ABSTRACT

BURLESON, SUSAN DEDMON. The Role of Relational Trust in Promoting Faculty Engagement in Student Success Reform Efforts at Community Colleges. (Under the direction of Dr. Audrey Jaeger).

Educational reform efforts spanning from kindergarten to high school have demonstrated the importance of relational trust in cultivating the necessary engagement to significantly impact student outcomes (Byrk & Scheider, 2002; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006; Yin et al., 2011). As the community college sector begins to examine the outcomes of the educational reform initiatives resulting from a national focus on increasing the completion of post-secondary credentials, an understanding of the role of relational trust will be important for scaling such reform efforts.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the role of relational trust in engaging community college faculty in educational reform efforts. Participants were 16 faculty from two community colleges in the United States that were finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence as a result of exceptional learning and/or completion outcomes. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to describe how relational trust with their leaders and among their faculty colleagues influenced their engagement in student success initiatives at their institutions. Research findings suggest that engaged faculty experience high levels of relational trust when they work in collaborative environments with highly competent individuals who share a clear vision for student success. These faculty have positive relationships with administrators and colleagues and through these relationships feel empowered to continually improve teaching and learning. Communications are transparent and intentional and faculty feel genuinely cared for and appreciated professionally and personally. In addition, faculty mindset emerged as an internal factor that influenced engagement. Because community colleges are

uniquely positioned to reduce inequities in our society and to promote economic mobility within our communities, this qualitative study may provide insight into the interpersonal conditions necessary to scale efforts to improve student outcomes and guide the future direction of the college completion agenda.

The Role of Relational Trust in Promoting Faculty Engagement in Student Success Reform Efforts at Community Colleges

by
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APPROVED BY:

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DEDICATION

To my mother for her unwavering support and encouragement to continually pursue advanced knowledge and education. To my husband for the many sacrifices he made to make this journey a possibility. And to two classmates who kept my momentum going through laughter and fellowship.

BIOGRAPHY

Susan Dedmon Burleson has always been a North Carolinian. She considers herself fortunate to have been raised in a small town where she was loved by a strong and independent mother who instilled in her a desire and drive to pursue higher education, a hardworking and tender hearted father to whom she will always be a "daddy's girl," and an empathic and caring step-mother who listened and cheered her on like no other. As the first person in her immediate family to pursue a university education, Susan has had many doors opened that have led to her continued growth professionally and personally as well as contributed to the development of lifelong friendships that further enhance her life.

Her educational journey began with excellent primary and secondary teachers in Lincolnton, North Carolina. As a lifelong Wolfpack fan, she always wanted to go to North Carolina State University (NCSU) and she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from there in 1991. Later she completed her Master of Arts in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Upon completing her Master's degree, she took a faculty position at a local community college teaching psychology. While community college leadership was not her career goal at the time, she was motivated and inspired by her students each and every day and knew she had found the right educational sector for her future.

As her teaching experience increased at Davidson County Community College (DCCC), she began to also demonstrate leadership qualities that were recognized by her administrators. Most importantly, her college president and later her mentor, Dr. Mary Rittling, provided opportunities and encouragement for her to step outside her comfort zone and try new roles and responsibilities. Over her 16 years at DCCC, she has taken on progressive leadership roles and is currently a vice president. Her responsibilities have included: integrating and launching student

success initiatives; facilitating grant development, strategic planning, and campus professional development; and coordinating institutional research, outcomes assessment, and the college accreditation process. She led DCCC's involvement in Completion by Design and now leads the Frontier Set initiative, both supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Most recently, Susan has transitioned to lead all operations at the Davie campuses of the college.

With the encouragement and support of her husband, her mother, and her mentor, Susan planned to pursue her doctorate degree once her youngest child began kindergarten. In 2016, she began the executive cohort model of the Adult and Community College Leadership educational doctorate program at NCSU where her interest have focused on community college faculty engagement. In her personal life, Susan and her husband have the great fortune to share four children who provide constant opportunities to grow, learn and laugh each day. Her family enjoys spending time with their furry family members, supporting each other at extracurricular events, camping and traveling, and visiting with a large extended family. Throughout her life, she has developed and maintained strong friendships that continue to enhance her development and provide positive examples of leadership, commitment, and staying focused on the most important things in life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of my doctoral work would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement of many individuals. Like the community college students I serve, I needed many support systems to overcome obstacles and sustain forward progress toward completion of my degree.

As I reflect on my educational journey to this point, my path began with a single mother who has only a high school education. She also happens to one of the most intelligent individuals I know. Growing up, my brother and I never questioned whether we would go to college as she instilled in us a love for learning and a desire for a college education. On a very limited income, my mother made sure we had rich and diverse educational experiences that included Broadway plays, symphonies, national and international travel, and frequent trivial pursuit game nights with very wise competitors. My mother provided unwavering support and encouragement for me as I've pursued each advanced degree with her desire for me to succeed only slightly outweighed by my own. I am so very grateful to her for laying the foundation that became the building blocks for my future in a fulfilling career in community college education.

My father was instrumental in the development of my work ethic, my desire to help others, and setting the example for taking intelligent risks and capitalizing on opportunities. He built a successful business from the ground up and made exceptionally smart decisions along the way. As a result, he was able to provide his family economic mobility and opportunities he had not been afforded. From him, I learned the value of hard work as well as extending kindness to those who have not had my same good fortune. As his daughter, I witnessed my father providing support to his co-workers, his friends, his family, and to strangers. Pursuing a career helping community college students was certainly influenced by his examples of service to others. My

father is a risk taker who is skilled at identifying the right opportunity at the right time. Throughout my life I have had opportunities to play it safe or take a risk. Thanks to my Daddy I am comfortable seeking out new opportunities and feel secure in taking strategic risks; luckily most of them have paid off so far.

In August 2003, I began working at Davidson County Community College. A few weeks later Dr. Mary Rittling became the third president in the college's history. She recently retired as a transformative leader who engaged her faculty and staff in comprehensive and systemic changes which significantly improved student experiences and outcomes as well as created an innovative institutional culture. Mary was instrumental in my development as a leader and a scholar. On a fateful August morning prior to an all-personnel meeting, she pulled me aside and asked me to consider a new position that had been created at the college. Initially I politely declined but she was not deterred. And for that I am eternally grateful. Her persistence and belief in me has led to a fulfilling career with opportunities and experiences I could have never imagined. She also subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) nudged me to complete my doctorate. It was not usual to find brochures about graduate programs on my desk, to receive emails from her colleagues recruiting a new cohort of doctoral students, or to find myself at dinner while at conference with her friends who were involved in doctoral programs. She eventually paired me with the right opportunity when she took me to a meeting of the North Carolina community college presidents where the newly revised NCSU Adult and Community College Education doctoral program focused on the Aspen Institute's success outcomes was highlighted. Finally it was the right time and the right place, returning to my alma mater, for me to pursue my doctorate.

Coincidentally one of the presenters of the NCSU program that day was Dr. Audrey Jaeger. Audrey (AJ) would later become my advisor, mentor, and friend. Her guidance, advice, and support has been invaluable throughout the dissertation process. In community colleges, intentional advising involves providing proactive support that anticipates and mitigates barriers with strong wraparound support practices. AJ has been an intentional advisor to me. She has skillfully balanced stretching my thinking and writing abilities with providing the right support to help me do so successfully. She knew the many demands on my time and effort but believed in me. Together we set high expectations which included being accountable to a timeline for progression. Without that external motivation, I am certain I would have progressed at a slower pace. She has been one of my greatest champions encouraging me throughout the process and mentoring me to further developed research skills needed to successfully complete my doctorate. In addition, she has provided numerous opportunities for me to grow as a professional such as being an Achieving the Dream scholar, presenting at conferences, and co-authoring publications. Most importantly, AJ exemplifies a professional educator who recognizes the importance of work/life balance. I am inspired by the positive example she sets as a female leader who values and prioritizes quality time with her family while also exceling in her profession.

To my other two committee members, Dr. Diane Chapman and Dr. Michelle Bartlett, I would like to express my gratitude for their guidance and insight in the development of my dissertation as well as expanding my knowledge of community college leadership through their commitment to providing high quality teaching and learning. As I have focused on faculty engagement in promoting student success in community colleges, I have had the good fortune to also experience engaged faculty in my own doctoral program who care deeply about teaching and learning.

The executive cohort format of my program facilitated a close knit family of classmates. I am especially grateful to two of those classmates who have become dear friends and provided the most effective wraparound support possible. Jeri and Connie provided positive peer pressure inspiring me to be the best student I could be. Both are incredibly hard working, dependable, and conscientious. Our bi-monthly dinners filled with laughter and stress relieving conversations filled me with the energy and motivation to keep moving forward. Our extraordinary friendship was unexpected but has been the most memorable and valuable part of my experience. In addition, I am thankful that Connie has been my partner in achieving the milestones that have culminated in this dissertation. With the same advisor and similar research interests, we have progressed side-by-side as a result of holding each other accountable to successfully take each step toward completion. I could not have had a more perfect partner in this work than her.

I am surrounded by strong female leaders who are my best friends. The vice presidents that comprise the DCCC leadership team provide unconditional love and support that is unparalleled. Knowing I could count on them to pick up my responsibilities while I pursued my doctorate lessened the stress many working professionals experience while trying to pursue higher education. They inspire me to be a better leader by always making decisions with a focus on students, showing me how to lead with my heart and mind, and always caring about me as an individual. Their strong work ethics and fabulous senses of humor make coming to work every day a pleasure.

My final acknowledgements of gratitude belong to my husband and children. Words cannot adequately describe the support they have provided to allow me to achieve this personal and professional goal. My husband believes in me even when I doubt myself. He encouraged me to apply to the program, rearranged his own work schedule to make it work, and provided

consistency to our family by stepping into the role of “go-to parent.” We sacrificed time together as a couple knowing that it would only be temporary and that the results would be beneficial to our future as a family. He has been my greatest supporter and will always be “my lobster.” My children have been patient and understanding as I’ve tried to balance work, school, and family. While I did miss many extracurricular events over the last three years, their dad and grandmother have been there cheering them on just a little louder to fill my absence. They have loved me no matter what and that has made all the difference. It is my hope that this time in our lives has shown them the importance of pursuing your dreams, achieving your goals, and working hard to get there. They are my inspiration and will always be my greatest achievements.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, community college reform efforts have emerged at the national, state and local levels in an effort to improve low completion rates, to achieve the nation's goal to have the highest percentage of college graduates in the world by 2020, and to develop a strong workforce aligned to economic demands (Bailey, 2017). The national "completion agenda" was firmly established in 2010 when the administration of former President Obama and numerous educational organizations set ambitious goals for increasing the completion of college credentials by 2020. Since then community colleges have received increased attention as a viable option for improving the economic mobility of our citizenry and the competitive advantage of our nation (Bumphus, 2015).

