the researcher were provided to the auditor.

Three criteria were used in this audit:

- Visibility—decisions were clearly explained
- Comprehensibility—decisions substantiated and thoroughly reflected the theoretical and conceptual frameworks
- Acceptability—in accordance with standards, values, and norms in research domain

The methodology was acceptable. Standards, values, and norms in research domain were clearly explained. Saldaña, Creswell, and Lochmiller and Lester were cited, and their recommendations were followed in the coding phase.

The coding decisions were visible, clearly explained and comprehensive. A priori coding was the predominant coding strategy. Fourteen initial codes were established in alignment with the elements of Kahn's theoretical framework and Gappa and Leslie's conceptual framework. Flexibility was allowed for in the addition of codes to capture new elements and significant quotes as data analysis was undertaken. It also allowed for reflexivity on the part of the researcher to reflect on the information provided in the interviews.

The three transcripts provided the words of the interviewer and the interviewee. Summary key words were provided at the beginning. Various parts of the interview were highlighted and codes were attached to them in the margins. The coding used the language of the thematic coding schema that had been constructed. The summary key words were helpful in providing a concise view of topics covered during the interview. A map of how those summary key words related to the codes would have been helpful and may be reported elsewhere.

This part of the study was transparent and adds support to the reliability of the study process. Having the codes rooted in the theory and established a priori minimized bias on the part of the researcher. The matching of the interviewee comments to the codes provides a strong foundation for the validity of the conclusions.

Dr. Donna Jovanovich is a research and evaluation consultant in higher education. Dr. Jovanovich has worked with 23 colleges in 12 different states as a data coach for Achieving the Dream. She was a consultant with the Dana Center in their math pathways work and teaches educational research methods for the John Roueche Community College Leadership Program at Kansas State University. She was a mathematics professor and Director of Institutional Effectiveness for the Virginia Community College System and John Tyler Community College. Dr. Jovanovich holds a Ph.D. in education, with a concentration in research and evaluation, from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Ms. Sramek was a student in her eight-week research and evaluation class in fall of 2021.

Appendix I - Participant List

Participant	Discipline	Number of years as adjunct faculty at College A, B, or C
A1	Biosciences	4
A2	Art History	9
A3	Physics	3
A4	Physics	3
A5	English	20
A6	Art Marketing	14
A7	Nursing	1
A8	Communication	5
A9	Business Communication	3
A10	Dental Assisting	1
B1	Sociology	15
B2	Communication	15
B3	Education	1
B4	Business Communication	6
B5	Education	6
B6	Geology	15
B7	Medical Interpreting	13
B8	Entrepreneurship	6
B9	Computer Information Systems	12
B10	Counseling in Addiction	15
C1	Communication	7
C2	Computer Information Systems	8
C3	English	7
C4	Sociology	10
C5	Sociology	8
C6	Library Instruction	2
C7	Aviation	6
C8	E-commerce	5
C9	Library Instruction	7
C10	Vocal Music	2

If you need more chapters, follow these steps:

1. Insert a Page Break **(Insert > Page Break)**, because chapters start on a new page.
2. Type the name of the chapter and apply a Heading 1 style **(Home > Heading 1)**.