Comprehensive educational reform efforts are relatively new in the community college sector but have been common in the public school arena with numerous change initiatives aimed at improving student achievement at the primary and secondary levels (Murphy, 1992). Early research examining the success of these efforts emphasized the importance of instructional reforms and narrowly focused on improving curriculum (Blum, Butler, & Olson, 1987; Hallinger, 1992; Levine & Lezotte, 1990). More recent research has illustrated examining the relational aspects of school reform is equally important in the successful implementation of curriculum improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). From the latter research, trust has emerged as a pivotal element in achieving and sustaining improvements in student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). High levels of trust have been associated with improved collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), greater teacher satisfaction (VanHoutte, 2006), increased teacher effort (Lee, Zhang, & Lin, 2011),

successful reform efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), and improvements in student achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Relational trust occurs in an educational community when all parties responsible for academic achievement have established a shared understanding of their role obligations in relation to others and role expectations from others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Research suggests that the success of educational reform efforts depends on teacher engagement and willingness to put forth extra effort (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010; Cerit, 2012; Correnti & Rowan, 2007). Relational trust has been shown to strengthen teacher engagement and create institutional conditions likely to promote significant improvement and enhanced student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). Trust of this nature has been linked directly and indirectly to extra effort by teachers when implementing curriculum reform (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Cerit, 2012; Yin et al., 2011).

Given the connections among relational trust, teacher engagement, and improved success of educational reforms in elementary, middle, and high schools, continued attention should be focused on these factors in post-secondary reform efforts. As innovative community colleges on the forefront of educational reform embark on initiatives to redesign student experiences at the post-secondary level, understanding the role of relational trust in enhancing faculty engagement in these efforts is important to scaling similar work and guiding the future direction of the college completion agenda.

Statement of the Problem

Community college students represent 41% of all undergraduates in the United States (AACC, 2018); however less than 40% of first time community college students will complete a post-secondary credential within six years (Shapiro, et al., 2016). As a result of low completion

rates, educational reform efforts are underway in an increasing percentage of community colleges with a focus on comprehensively redesigning the student experience to improve completion (Bailey, 2017; Kilgore & Wilson, 2017).

Substantial research has demonstrated that faculty-student interactions are important to student success, particularly for underserved and under-represented students (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). A host of positive student outcomes have been associated with quality and frequency of faculty-student interactions such as persistence (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000; Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2002; Wang & Grimes, 2001), completion (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006), improved grades (Anaya, 1992; Anaya & Cole, 2001), and the mastery of general education outcomes and "soft" skills development (Bjorkland, Parente, & Sathiananthan, 2004; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). Despite this evidence, faculty have received minimal focus in post-secondary reform efforts. In a recent paper, the Educational Advisory Board (2016) suggests that successful reform efforts "rely on the willingness of faculty to redesign the institutional approach and carry out a new set of procedures, but many academic administrators have neglected to involve faculty from the outset (p. 3)."

Given the importance of faculty engagement in promoting student success and relational trust in generating teacher engagement in successful educational reform efforts in the K-12 sector, it is important to understand how relational trust in community colleges influences faculty engagement and the success of change initiatives. This qualitative study explored the importance of relational trust in engaging faculty in educational reform efforts at two community colleges. These institutions were identified as exemplary in engaging faculty in improving student success by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. The Aspen Institute's College Excellence

Program awards a one million dollar prize every two years to a community college that demonstrates excellent performance in four categories: student learning, credential completion, family-sustaining employment, and equity in outcomes for minority and low-income students (The Aspen Institute, 2018a). The process for selecting the winner begins with a review of more than a 1,000 public community colleges, narrows to a field of 150 eligible colleges invited to apply, then the winner is selected from ten finalists after extensive reviews of the colleges' qualitative and quantitative data and on-site visits (The Aspen Institute, 2018c). The College Excellence Program recognizes the need for community colleges to change in order to achieve successful student outcomes and expects the Aspen Prize to spark identification and replication of best practices for achieving those outcomes (The Aspen Institute, 2018b).

Background of the Problem

Community colleges play a significant role in higher education in America. The comprehensive mission of the community college ensures that all individuals seeking additional education have the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge, whether through earning post-secondary credentials or transfer, remedial education, workforce training, or community enrichment (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013). As the pace at which Americans are obtaining post-secondary credentials continues to lag behind other countries, community colleges are receiving unprecedented attention and support to improve completion rates (OECD, 2017; Russell, 2011). Because of their open doors, commitment to access, and inclusive mission, community colleges are uniquely positioned to reduce inequities in our society and to promote economic mobility within our communities by improving completion rates.

Since 2010 when former President Obama's administration and leading educational organizations publically established a joint effort, with ambitious goals for 2020, to ensure

America was again first in the world in the attainment of post-secondary credentials, institutions of higher education and private foundations have responded by engaging in comprehensive and systemic reform efforts (Bailey, 2017; Russell, 2011). The community college sector has engaged in initiatives such as Complete College America, Completion by Design, and the American Association of Community College's Guided Pathway Project (Kilgore & Wilson, 2017). Beginning in 2011, the Aspen Institute's College Excellence program awarded the first Aspen Prize for community college excellence, a $1 million reward, to a community college with exceptional student outcomes (The Aspen Institute, 2014). A primary goal of all of these initiatives is to improve post-secondary completion rates.

Innovative community colleges on the forefront of educational reform are implementing strategies identified as promising or high-impact in an effort to improve completion rates. These efforts are being closely examined by research institutes such as the Community College Research Center (CCRC), the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina, Public Agenda, and the Aspen Institute. While less than a decade has passed since the intensive focus on improving completion of post-secondary credentials began in community colleges, the available data examining the effectiveness of the major reform efforts has not yet demonstrated substantial increases in overall national completion rates (Shapiro et al., 2016). Efforts of this magnitude will take time to significantly impact long-term outcome measures. Another possibility is that significant improvements have yet to be realized because faculty have only been peripherally involved in the majority of these efforts. Little to no attention or resources have been focused on how to impact the teaching and learning environment through direct faculty engagement in comprehensive educational reform efforts.

While community colleges are experiencing the first significant period of comprehensive educational reform, public education has experienced decades of educational reform efforts since the early 1980s. The national reform efforts to improve public education have focused on the quality of education, the organizational and power structures of public schools, and how students learn (Ouchi, 2003). Thus far, most of these major reform efforts have not produced the anticipated improvements in student achievement and have been replaced with new initiatives or rejected by the educators expected to implement significant change (Comer, 2001; Iorio & Yeager, 2011). One shortcoming noted throughout the literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hipp & Bredeson, 1995) suggests that these reform initiatives may have been unsuccessful because they failed to focus on the actual processes involved in creating institutional conditions conducive for initiating and sustaining significant change efforts. An examination of smaller scale efforts that have successfully improved student achievement in primary and secondary schools reveals that the relational, or interpersonal, processes of educational reform are important elements in achieving and sustaining improvements in student outcomes with trust being the most critical (Abdul-Jabbar, 2013; Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Barnes, & Adams, 2006).

The relational trust theory which emerged from research conducted in the K-12 sector proposes that relational trust evolves when faculty and leaders have had opportunities to demonstrate to each other evidence of collegial respect, professional competence, personal regard for others and integrity. Byrk and Schneider (2002) state that “trust fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and others social-psychological, that make it more conducive for individuals to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvements” (p. 116).

In the book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015), the authors introduced the concept of relational trust as an important institutional quality for cultivating faculty and staff engagement in comprehensive and systemic reform efforts in community colleges. These researchers provided leaders with an understanding of and examples of how to actively cultivate such trust through the demonstration of personal integrity, professional competence, and collegial respect. However, little to no empirical research exists that examines faculty perceptions of relational trust as a motivator to engage in institutional reform efforts at community colleges. Therefore, this study focused on the role of relational trust in engaging faculty in educational reform efforts in the community college sector.

Theoretical Framework

This study focused on the theory of relational trust which evolved from longitudinal research conducted on a three year educational reform effort in the Chicago Public School system. Relational trust is composed of a "dynamic interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity" (Byrk & Schnieder, 2002, p. 23). This type of trust is viewed as an institutional quality that emerges as the result of daily interactions among all shareholders responsible for student success. As a result of the interdependence and mutual responsibility of these shareholders, educational reform efforts that lack relational trust are unlikely to be successful. From research on relational trust within the K-12 sector, it can be concluded that educational reform efforts are more likely to demonstrate positive outcomes when strong, trusting relationships exist among colleagues (Byrk & Schnieder, 2002; Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011; Yin, Lee, & Jin, 2011). Thus far, research on the role of relational trust in engaging community college personnel, particularly faculty, in implementing and sustaining comprehensive reform efforts has yet to be conducted.

Assumptions

Research assumptions provided the basis for conducting this qualitative study. The assumptions made by the researcher are grounded in the literature review for the study and from personal experiences from a career in community colleges of almost two decades. These three assumptions are statements that the researcher has taken for granted or considered to be truths for the purpose of this research study: 1) Relational trust is an organizational resource that exists in community colleges and is leveraged during successful educational reform; 2) Faculty are critical partners in successful organizational change at community colleges; 3) When community college faculty experience high levels of relational trust within organizations, they are engaged in student success reform efforts.

The first statement assumes that the findings from the K-12 research will generalize to other educational sectors, in particular to community colleges for this research study. Following decades of research, relational trust is considered a critical property of successful school improvement efforts from kindergarten through high school (Bryk & Sneider, 2002; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). While many differences exist between community colleges and public schools, substantial research exists demonstrating the importance of trust in the workplace (Jones & George, 1998; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume trust will be a significant organizational property within community colleges that can be leveraged during student success reform efforts.

Second, faculty, like teachers in the K-12 area, are viewed as critical partners in successful reform efforts. For decades an understanding has prevailed that effective pedagogical approaches, which occur in the classroom and are delivered by instructors, must accompany successful educational reform efforts (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Chickering & Gamson, 1997;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2012). As Vincent Tinto (2012) stated: “For many students, especially in community colleges, if involvement does not happen in the classroom, it is unlikely to occur at all” (p. 68).

The final assumption makes a logical connection that if faculty are critical partners in successful reform and relational trust is an important organizational feature for significant change to occur, then high levels of relational trust will be related to high levels of faculty engagement. Again this assumption extends the literature from K-12 to community colleges. Relational trust, as conceptualized by Bryk and Schneider (2002), emerges as an organizational property through the daily interactions of the adults connected to the school environment. High levels of relational trust have been shown to strengthen teacher engagement and create institutional conditions likely to promote significant improvement and enhanced student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Wong et al. 2006). Given these findings, it is reasonable to assume that relational trust and faculty engagement are interconnected.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Educational reform efforts spanning from kindergarten to high school have demonstrated the importance of relational trust in cultivating the necessary engagement to significantly impact student outcomes (Bryk & Sneider, 2002; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). As the community college sector begins to examine the outcomes of the educational reform initiatives resulting from a national focus on increasing the completion of post-secondary credentials (Bailey, 2017; Cho, Kopko, Jenkins & Jaggars, 2012; Quint et al., 2013; Rutschow et al., 2011), an understanding of the role of relational trust will be important for scaling such reform efforts. The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the role of relational trust in engaging community college faculty in educational reform efforts. Participants were faculty

from community colleges that were finalists or winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence as a result of exceptional learning and/or completion outcomes ((The Aspen Institute, 2018a). This basic qualitative study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does relational trust promote faculty engagement in educational reform efforts at community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?
2. What components of relational trust are most influential in faculty engagement in educational reform efforts?
3. What differences exist in faculty perceptions of relational trust within the same institution?
4. What differences in relational trust exist between community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?

Overview of Methodolgy

The purpose of this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to explore how faculty experience relational trust at institutions that have effectively and actively engaged faculty in improving student success. To conduct this study, 16 faculty engaged in student success reform efforts at two community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute of Community College Excellence for exceptional student outcomes participated in semi-structured interviews. The sample of community college faculty was representative of the various disciplines and programs available at the colleges, included early champions and the initially more reluctant participants in reform efforts, and matched the demographics (i.e. gender, race, age, and longevity) of the general faculty population.

The case study design was selected for this research study to allow for a rich account of faculty experiences to better understand how relational trust influences faculty engagement in

comprehensive community college reform efforts. Examining two community college allowed for a multiple case study which is considered to be more robust than a single-case study, allowing for more variation and increased validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Similarities and differences can also be deduced from studying more than one case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). The use of a multiple case study allowed for an analysis of data within the institutions selected as well as between the institutions selected (Yin, 2003). When similarities are noted across multiple cases, replications of findings contribute to the external validity of the study and the robustness of the results (Yin, 2003).

Document analysis was another source of information for this study and included reviewing written and visual documents such as websites, strategic planning materials, personnel directories, organizational charts, student success documents and outcomes, and policy manuals. These documents were collected, reviewed and analyzed prior to the site visits in an effort to better understand the institutional culture. A few documents were revisited to add clarity to information that was provided during interviews. To confirm information gathered throughout the interviews, data was triangulated with document analysis when possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

An electronic database was utilized to organize and store data on a password protected computer and a locked file cabinet secured all hard copy materials. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Transcripts were analyzed with first- and second-coding cycles which provided a thorough analysis of the data (Saldana, 2009). Coding during the first cycle focused on gaining an initial understanding and early analysis of the data. A variety of first-cycle coding methods appropriate for case studies were used in this study and included initial, in vivo, values, narrative, and theme coding. Second-cycle coding allowed the researcher to review, organize,

and re-analyze the first round of coding. Analytic memos written during the coding allowed for in-depth, diverse thinking to develop regarding the data (Saldana, 2009).

To enhance the credibility of this study, member checking (Stake, 1998) was used to allow participants to review reports for accuracy (Yin, 2015). A research design protocol was documented and followed to increase dependability (Yin, 2015). This study provides sufficient detail to allow another researcher to make the same journey from the research questions to the findings, thereby improving trustworthiness through confirmability (Yin, 2015).

Organization of the Study

The remaining sections are organized in the following manner. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on the role of community colleges and the emergence of the national completion agenda, the role of faculty engagement in improving student outcomes, and the importance of relational trust in implementing successful educational reform. A theoretical framework is identified to explore the nature of relational trust in community colleges and how the qualities of relational trust influence faculty engagement. Chapter three describes the research design including how data was collected and analyzed as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study. Chapter four details the key findings through a description of the five themes and related subthemes that emerged through data analysis. Chapter five provides an in-depth discussion of these findings by relating the themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews with community college faculty to the literature on relational trust, faculty engagement, and educational reform. This chapter concludes with reflections on the significance of this study, its implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

By 2020, nearly 65% of jobs in the United States will require post-secondary education with a projected gap of about 5 million workers (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Of those jobs, 30% will require some post-secondary training but not at the level of a bachelor's degree. Community colleges play a key role in closing this gap by preparing students to immediately enter the workforce or transfer to four-year institutions. However, the majority of students entering community college do not complete a certificate, diploma, or degree (Shapiro, et al., 2016). As a result of low completion rates, comprehensive community college reform is underway across the nation.

Thus far the research on these reform efforts has focused primarily on the systemic changes made by institutions rather than the relational qualities of successful reform. In order to successfully scale community college reform efforts and significantly increase post-secondary credential completion to meet the demands of our economy, the relational qualities necessary to achieve exceptional student outcomes must also be identified. In particular, it is important to understand what interpersonal factors within the institutional climate influence faculty, those who interact with students the most, to initiate, implement, and sustain comprehensive reform efforts that improve student learning outcomes. The current study explored how faculty experienced relational trust at two institutions identified by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program as exemplary in engaging faculty in improving student success.

The literature review begins with a brief history and description of community colleges and their role in preparing students for enhanced careers and educational opportunities in a changing economy. In addition, this section describes the recent shift from focusing on access and enrollment to success and completion as measures of success at community colleges. A

focus on the former reflected community colleges in a much more positive light than does the current focus on the latter. During this transition a number of traditional reform efforts were implemented but did not result in significant gains in student success. The shortcomings of those reforms are discussed with a case made for more comprehensive reform efforts that examine and address the barriers that students experience across their educational pathways at community colleges and include faculty engagement in enhancing the teaching and learning environment. Finally, the current national reform efforts, funded by philanthropic foundations, and the early results of those initiatives are detailed. Together, the first section of this chapter highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to reform and the need to understand the myriad conditions, both structural and relational, that are necessary ingredients for engaging faculty in successfully improving completion rates at community colleges.

While community colleges are engaging in the first significant wave of comprehensive educational reform, public education has experienced decades of educational reform efforts since the early 1980s. Therefore, the next section of this chapter examined what knowledge has been gained from these efforts and what factors have emerged as instrumental in successfully improving student outcomes. In particular, the construct of relational trust, one of the critical elements identified in successfully implementing K-12 educational reform initiatives, is examined. The theory of relational trust, formulated by Bryk and Schneider (2002), following their investigation of education reform in the Chicago school system, provided the theoretical framework of this study. Additionally, this section establishes that the success of comprehensive educational reform efforts, and related improvements in student success, relies on the engagement and effort of teachers. Therefore, it is essential when examining the success of

community college reform efforts to focus on the factors that promote faculty engagement in improving student learning.

Next a review of the literature related to the faculty role in student learning and success is described. The intent of this section is to establish faculty as vital personnel who must be engaged in comprehensive educational reform efforts to significantly increase completion rates. Finally, rationale is provided for choosing community colleges that have been identified by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program as the units of analyses for this study. The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program is described and their multi-faceted definition of student success is detailed. Justification for choosing the two community colleges examined in this study is connected to strong faculty engagement in improving student success and completion.

The Role of Community Colleges

Just over a century old, community colleges have played a crucial role in post-secondary education by providing Americans access to general and career technical education, basic skills and remedial education, and workforce development and continuing education opportunities. Community colleges, initially referred to as junior or two-year colleges, emerged following the Morrill Act of 1862 (the Land Grant Act) which sought to expand educational access to more individuals than being served by four-year institutions. In 1890, the second Morrill Act further expanded access by putting into place monetary penalties if students were denied access to higher education as a result of race, unless the state provided minority serving institutions. In 1901, William Rainey Harper, the first junior college, was established in Chicago, Illinois (Drury, 2003).

Two-year colleges were slow to expand across the nation when their primary mission was exclusively to prepare students for transfer. Beginning in the 1930s, vocational education was

promoted as a viable curriculum for two-year institutions resulting in terminal degrees that led directly into careers (Brint & Karabel, 1989). The addition of vocational education, as well as historical events such as the Great Depression (1929-1939), the establishment of the G.I. Bill of Rights (1944), the Truman Commission Report (1947), the Higher Education Act (1965) and the coming of age of the World War II baby boomer generation (1960s), led to an exponential expansion of two-year colleges across the county (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013; Drury, 2003). The phrase "community college" was coined by Jesse Bogue in 1946, secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC) which later become the American Association of Community College (AACC).

During the 1970s, enrollment at community colleges boomed, increasing from 1.6 million at the beginning of the decade to 4.5 million by the end of the decade (Brint & Karabel, 1989). During this time, the rapid enrollment growth was primarily in the vocational education areas with declines in transfer student enrollment. Today, there are over 1,100 community colleges in the United States, serving 7.2 million credit students and 5 million non-credit students a year. Community college students in curriculum programs represent 41% of all undergraduates in the United States (AACC, 2018).

The comprehensive nature of the community college mission provides an open door to all individuals seeking to expand their knowledge and opportunities for advancement. With tuition costs averaging only $3600 a year in 2016-2017, nearly 65% less than four-year institutions, and only 9% of community college students having to pay more than 25% of that cost after financial assistance (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2018), community colleges are an affordable option for those seeking higher education. Due to their open admissions policy, geographic proximity, and affordability, community colleges are more likely to serve student populations whose parents did

not graduate from college (38% versus 20% parents graduated), that are low income (44% versus 15% high income) (The National Center for Public Policy & Higher Education, 2011), that are minorities (56% Hispanics, 44% African American, versus 39% White) (Ma & Baum, 2016), with an average age of 28 years old, and that will attend part-time (63%) (AACC, 2018) and work full-time (33%) (Ma & Baum, 2016). Community colleges are often a "second chance" opportunity for many students who have not been academically successful, whether in high school or other post-secondary institutions, need more training following unemployment or underemployment, or are seeking a new direction in life (Dougherty, Lahr, & Morest, 2017).

Around the turn of the 21st century, a shift occurred in how community colleges were viewed. When enrollment was the primary indicator of success for community colleges, these institutions were viewed positively because they were providing access to post-secondary education to a diverse student population with various purposes for attending. In 2000, community college graduation rates by institution began to be published by the Department of Education and the numbers indicated a dismally low rate of completion, just over 20% on average. The open doors of community colleges are often referred to as revolving doors (Boggs, 2011). Because the majority of students entering these institutions do not complete a certificate, diploma, or degree, focus is shifting from measuring community college success by access to completion.

The national "completion agenda" was firmly established in 2010 when the administration of former President Obama and numerous educational organizations set ambitious goals for increasing the completion of college credentials by 2020. Research indicates that completing any education beyond a high school diploma significantly increases earnings over a lifetime. The median annual salary for an employee with a high school diploma is $35,256, with

some post-secondary but not a degree is $38,376, with an associate's degree is $41,496, and with a bachelor's degree is $59,124. Over a forty year career, workers who have achieved associate degrees will earn approximately $1.7 million, while those with only a high school diploma will earn approximately $1.3 million (Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2001). In addition, the likelihood of being unemployed decreases as educational level increases (Josephson, 2018). Furthermore, by 2020, nearly 65% of jobs in the United States will require post-secondary education with a projected gap of about 5 million workers. Of those jobs, 30% will require some post-secondary training but not at the level of a bachelor's degree (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013).

To meet national completion goals and address the economic imperative of creating a skilled workforce and improving social mobility, community colleges have received not only increased attention but significant funding from both the federal government and private foundations to improve student outcomes and the competitive advantage of our nation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2017; Drummer & Marshburn, 2014). For the last two decades, reform efforts have swept across community colleges with an early focus on more traditional models of reform aimed at "fixing" certain parts of the student experience (i.e. advising, developmental education, instructional supports) and a more recent focus on reforms that comprehensively redesign the entire student pathway (Bailey, 2017). However, even the national comprehensive reform efforts have failed to engage faculty thus far in meaningful and significant improvements in assessing student learning and continually improving the teaching and learning environment at community colleges.

Community College Reform Efforts

The first wave of community college reform efforts focused on a specific part of the community college experience and aimed to improve that experience. Thomas Bailey, president

of Teachers College at Columbia University and former director of the Community College Research Center, describes three traditional reform efforts that were implemented in community colleges with the intent of improving completion during the early 2000s (Bailey, 2017). The first, Achieving the Dream's Community Colleges Count initiative, heavily funded by the Lumina Foundation and eight other national partners, have engaged more than one hundred community colleges to utilize institutional data to identify obstacles to completion and implement promising and proven strategies to improve student success (Boggs, 2011). A second reform effort, the Developmental Education Initiative (DEI), supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, was focused on redesigning developmental, or remedial, education (Quint, Jaggars, Byndloss, & Magazinnik, 2013). Developmental education has been called the "Bermuda triangle" of community college because so many students enter but disappear unable to successfully complete remedial math and/or English required for enrollment in college-level work, even though they have earned a high school diploma or the equivalent (Esch, 2010). The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) at the Community College of Baltimore County (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009), the third reform effort Bailey (2017) describes, was indicative of the many institution-specific initiatives implemented during this time tailored to the unique needs of community college students. The co-requisite format of this program allowed developmental education students to simultaneously enroll in developmental reading and college-level English with an instructional support component. Following early positive results, this model was replicated across many states in an effort to improve course success and progression rates.

Despite being well-funded, well-designed, well-intentioned and implemented by devoted and passionate community college faculty and staff, the results of traditional reform efforts

aimed at improving a single point or area along the student pathway were not substantial and rarely scaled to reach a majority of community college students at the institution (Rutschow et al., 2011). Some positive results were realized for the limited number of participants directly involved in these initiatives but overall institutional success, such as retention and course and program completion, did not increase (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins & Jaggars, 2012; Quint et al., 2013; Rutschow et al., 2011). Bailey (2017) suggests that the lack of significant improvements in completion were due to two primary reasons. First, targeted interventions are typically designed as pilot programs that in reality will never scale to impact more than a small percentage of students. Institutions often plan to scale them but for various reasons, including funding, time, and changes in leadership, the systemic modifications necessary to institutionalize the promising practices never occur. The second reason these efforts do not generate a significant improvement in student success is that they are narrowly focused on one point along the community college student pathway. When programs are implemented in isolation, the positive results may be short-lived and lessen as the student progresses and no longer has the additional support systems specific to the programs. As Bailey states, "many of the initial reforms motivated by the completion agenda were in effect not designed to promote completion but, rather, to improve an intermediate step. Improving the intermediate outcomes had only modest effects on overall completion" (2017, pp. 38-39).

Given the shortcomings of traditional reform, comprehensive community college reform initiatives have emerged that involve examining the entire student pathway and redesigning the student experience with a clear focus on student success from start to finish. Complete College America, Completion by Design, and the American Association of Community College's Guided

Pathway Project are three of the major national initiatives aimed at comprehensive reform (Kilgore & Wilson, 2017).

Complete College America, founded in 2009, partners with states to implement six "game changers" at the institutions within their systems. These game changers include encouraging full-time enrollment (15 credits per semester), completing gateway math in the first year, providing co-requisite academic support, generating momentum in the first year toward credential completion, advising that is proactive with structured educational maps, and a designing more efficient pathways for returning adults. The primary results, published to date related to this initiative, are related to co-requisite remediation. Results from a number of participating states are demonstrating impressive results in simultaneous completion of development and gateway math and/or English by students. Vandal (2015) reported that students enrolled in co-requisite developmental English and curriculum English succeeded twice as often as did students who were not and those enrolled in co-requisite math were five to six times more likely to complete developmental math than those not in a co-requisite model. Thus far, however Complete College America has not published comprehensive student outcome data for institution's implementing the game changing strategies nor is it clear the extent to which faculty have been engaged in improving the teaching and learning environment as part of implementing the game changers.

Completion by Design, a national community college initiative, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was a five-year project aimed at comprehensively redesigning the student experience at community college in three states, Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio. This initiative, launched in 2011, introduced the loss-momentum framework, which focused reform efforts on eliminating barriers and generating momentum across the student pathway from

connection through completion. Results from this initiative are promising with all of the nine colleges reaching the majority of their target goals three years before anticipated. Overall, these nine colleges have achieved positive increases in intermediate key performance indicators of success such as: a 10% increase in student completion of entry-level math in the first-term; a 12% increase in student completion of entry-level English in the first-term; a 12% increase in student completion of 12 credit hours in first term; and an 8% increase in student completion of 24 credit hours in first year (Completion by Design, n.d.). Faculty were significantly involved in redesigning programs of study to be more coherent and sequential and typically were supportive of the process and policy changes related to the student experience outside the classroom. However, this initiative did not adequately engage faculty or focus on student learning and improvements in the instructional environment (R.E. Bowling, personal communication, October 3, 2017).

The experiences and insights gained from the Completion by Design initiative laid the foundation for the current guided pathways movement and the design principles described in *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). In this book, the authors provide guidance to leaders on how to comprehensively redesign their institutions. They draw comparisons between how "cafeteria" (or traditional) community colleges approach student success and the processes and practices along the student continuum to how "guided pathways" colleges do so. Using data and numerous case studies of community colleges across the nation, the authors argue in favor of a clearer, more coherent and structured approach to the student experience.

The current American Association of Community College's (AACC) Guided Pathways Project builds upon the lessons learned from prior comprehensive initiatives, such as Completion

by Design. This initiative, also supported by funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, originated in 2015. Currently 43 community colleges are participating in "an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from her/his point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market." This model focuses on four key pillars: 1) Clarifying paths to student end goals; 2) Helping students choose and enter a pathway; 3) Keeping students on path; 4) Ensuring students are learning (https://www.aacc.nche.edu/programs/aacc-pathways-project/). Unlike the previously described comprehensive reform initiatives, the Guided Pathways model has an explicit focus on student learning with objectives that specifically engage faculty to enhance the instructional environment. While results related to student outcomes are not yet available, early qualitative insights indicate that these colleges are making comprehensive, systemic changes in an effort to redesign the student pathway to improve the four key areas described above (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017).

In reviewing the literature for these comprehensive reform efforts, the majority of the lessons learned and research evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, are focused on the structural changes that promote better student experiences and outcomes. Many of the lessons learned, or design principles, are related to redesigning processes, revising policies, restructuring programs, and reallocating resources. Limited attention has been devoted to the relational aspects of managing such large scale change, particularly at the level of faculty, until Bailey, Jaggars and Jenkins (2015) introduced Byrk and Schneider's (2002) concept of relational trust to the higher education environment. From their extensive involvement as Community College Research

Center staff members in reform initiatives, they identified relational trust as an important institutional quality for cultivating faculty and staff engagement in comprehensive reform efforts such as implementing guided pathways. Anecdotal evidence is provided from interviews with faculty and staff describing interactions with administration that have generated relational trust through public and consistent demonstrations of professional competence, personal integrity, and collegial respect. However, since their identification of relational trust as an important component to successful educational reform in 2015, very little empirical research has been conducted to further explore its development and influence at the community college level.

K-12 Educational Reform

Comprehensive educational reform efforts are relatively new in the community college sector but have been common in the public school arena with numerous change initiatives aimed at improving student achievement at the primary and secondary levels (Murphy, 1992; Zhoa, 2009). Since the 1980s, three waves of comprehensive education reform have occurred in the United States. Each of these waves have been aimed at enhancing student achievement at the elementary, middle and high school levels of education (Ouchi, 2003).

The first wave of reform, from 1982 to 1986, occurred following the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983), a report commissioned by former President Ronald Reagan that criticized American schools as being underperforming at national and international levels thereby affecting the nation's ability to be competitive in the global economy (Cuban, 2000; Murphy, 2002). As a result, an array of mandated, top-down reform measures emerged aimed at repairing the existing system through initiatives such as extending the school year, enacting more rigorous high school graduation requirements, increasing faculty evaluation, and giving more standardized student tests. This quick fix approach that often

alienated educators did not give rise to effective interventions and was abandoned in 1986 following the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*.

This report, which suggested that schools were beyond repair and needed a complete overhaul, gave rise to the second major reform effort of public education in America (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). This wave focused on empowering and involving teachers and parents in redesigning public education and evolved from the bottom up (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy, 1992). As a result, the traditional role of school administrators, such as principals and superintendents, shifted from being managers to being transformational leaders who were skilled in collaborative problem-solving, building interdependent relationships, nurturing effective teaching and learning, and establishing a common vision (Bjork & Gurley, 2003). Change initiatives emerging during this reform wave focused on restructuring education through a more distributed power structure and the implementation of evidence-based research strategies to strengthen the teaching profession (Clark & Meloy, 1989; Hallinger, 1992).

The third wave of reform began in 1989 when the child became the primary focus, rather than the educational environment. While the second wave focused on decentralizing educational reform efforts and placing the responsibility for improvements at the level of the school districts and individual schools, the third wave moved that responsibility to the federal government (Ladd, 2007). The primary concern now centered on how children learn and methods for ensuring that all children progressed successfully. This wave prepared the landscape for the emergence and passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 under former President George W. Bush. NCLB made a national commitment to ensuring that through standards-based models of instruction all children receive a quality education. Underlying this educational policy is the

belief that all children can learn and that schools should be held accountable if they do not perform to their abilities (Tucker & Codding, 2002). The NCLB Act was in effect from 2002 until 2015 when it was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act. While the intent of NCLB to level the playing field and eliminate achievement gaps garnered bi-partisan support, it was controversial among educators and criticisms included stifling teacher creativity by requiring them to "teach to the test," hurting the schools with the least resources, and a lowering of individual state standards to meet a national goal of academic proficiency on state assessments by 2014 (Fuller, Wright, Gesicki, & Kang, 2007).

While today each of these waves of comprehensive educational reform efforts are viewed as unsuccessful in making significant improvements in student outcomes (Comer, 2001; Ouchi, 2003), successes were achieved and lessons were learned within many schools. Early research examining the success of these efforts emphasized the importance of instructional reforms and narrowly focused on improving curriculum (Blum, Butler, & Olson, 1987; Hallinger, 1992; Levine & Lezotte, 1990). More recent research has illustrated examining the relational aspects of school reform is equally important in the successful implementation of curriculum improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Ford, 2010; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016).

From the latter research, trust has emerged as a pivotal element in achieving and sustaining improvements in student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). High levels of trust have been associated with improved collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), greater teacher satisfaction (Houtte, 2006), increased teacher effort (Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011), successful reform efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), and improvements in student achievement (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Relational Trust

Organizational change researchers have promoted the value of relationships in the process of successful change efforts in various types of organizations (Holland, Cooper, & Sheehan, 2017; Senge, et al., 1994; Shore & Shore, 1995; Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2014). Successful change requires a focus on the interpersonal context not just the structural or procedural strategies implemented to effect change (Senge, et al., 1994). For instance, employees who perceive their work environment to be supportive are more likely to be engaged and committed to organizational goals (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Momentum for change is created through the development of trusting relationships allowing individuals within an organization to put forth extra effort even in times of uncertainty with the belief that the change will be beneficial for the organization and the employees (Gilder, 2003; Cerit, 2013).

These findings have been replicated in the research on educational reform demonstrating that "trust is pivotal in the effort to improve education" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 505). After conducting extensive research on the outcomes of the Chicago Reform Act of 1988 on public schools, Bryk and Schneider (2002) discovered that in order to effectively implement a school improvement plan, relational trust was a key ingredient and when such trust was absent, it was nearly impossible to build the organizational features required to improve schools.

From their research, Bryk & Schneider (2002) developed a theory of relational trust. Relational trust occurs in an educational community when all parties responsible for academic achievement have established a shared understanding of their role obligations in relation to others and role expectations from others. These relationships include those between principals and teachers, among teachers, and between parents and teachers. The development and

maintenance of relational trust within each group requires “synchrony of … mutual expectations and obligations” (p. 21). When expectations and obligations are synchronized among all groups within a school, relational trust is high but when they are not, relational trust suffers and positive organizational change is unlikely.

During social exchanges among networks, relational trust develops as the result of a “dynamic interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23). Respect develops through personal interactions and the ability to listen and value of others’ opinions. Competence occurs when members demonstrates the ability to effectively carry out their core responsibilities and collaborate with others to collectively achieve desired outcomes for students. Personal regard for others is evident when members show genuine care for others as individuals and are willing to go beyond their formal roles to show that care. Integrity involves guiding one’s work through a moral and ethical lens and engaging in behaviors that demonstrate trustworthiness.

Once it exists, relational trust creates conditions within individuals and organizations that promote and sustain comprehensive improvement efforts When these qualities are frequently displayed through the interpersonal interactions of the adult stakeholders of the school, educational reform is more likely to be embraced and sustained in times of uncertainty and risk (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Kochanek, 2005). Comprehensive reform efforts require teachers and other stakeholders to experiment with new, and often uncharted, academic models and during this time relational trust can promote risk taking and buffer against inaction as the result of uncertainty and feelings of vulnerability. Relational trust promotes both collaborative problem solving resulting in common standards for teachers and individual approaches to exploring new solutions to improving student outcomes.

Finally, relational trust when well-established becomes a property of the organization that can sustain reform efforts and build capacity for comprehensive and significant positive change (Byrk & Schneider, 2002). As Byrk and Schneider (2002) conclude, the presence or absence of relational trust "has important consequences for the functioning of the school and its capacity to engage in fundamental change" (p. 22).

Principals set the tone for organizational change and nurture relational trust through the display of personal integrity, the demonstration of respect and empathy, and actively listening to the concerns of constituents, which can mobilize others to reform their schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). While principals may initiate the conditions necessary for reform, the success of comprehensive educational reform efforts depends on teachers (Correnti & Rowan, 2007). Teachers must be engaged and willing to put forth extra effort (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010; Cerit, 2012; Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Kochanek, 2005). Relational trust has been shown to strengthen teacher engagement and create institutional conditions likely to promote significant improvement and enhanced student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Wong et al. 2006). Trust of this nature has been linked directly and indirectly to extra effort by teachers when implementing curriculum reform (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Cerit, 2012; Yin, Lee, & Jin, 2011).

Faculty Role in Student Learning and Success

Although minimal research has extended the concept of relational trust into the higher education sector, substantial research has demonstrated that faculty-student interactions are key to student success, particularly for underserved and under-represented students (Kuh et al., 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). A host of positive student outcomes have been associated with quality and frequency of faculty-student interactions such as persistence (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000; Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2003; Wang &

Grimes, 2001), completion (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006), improved grades (Anaya, 1992; Anaya & Cole, 2001), and the mastery of general education outcomes and "soft" skills development (Bjorkland, Parente, & Sathiyananthan, 2002; Martin, 2000; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006).

For decades an understanding has prevailed that effective pedagogical approaches must accompany successful educational reform efforts (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Chickering & Gamson, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2012). Vincent Tinto (2012), in his research on college completion, stated "For many students, especially in community colleges, if involvement does not happen in the classroom, it is unlikely to occur at all" (p. 68). Chickering and Gamson's (1997) "Principles of Good Practice for Undergraduate Education" emphasized the importance of faculty engagement and the use of active learning strategies in the classroom. The seven principles of "good practice" are: 1) encourages contact between students and faculty, 2) develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, 3) encourages active learning, 4) gives prompt feedback, 5) emphasizes time on task, 6) communicates high expectations, and 7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning. Furthermore, they provide guidance to institutions in supporting faculty to achieve these seven principles. Their recommendations to administrators are to "create a strong sense of shared purpose, [provide] concrete support from administrators and faculty leaders for those purposes, [provide] adequate funding appropriate for these purposes, [adopt] policies and procedures consistent with these purposes," and continually examine "how well the purposes are being achieved" (p. 5).

In a commissioned report examining the factors that influence postsecondary student success, Kuh et al. (2006) determined that faculty-student interactions, teaching and learning strategies, and faculty having a growth mindset related to their students' abilities to learn were

positively associated with credential completion. In a more recent publication for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Kuh (2008) identified ten high-impact teaching strategies that have the potential to transform student learning and produce desired student outcomes. These include strategies such as learning communities, first-year experiences, and service learning. Following these researchers, organizations such as Achieving the Dream (AtD) and the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) have promoted the adoption of similar strategies with their community college constituents (CCCSE, 2014; McClenney, 2013).

Despite substantial evidence of the critical role of faculty in improving student learning and educational outcomes, community college faculty have received limited focus in post-secondary reform efforts. As noted earlier, three of the major national comprehensive reform efforts aimed at improving community college completion rates have minimally involved faculty or devoted resources and attention to the role of faculty. While AtD and CCCSE, both national leaders in advancing community college student success, promote high-impact instructional practices through their publications and initiatives, neither has taken a comprehensive approach to providing resources and actionable strategies that deeply engage faculty in a process of improving teaching and learning across the faculty experience, from hiring and onboarding to promotion and tenure. In addition to a lack of widespread faculty engagement in transforming the student experience, these national initiatives have also failed to adequately examine the interpersonal conditions necessary to motivate, engage, and sustain faculty in significant reform of the teaching and learning environment. In a recent paper, the Educational Advisory Board (2016) suggests that successful reform efforts “rely on the willingness of faculty to redesign the

institutional approach and carry out a new set of procedures, but many academic administrators have neglected to involve faculty from the outset" (p. 3).

Relational Trust in Community Colleges

Beginning in 2011, the Aspen Institute's College Excellence program awarded the first Aspen Prize for community college excellence, a $1 million reward, to a community college with exceptional student outcomes (The Aspen Institute, 2014). With the inaugural prize, a broader definition of student success emerged in the community college sector to include more than just completion of credentials. This new definition recognized student learning as a primary domain of student success, along with equity, completion and labor market outcomes. In *Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence* (2014b), an intentional focus on excellence in teaching and learning is identified as an essential component of exceptional community colleges.

A subsequent publication, *Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success* (2014a), details a process for faculty engagement utilizing examples from the first Aspen Prize winner, Valencia College, and a few other exemplary community colleges. The process includes making the case for change, building the right team, determining and implementing a plan for change that becomes institutionalized, and continually assessing for improvements. Throughout this and other Aspen publications, while the phrase "relational trust" is not used, the qualities of strong relational trust at these institutions effectively engaging faculty in comprehensive educational reform efforts are evident. For example, faculty at Valencia College engage in action-based research to both collectively and individually experiment with new, more effective methods of instruction. Faculty are enculturated from the time they are employed that innovative risk-taking in the classroom is rewarded and they trust negative consequences will not follow if the risks are

not successful. At West Kentucky Technical College, an Aspen Prize finalist, “learning circles” of full-time and adjunct faculty collaborated to share practices, data, and learn new teaching skills culminating in a significant improvement in reading abilities of students across disciplines (The Aspen Institute, 2014a). At Odessa College, named as a “Rising Star” in the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the faculty onboarding and professional development process has been redesigned to focus on effective teaching principles as well as effective engagement strategies to promote student connection and completion. The other “Rising Star” in 2017 was San Jacinto College where the department chair model was re-visioned to provide coaching and mentoring to faculty on high impact teaching methods (The Aspen Institute, 2017). In each of these cases, it is likely the strong organizational cultures at these institutions focused on comprehensively and significantly improving student success include the essential qualities of relational trust - respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As a result of low completion rates (Shapiro, et al., 2016), educational reform efforts are underway in an increasing percentage of community colleges with a focus on comprehensively redesigning the student experience to improve completion (Bailey, 2017; Kilgore & Wilson, 2017). While comprehensive reform efforts are relatively new to community colleges, reform efforts to improve student outcomes within the K-12 sector have been underway for decades with research identifying relational trust as a pivotal element in achieving and sustaining improvements in student outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Li, Hallinger & Walker, 2016; Schneider, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). To effectively scale successful community college reform efforts and significantly increase post-secondary credential completion to meet the workforce demands of a changing economy, understanding the relational qualities of institutions that are achieving exceptional student outcomes is essential. In particular, it is important to understand how interpersonal factors influence faculty, those who interact with students the most, to initiate, implement, and sustain comprehensive reform efforts that contribute to improvements in student learning outcomes.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was to explore how faculty experience relational trust at institutions that have effectively and actively engaged faculty in improving student success. Two institutions were selected from a group of community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program as exemplary in engaging faculty in improving student learning. Given the lack of empirical research on the role of relational trust in engaging faculty in community college reform efforts, this research study provides an initial exploration of faculty perceptions of the importance of relational trust in motivating them to initiate and sustain comprehensive reform efforts to improve student

learning. To further investigate the role of relational trust, this study examined whether certain components of relational trust, as conceptualized by Bryk and Schneider (2002), emerged as more influential than others in influencing faculty engagement levels. The design of this multiple case study allowed for comparisons of individual responses within institutions as well as comparisons between the two institutions. The specific research questions of this qualitative inquiry are:

1. How does relational trust promote faculty engagement in educational reform efforts at community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?
2. What components of relational trust are most influential in faculty engagement in educational reform efforts?
3. What differences exist in faculty perceptions of relational trust within the same institution?
4. What differences in relational trust exist between community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?

The remainder of this chapter provides a description of the methods used to answer these research questions. The chapter begins with a rationale for choosing a qualitative research design and then more specifically, a multiple case study. The remainder of the chapter describes the process used for site and participant selection, how data was collected, analyzed and verified, and concludes with a review of the study's delimitations and limitations.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The exploratory nature of this research study and the reliance on community college faculty perceptions of the role of relational trust on their engagement in comprehensive educational reform efforts supported a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is

typically grounded in social constructionism, which holds that people create meaning in situations, particularly through their social interactions (Creswell, 2014). In other words, "meaning is not discovered, but constructed" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Reality is believed to be "sustained . . . and reproduced through social life" (Crotty, 1998, p. 55). Qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning that participants assign to their experiences and focus on the ways participants interact within specific settings (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2009) indicated that the qualitative "research process involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting" (p. 232). Qualitative research aims to create a rich description of the meanings that participants assign to their experiences, in order to see the world through their perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

This study aimed to describe faculty experiences of relational trust at institutions that have effectively and actively engaged faculty in improving student success. Participants were asked to recall and describe their social exchanges and interpersonal interactions during organizational change. As described above, qualitative research provides the optimum methodology for this research study. This study relied on individual faculty perceptions of their experiences to better understand the role of relational trust in engaging them to improve student learning and success through comprehensive reform efforts. Given that the decision to trust or not to trust is an individual decision, faculty have different perceptions about who to trust and why they trust. A qualitative research design provided an effective and appropriate method to interpret their perceptions of reality (Creswell, 2014).

Rationale for a Multiple Case Study Approach

This study employed a case study approach, examining the perspectives of faculty at community colleges that have experienced and sustained improved student outcomes. A case

study involves in-depth examination of a case. Glesne (2011) defines a case as “a bounded integrated system with working parts” (p.22) that is specific to a certain time and place (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, Yin (2002) states that a case is “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context” (p.13). The case study approach was applicable to this research study in that the research was limited to two community colleges and was bounded by the faculty interviewed at these two institutions. Additionally, the study of relational trust is a contemporary phenomenon and is studied in the real-world setting of the two community colleges.

Cases studies are recommended when the research seeks to describe or explore a current phenomenon that has limited prior research, when the research aims to answer “why” or “how” questions, and the researcher lacks control over events (Yin, 2014). This research study met these conditions indicating that the case study methodology is an appropriate approach.

Case studies are based on an interpretivist paradigm (Glesne, 2011) suggesting that a single truth does not exist and reality is determined by the individual having the experiences. Therefore, another reason for selecting case study methodology was to allow the researcher to explore the phenomenon through multiple lenses allowing for the construction of a more robust and richer understanding of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study was selected for this research study to allow for a rich account of faculty experiences to better understand how relational trust influences faculty engagement in comprehensive community college reform efforts.

Finally, a multiple case study is considered to be more robust than a single-case study, allowing for more variation and increased validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). The

use of a multiple case study allowed for an analysis of data within the institutions selected as well as between the institutions selected (Yin, 2003). Community colleges across the country are as diverse as the students they serve, therefore gaining an understanding of how relational trust influences faculty engagement at two institutions, rather than one, increased the potential value of the results and their application across various community college structures. Similarities and differences can also be deduced from studying more than one case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). When similarities are noted across multiple cases, replications of findings contribute to the external validity of the study and the robustness of the results (Yin, 2003).

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling works from the assumption that selecting a sample from which the most information can be gleaned, a sample that is unique or special in some way, will lead to insights about the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The sampling method in this study was purposeful in that the participants worked at community colleges that were finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. This award recognizes colleges who have made significant gains in improving student outcomes in four areas: learning, equity, completion, and labor market (The Aspen Institute, 2018). In particular, both of these institutions were acknowledged by the Aspen Institute (2018) for demonstrating impressive improvements in the area of student learning as the result of strong faculty involvement in success initiatives. These two institutions were intentionally selected in an effort to gain insights that may not have been possible with random sampling.

Site Selection

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program awards a one million dollar prize every two years to a community college that demonstrates excellent performance in four

categories: student learning, credential completion, family-sustaining employment, and equity in outcomes for minority and low-income students (The Aspen Institute, 2018a). The process for selecting the winner begins with a review of nationally available performance metrics on the country's 1,000 public community colleges, focusing on student retention and completion, including equity in outcomes. From the data, 150 colleges are determined to be eligible to apply for the Aspen Prize (The Aspen Institute, 2018c). These colleges are invited to submit applications, providing additional data regarding labor market outcomes, student learning assessment, and retention and completion. From the pool of applicants, ten finalists are named. The winner is selected from ten finalists after extensive reviews of the colleges' qualitative and quantitative data and on-site visits. Josh Wyner, Executive Director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, explains that the finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence have demonstrated exemplary outcomes related to student success:

> Their leaders, faculty, and staffs have developed cultures that drive toward scaled improvements in completion and classroom learning as well as students' post-graduation success—at universities where they transfer and in the job market. And they work hard to achieve strong results for all students, understanding the critical role community colleges play in advancing social mobility for many students who historically have been underserved in higher education. (The Aspen Institute, 2018a, n.p.)

The College Excellence Program recognizes the need for community colleges to change in order to achieve successful student outcomes and expects the Aspen Prize to spark identification and replication of best practices for achieving those outcomes (The Aspen Institute, 2018a).

As a result of their accolades in the area of student learning, innovative institutional cultures, and improvements in student outcomes, two community colleges were approached to

gauge preliminary interest in participating in this research study. Both agreed to serve as sites for exploring the role of relational trust in faculty engagement through a case study approach.

To protect the anonymity of the participants and the two community colleges, pseudonyms will be utilized throughout the study. Plains Community College (PCC) is used when referring to the smaller of the two colleges and Urban Community College (UCC) is used for the larger institution. These two community colleges are located in the South Central area of the United States. Both community colleges operate under a state-level higher education coordinating board or agency and are governed by a locally elected board. Each college has multiple campuses, offers over 100 curriculum level credentials, has an organizational structure with roles similar to a department chair, has experienced tremendous change resulting in some turnover in personnel, implements student success efforts at scale, and has seen significant improvements in completion outcomes. Neither college is unionized or has a tenure process. While different titles were used by faculty to describe administrators at the two colleges, for the purposes of describing them in this study the following terms are utilized: “Department chair” is used to describe the immediate faculty supervisor; “Vice President” is used to describe the top academic leader; and, “President” is used to describe the top leader at the institution.

Participant Selection

The population of participants was determined by the scope of this research project which focused on faculty who have been engaged in comprehensive community college reform efforts. Participants for this study were selected from faculty in general education and career technical programs at the two identified community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program as achieving exceptional student outcomes. Following the initial solicitation email (Appendix A), the Vice President at each institution coordinated with the researcher to

identify faculty who have demonstrated strong engagement in comprehensive student success initiatives at their respective sites. Additionally, selected faculty must have worked at the institution for at least three years. In the case of PCC, the Vice President contacted the complete list of faculty identified as potential participants to gauge their interest. A list of those who showed interest was compiled by an administrative support staff member as well as a grid showing each faculty member's availability. The researcher used the college directory to select a sample of seven faculty that closely resembled the characteristics of the general faculty population. Once the research schedule was coordinated, the administrative support staff member sent calendar invitations to both the faculty and the researcher. The researcher emailed the faculty member with additional information about the study (Appendix B). A very similar process was conducted at UCC, however the researcher was provided with a list of seven names and their available interview times. The majority of these faculty were in areas other than career technical programs therefore follow up conversations occurred to identify two additional faculty from those areas. Every faculty member was present at their scheduled times and chose to participate. Prior to participation, the Informed Consent for Research form was explained to the faculty members which detailed the purpose of the study, their involvement, their rights as participant, and how their confidentiality was protected (See Appendix C). Each participant signed a copy of this form and agreed to be audio recorded. All faculty were told they could withdraw from the study at any time. Only one faculty member chose to skip a handful of questions related to trust with his leaders.

The final sample of community college faculty was representative of the various disciplines and programs available at the colleges, included early champions and the initially more reluctant participants in reform efforts, and matched the demographics (i.e. gender, race, age, and longevity) of the general faculty population.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to interview enough faculty members at each institution to achieve both rich and thick data (Dibley, 2011). Fusch & Ness (2015) suggest thinking of "rich as quality and thick as quantity" (p. 1409). The goal of this study was to have both. To achieve depth in data collection, a sample of 16 faculty (7 from Plains Community College and 9 from Urban Community College) were interviewed. Yin (2014) suggests that the sample size for case studies include at least six sources of information and Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that data saturation begins to occur after 12 interviews. More faculty were identified and scheduled to prevent too few interviews should unexpected circumstances arise. In the case of this research study, all faculty were present and participated in their interview. The target sample successfully revealed key variants related to the role of relational trust in faculty engagement.

The instruments used to collect data in this study were interviews and document analysis. The study employed semi-structured interviews and achieved the goal of yielding rich, descriptive information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The format of the interviews was one-on-one, with the exception of one interview that involved two faculty members who were co-teaching together and involved in the same success initiative. Interviews lasted on average for 45 minutes with the shortest lasting just over 20 minutes and the longest lasting 90 minutes. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to investigate a specific topic with a limited number of prepared questions, with follow-up questions asked for further, less structured exploration (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interview questions explored faculty experiences of relational trust at institutions that have effectively and actively engaged faculty in improving student success. Interviews gauged their experiences during interactions with various social networks (i.e. executive leadership,

middle leaders, and colleagues/other faculty) and the role relational trust played in their engagement in implementing comprehensive educational reform efforts that impact student learning and success. The qualities of relational trust served as a guide to develop interview questions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Appendix D provides the protocol and interview questions.

Document analysis was another tool used for this qualitative research. Document analysis provides data about the contexts in which research occurs. Documents helps provide information and background that supports the research questions. They provide supplemental data, such as demographic information, student characteristics, and success outcomes. Documents also provide corroborating evidence that verified information obtained through the interviews (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis for this study included reviewing written and visual documents such as websites, strategic planning materials, personnel directories, organizational charts, student success documents and outcomes, and policy manuals. These documents are available to the public and if included here would reveal the identity of the institutions; therefore, they are not cited here or included in the reference section. These documents were collected, reviewed and analyzed prior to the site visits in an effort to better understand the institutional culture. A few documents were revisited to add clarity to information that was provided during interviews.

A research journal was a personal document used by the researcher to keep track of notes, thoughts, and ideas that arose during the interviews. The few modifications from protocol were documented as well as changes that were made during the interview process to better address the research questions (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). The primary adjustment made during the 16 interviews was to ask more direct questions about faculty participation in student success

initiatives in an effort to identify an initiative that allowed the faculty to most thoroughly discuss the remaining interview questions.

In a few instances, document analysis was combined with interviews in that the researcher asked questions about certain documents, such as how the reporting structure worked within an organization chart and about the origination of particular policies and practices (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To confirm information gathered throughout the interviews, data was triangulated with document analysis when possible.

Ethical Considerations

Protecting human subjects required obtaining informed consent from all study participants. Privacy and confidentiality was secured through pseudonyms (Yin, 2015) and transcripts and other documentation were kept on a secure, password-protected computer and in locked cabinets. The research design reduced adverse actions that may have resulted from participation in the study (Yin, 2015). In addition, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at North Carolina State University and the boards at each institution.

Data Analysis

Documents were analyzed through an initial skimming and then a more thorough reading of those determined to be relevant. Interpretation followed an iterative process of examining the documents for content and themes. Content analysis involved organizing information into categories based on the research questions of this study. Thematic analysis involved a more in-depth processing of the information to discover themes related to the topic of interest. Coding methods described below were utilized to allow for the integration of data gathered through document analysis and interviews (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. The researcher audio recorded each of the interviews using Otter Voice Notes which translates English conversations into transcriptions. The software is safe and secure as the data is synced over an encrypted connection and stored in a secure cloud environment. The transcripts required significant editing by the researcher to closely match the actual content of the conversations. During transcription, identifiers were de-linked from the data which was stored on a password protected computer.

Completed transcripts were uploaded to the computer-assisted, qualitative data analysis software NVIVO to assist with coding data. First- and second-coding cycles provided a thorough analysis of the data (Saldana, 2009). As described by Saldana (2009), coding is a recursive process of identifying, comparing, and checking codes, data, categories, and other factors. Coding during the first cycle focused on gaining an initial understanding and early analysis of the data. A variety of first-cycle coding methods appropriate for case studies were used in this study and included initial, in vivo, values, narrative, and theme coding. Initial coding involved creating notes and memos while reading through the transcripts the first few times. In vivo coding allowed the faculty voice to be captured through salient quotations. Values coding provided a method to label values, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives and the frames through which they viewed relational trust. Narrative coding was utilized to understand interpersonal interactions expressed through the accounts provided by faculty. And themeing the data, the most frequent and helpful method, allowed the researcher to analyze the data by grouping it into thematic patterns (Saldana, 2009)

Second-cycle coding allowed the researcher to review, organize, and re-analyze the first round of coding (Saldana, 2009). Code mapping during this cycle allowed the researcher to organize and further refine codes by combining, condensing, eliminating, or realigning codes.

Analytic memos written during the coding allowed for in-depth, diverse thinking to develop regarding the data (Saldana, 2009). Topics for the memos included the researcher's connection to the participants, flow of the interview, modifications to or interesting perspectives on the research questions, codes and reasons for their selection, patterns or themes in the data, and potential future directions for the study (Saldana, 2009).

Trustworthiness of the Research

The quality of a qualitative study is determined by its credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Mertens, 2010). Credibility refers to how believable the research is from the perspective of the participants. To boost credibility, the researcher can request that participants review reports for accuracy (Yin, 2015). This is referred to as member checks (Stake, 1998). According to Yin, reviewing reports is a way of "corroborating the essential findings and evidence presented in a case study report" (2015, p. 199). All participants were provided the transcript of their interview and given the opportunity to review it for accuracy. Ten of the 16 faculty provided confirmation that their transcripts were accurate with a few tweaks made for clarification. Triangulation from document analysis and interview content further enhanced credibility. A case study's conclusions are perceived as more accurate and valid if based on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2015). This multiple case study allowed for the collection of data from multiple participants and multiple sites.

The goal of dependability, referred to as reliability in quantitative studies, is to reduce biases and inaccuracies to ensure a study can be replicated (Yin, 2015). The dependability of data and conclusions in case study research depends on whether another researcher, functioning in the same way an auditor would, would arrive at the same conclusions in the study (Yin, 2015). Therefore, the researcher documented procedures thoroughly to allow an effective reliability

check to be completed using that documentation (Yin, 2015). Yin (2015) advocates for the creation of a protocol, which outlines the procedures, logistics, and rules that will be followed during the case study. Appendix D outlines the interview protocol and research questions for this study.

Finally, confirmability occurs when the research can be corroborated by others. A chain of evidence increases a study's confirmability. A chain of evidence allows another researcher or an observer to retrace the steps taken from findings to the data and research questions that led to it—and to make the same journey from the research questions to the findings (Yin, 2015). Research methods are detailed and well-documented in the appendices.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations are conditions within the researcher's control that narrow the scope of a research study (Creswell, 2014). Participation in this research study was limited to community colleges that have been finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Faculty involvement was limited to only those faculty identified by their top academic leader as being employed for at least three years and significantly involved in one or more student success initiative at the institution. Given the exploratory nature of this study, intentional choices were made by the researcher to apply boundaries to participant selection to maximize the opportunity to gain insights from engaged faculty who likely experience high levels of relational trust. Therefore, these institutions were ideal for an initial study on the role of relational trust in promoting faculty engagement.

This study had limitations that are important to note. As previously mentioned the faculty participants were identified by their administrators as being significantly engaged in reform efforts. As a result, they may not be representative of the full faculty at the two community

colleges examined. Those faculty most engaged and positive about their experiences may have been the most agreeable to the interview and more open to authentic dialogue with the researcher. With a sample size of 16 participations, 7 at PCC and 9 at UCC, a variety of faculty perceptions were expressed with only a few faculty providing less positive accounts of their experiences than the majority.

A second limitation of this study was that the semi-structured interviews relied on self-report and participants' memories of prior experiences with reform efforts. Therefore, the data collected was subject to inaccuracies given the fallibility of memories. In addition, a few faculty were unwilling to provide complete expressions of their perceptions. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions to probe certain areas in greater depth and seek clarifications; however there were some instances where a deeper understanding was not possible.

Because these institutions are recognized for being exceptional community colleges, multiple factors may be contributing to the success of the institutions and the engagement of their faculty. Examining community colleges that have recently been recognized by the Aspen Institute of Community College Excellence in the area of student learning outcomes provided the researcher with enhanced opportunities to investigate strong faculty cultures of engagement with high levels of relational trust. These cultures may not be indicative of the majority of community colleges across the nation. Another commonality between these two community colleges was that they shared a number of contextual characteristics, such as both operating under a state-level higher education coordinating board or agency and being governed by a locally elected board. As a result of the similarities, factors and conditions may be present that influence faculty engagement. However, this qualitative case study was not focused on causality or quantifying the

magnitude of one factor on the improvements in student outcomes. Furthermore, it was not the intent of this study to be able to generalize the findings from these two case studies to all community colleges. As Stake (2000) notes, “the purpose of a case report is not the represent the world, but to represent the case” (p. 448). It was the intent of this research study to gain knowledge about the role of relational trust in engaging faculty in comprehensive reform efforts to improve student outcomes, to provide readers of this study with information relevant and helpful to their particular situations, and generate additional research from the findings.

Positionality Statement

A study can be limited by the researcher’s position. Positionality is the acknowledgement by researchers that their views, values, and locations, in both time and space, can influence their understanding of the world and the research process. As the researcher, I am aware that my beliefs, values, and experiences are always present and inseparable from my position as the researcher of this study. Glesne (2011) suggests that “researchers cannot control positionality in that it is determined in relations with others, but they can make certain choices that affect those relationships” (p. 157). It is imperative to mindfully, purposefully, and critically reflect on my positionality throughout this research project.

As an undergraduate psychology major, I was intrigued by the literature on how human perceptions are constructed. Later as a psychology instructor, I loved teaching the sensation and perception material and witnessing the astonishment of my students when they realized that their classmates were sensing exactly the same sensations as they were but having very different perceptions. As a result of these experiences and others, my belief is that reality is constructed by the individual experiencing it. Qualitative research is well aligned to my own epistemological

perspective which influenced my decision to use the case study methodology for this exploratory research project.

For 18 years, I have worked in a community college setting beginning as a psychology faculty. For most of those years, I have been in an administrative position, starting with department chair to my current role of vice president. Much of that experience was in the academic area, although that is not currently the case. I have also led one major, comprehensive reform effort at my current community college. These experiences have contributed to my perceptions about faculty engagement and their participation, or lack of participation, in student success initiatives. These experiences, and resulting concerns, drove my interest and ultimate decision to examine relational trust and engagement in comprehensive reform efforts from the level of the faculty member.

These experiences have also influenced my belief that many of the major reform initiatives happening in community colleges today are missing a critical focus on the relational aspects of engagement during times of significant change within an organization. Because of my strong desire to understand these relational factors, not only to inform the field but also to become a better leader myself, I chose to study relational trust for my dissertation topic.

Acknowledging my own positionality, I was reflective about the design of the study and my interpretation of responses to avoid simply confirming preconceptions about the topic under study (Yin, 2015). In order to produce a quality study, I was not invested in a particular outcome. A strategy used to avoid bias was to look for contrary findings or alternative (or “rival”) explanations when analyzing the data (Yin, 2015, p. 140). Another strategy was keeping a journal with personal reflections during the research process to identify areas where my own subjectivity could potentially influence the data process and the interpretation of outcomes.

According to Stake (1995), “Good case study is patient, reflective, willing to see another view…” (p. 12).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This purpose of this study was to explore the role of relational trust in engaging community college faculty in educational reform efforts. Community college faculty members participated in semi-structured interviews designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does relational trust promote faculty engagement in educational reform efforts at community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?
2. What components of relational trust are most influential in faculty engagement in educational reform efforts?
3. What differences exist in faculty perceptions of relational trust within the same institution?
4. What differences in relational trust exist between community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program?

Participants were 16 faculty members from two community colleges, both located in the South Central region of the United States, who have been recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program for achieving exceptional learning and/or completion outcomes. This chapter presents findings related to faculty members' perceptions of relational trust with college leadership and their faculty colleagues through the description of themes and subthemes that emerged during analysis of semi-structured individual interviews. While each interview was unique, common themes emerged during the data analysis process. The following themes emerged as faculty discussed how relational trust with their administrators and fellow faculty members influenced their engagement in student success initiatives: (a) environments are collaborative with a shared vision of student success, (b) faculty are surrounded by highly

effective individuals, (c) faculty learning is integral to student learning, (d) genuine care and appreciation for others is an institutional norm, and (e) faculty have a positive mindset.

As a condition for participation in the study, faculty members must have been actively engaged in a student success initiative at their respective institutions. Faculty were initially identified by their leadership as having been significantly engaged in a student success initiative and through the informed consent process each individual faculty confirmed their engagement in a student success initiative and further expanded upon their involvement during the interview. Besides been actively involved in implementing one or more student success initiative, these 16 faculty were engaged in many other ways as well. Examples of engagement included: mentoring adjunct faculty members; proactively providing support to students; continually improving their courses through redesigning structure, assignments, and activities; leading student activities such as advising a club or taking students to conferences; taking initiative to get involved in campus life through committees, task forces, and activities; and serving on external boards and committees. The majority of these faculty were passionate and energetic about their engagement and genuinely enjoyed their community college careers. Table 1 provides a description of the faculty members who participated.

Table 1

Faculty Participants

Identifier	College	Department	Gender	Years at College
Faculty 1	PCC	Business	Female	3 years
Faculty 2	PCC	Health Sciences	Female	4 years
Faculty 3	PCC	Social Sciences	Male	9 years
Faculty 4	PCC	Developmental Math	Female	18 years
Faculty 5	PCC	Criminal Justice	Male	3 years
Faculty 6	PCC	Welding	Male	5 years
Faculty 7	PCC	Fine Arts	Male	5 years
Faculty 8	UCC	Math	Female	5 years
Faculty 9	UCC	English	Female	15 years
Faculty 10	UCC	Developmental English	Female	12 years
Faculty 11	UCC	Science	Female	40 years
Faculty 12	UCC	Health Sciences	Female	14 years
Faculty 13	UCC	Developmental English	Male	11 years
Faculty 14	UCC	Math	Female	4 years
Faculty 15	UCC	Developmental Math	Female	10 years
Faculty 16	UCC	Welding	Female	9 years

Qualities of Relational Trust

The semi-structured interview questions were developed to be consistent with Bryk and Schneider's (2002) concept of relational trust, which develops as the result of a "dynamic interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and

integrity" (p. 23). Respect develops through personal interactions and the ability to listen and value others' opinions. Competence occurs when members demonstrates the ability to effectively carry out their core responsibilities and collaborate with others to collectively achieve desired outcomes for students. Personal regard for others is evident when members show genuine care for others as individuals and are willing to go beyond their formal roles to show that care. Integrity involves guiding one's work through a moral and ethical lens and engaging in behaviors that demonstrate trustworthiness (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Specific questions were asked to gain a better understanding of how competence, respect, integrity, and personal regard expressed by their administrators and colleagues influenced faculty engagement. While these 16 community college faculty confirmed that these four qualities are important and influenced their engagement in change initiatives, the major themes emerging from data analysis did not fully align with these four qualities. The qualities of relational trust were often interconnected and difficult to isolate to a single theme. The major themes that emerged during analysis were comprised of a combination of qualities. One theme emerged that was not specifically related to relational trust and focused more on the internal characteristics of the individual faculty member than external characteristics that motivate engagement. Table 2 provides an overview of the themes and subthemes that emerged as faculty discussed how trust in administration and colleagues influenced their engagement in student success efforts. In addition, the specific qualities of relational trust which most often comprised faculty descriptions are mapped to each relevant subtheme.

Table 2

Themes/Subthemes on Faculty Engagement

Themes	Subthemes	Qualities of Relational Trust
Environments are collaborative with a shared vision of student success	Faculty embrace the vision for change	Competence, Respect
	Faculty feel empowered to initiate change	Competence, Respect, Personal Regard
Faculty are surrounded by highly effective individuals	Core responsibilities of others are performed effectively	Respect, Integrity
	Communications are transparent and intentional	Competence, Integrity
Faculty learning is integral to student learning	Continual improvement in teaching and learning is an expectation	Competence, Respect
	Investments are made to ensure high quality teaching and learning	Competence, Integrity
Genuine care and appreciation for others is an institutional norm	Faculty feel valued and recognized for their contributions	Respect, Personal regard
	Faculty are known as individuals	Integrity, Personal regard
Faculty have a positive mindset	Faculty are open to change	
	Faculty have a growth mindset about students	

Themes and subthemes emerged from responses to specific questions as well as throughout the entire interview. Each of the themes and corresponding subthemes are reviewed in detail in the following sections. Minor edits have been made to the quotations to make them more readable but without altering their accuracy.

Environments are Collaborative with a Shared Vision of Student Success

The first theme, working in a collaborative environment with a shared vision of student success, was expressed in some manner by every faculty member interviewed. Two subthemes emerged within this theme: (a) faculty embrace the vision for change and (b) faculty feel empowered to lead change.

Faculty Embrace the Vision for Change

To embrace the vision for change, faculty must understand and participate in that vision. The most common way faculty gained an understanding of the change vision was through effective articulation by their leaders. Each of the 16 faculty members identified leadership's ability to successfully communicate a shared vision for student success as a factor in their engagement in educational reform at their institutions. Their ability to motivate faculty participation in the vision was often connected to improving student outcomes and included references to connecting change to the institutional mission, providing "the why" behind the change, and understanding the big picture.

Institutional mission. Individual student success initiatives were situated within the overarching mission of the college. An institutional responsibility for student success was a prevalent feature of these two community colleges. Document analysis confirmed the perspectives of faculty through clearly stated student-focused mission and vision statements, strategic plans placing students at the center of operations, and the use of data-informed decision making to improve student outcomes. A PCC faculty member clearly articulated her understanding of her institution's perspective on student success.

> I think it's communicated that we hope you enjoy working here and we want you to stay here. But we always do what's best for students. That's communicated to us a lot. We are literally only here and our doors are only opened to serve students.

Similarly, a UCC faculty member remarked "I think student success is at the helm of what we do. And if it doesn't benefit the student, then we don't want to do it."

Faculty specifically connected a shared vision of student success with feelings of trust. A general education faculty member describing an initiative to retain students through personalized interactions indicated: "It's important to have the focus on students and what's in their best interest. There has been big buy-in that this initiative benefits the student and when people see that the trust becomes stronger." A career technical faculty member connected respect and trust to administrators' communication of the vision for change when describing the importance of a consistent and compelling institutional message of student success.

> I feel like the initiatives speak for themselves. From my perspective, the people that we have in administration, they don't talk about their position. They talk about the students and they talk about the faculty and staff. That's translated … which to me generates respect and respect generates trust and just that passion for the students. And when you have your five VPs and your administrative team all speaking at different times about the same goal, the alignment strengthens the ability to respect the vision and to trust the vision because they're all on board. Apparently, they all see something with their experience and their role that I can't see yet. To me, it's just a piece of it, you just have respect the role. And then with that the trust piece comes.

Faculty felt a sense of connection and purpose to change efforts when they could link the initiative to improved success for students and the overarching institutional mission.

The reasons why. Effectively communicating a vision for change involved providing reasons for why new approaches were needed. Understanding "the why" behind the student success initiatives helped motivate faculty to be engaged in change efforts. Speaking specifically about his department chair, a humanities faculty stated:

> I guess everybody needs motivation. I think that communicating "the why" these things are necessary is important. That's one thing that my department chair has always been very good at - articulating why things need to be done. He's been a pretty good voice for the administration and going between explaining why things are the way that they are and why they need to be done the way that they are done. I think that just understanding why. Now that doesn't mean that we never complain obviously. But even in complaining, it's mostly complaining about not understanding how we're going to make something work, not that we are unwilling to make it work. It's just the challenge of it. Sometimes you just vent a little and then you go, okay, actually, it's a good thing and we'll end up doing.

In many instances, institutional data highlighting student outcomes was used to provide "the why" creating a sense of urgency to become engaged to improve student success. Faculty across disciplines and across institutions noted the importance of using data to generate momentum to implement change. At PCC, a top-down initiative to transition most courses to 8 weeks in length was driven by student data examining when students tended to drop out of courses. One faculty member described the data as showing that "over 16 weeks, life happens to our students and it seemed to happen about the 8 -9 week mark. That's when most of our students were dropping out, or they would quit coming when their grades would go down." This same faculty member recognized that administrators varied their communications because not everyone is motivated to become involved through the same channels.

> I'm a soft skills teacher and like more leadership stuff. But I know there are professors around here that want the data, they want the numbers, they want the research. And so I think it's good that they kind of do a balance - communicating with the facts but then also raising the morale, the camaraderie that we're all doing this together, all in this together.

Another faculty confirmed the importance of personalized approaches to motivating faculty engagement when he said about his department chair: “He knows me and my personality. I'm a person about the results. So if you can show me something works, and you can show me the results, then I'll do it.”

A PCC initiative to require remediation when exam grades dropped below 80 was driven by low pass rates on a state licensure exam and threats of shutting down a high demand program. The faculty member shared “when I first started, we were on the verge of getting shut down on one of the campuses because of pass rates. We didn’t have a choice but to say none of this is working. It is very obvious that none of this is working. Let’s just start doing something different.”

Because trust levels were perceived to be high by most of the faculty interviewed, when reform initiatives were introduced by upper administration at these institutions faculty had confidence that the changes would benefit students and did not need clearly stated reasons for becoming engaged. A business faculty member at PCC stated:

> By the time it gets to us as faculty, I think there's been a ton of research into it. I think they've done their homework… I have faith in our administration that they're not going to ask me to do something that they have not already done tons of research on and that it's best for students.

Another social science faculty at the same institution discussing implementing strategies to improve student engagement and lower drop rates indicated the campus-wide initiative came from the top down.

> It came from the analysis of data. They looked at professors who had high retention rates in their courses and what those professors were doing. It was data driven, and top down driven. I know top down doesn't sound good but in this case it was.

When reasons for change are not clear, faculty noted that resistance could occur. In general, the faculty interviewed were not resistant to change but a few described instances of conflict. In one case, a PCC faculty member described the importance of addressing the reasons for the change in order to prevent resistance.

> I feel like sometimes "the why" is lost. And when "the why is lost," for me and a couple of the other faculty it seems more like a "you have to" instead of a "this is why we should" and I get sometimes you can't know the why. But I think that's something that our director has sort of learned because she's felt that push back. And she's felt that questioning of, but why, but why. So I think she's had to change and give a why when maybe she doesn't feel like she can give a why. Then tell us "I can't give a why right now, you've just got to trust me." And then hearing that, we think "Okay, you've never steered us wrong before so we will trust you." So that would be the only thing that I think is tough. I want more of that why.

Another faculty members confirmed the perspective that pushback was a consequence of not having a clear understanding of the reasons for the success initiatives.

> Sometimes I think the vision may not necessarily be shared. If people don't share your vision it's hard for them to give everything they have for you. I think sometimes their

> agenda may be different than my agenda. So human nature is to be more interested in your own agenda. So if my main goal is to make sure these students do X, Y, and Z and your main goal is to make sure we have as many students possible then there is going to be some conflict.

Communicating why initiatives were being initiated and implemented had an influence on faculty engagement. When they understood the reasons for an initiative, faculty were willing to be engaged. Conversely, when those reasons were unclear or seemed to be in conflict with the faculty perspective on student success there was resistance.

The big picture. At UCC, math faculty were charged by the president to develop a co-requisite model of teaching math by linking a developmental course with a curriculum course. A number of math faculty members mentioned low pass rates and high dropout rates in developmental math and a recognition that the prior model was not working for their students. One math faculty recognized a concern not only at her institution but across the county related to the completion of developmental math.

> We understood that the reason why was because what we thought was working for our students really wasn't. Everybody across the nation was seeing it – with three levels of developmental math, most students will not survive. And the success rate by the time they made it to their academic course, for those that did, was so low. This was the push behind the co-requisite model.

A PCC career technical faculty member emphasized the need to be reminded by leadership of the broader vision for change. As she explained:

> I think for me always reminding us about what the big goal is. They use this term "the 30,000 foot view" a lot on this campus. And so I think she [department chair] did a really

> good job about reminding us of what that big goal is, what that big objective is. Because when you're in the grind, and you're down in the trenches, you don't see that. You're just like, why, why, why, I'm exhausted, I'm going nowhere, I'm just spinning my wheels. But to be reminded of that, you're like okay, okay. And I think that whenever I would call her frustrated, she would say, "Okay, I hear you and I get it. Have you tried this? But remember this is what we're going for. So we might have some rough patches, we might lose a few still. But this is our goal, remember that's what we're shooting for. We're not shooting for this, we are shooting for that." And so that was helpful for me.

Faculty are on the front lines working with students on a daily basis. Some indicated that while they were on that level they could lose focus on the big picture therefore reminders from leaders were helpful.

The change initiatives described thus far were internally driven. At times, faculty described reforms that were externally driven, most often originating from mandates by a larger state system. While faculty preferred initiatives that originated from within their institutions, when their leadership allowed them to have some input in implementing mandated initiatives faculty were positive about their engagement in them. Directives from a state system were described by faculty at both institutions. One faculty member in the developmental education area indicated "it was a directive … the definition was so explicit we didn't have a lot of free reign to make modifications." However she went on to explain that faculty were given time to prepare since "we talked about the changes. It had been mentioned at the ending of the prior semester [by leadership]. So we had some time to really think about how we could do this. We talked about it the week before classes started. It still left room to make changes inside the classroom, but it had a very different feeling when it is presented as a rule or directive versus as a

goal." Similarly, a developmental education faculty member discussing another initiative pointed out "it was a state mandate and we knew that the state was not going to change their mindset" but his department chair facilitated teamwork among his colleagues that allowed them to successfully implement the initiative.

In another instance the state mandated a reduction in total credit hours for a degree program in the health sciences but the department chair in that area was "very transparent about what was going on." The UCC faculty explained that the department chair provided the directive of cutting 12 hours from the program but allowed the faculty to determine how to restructure the program to ensure the program outcomes were achieved.

> She's a very collaborative person and she wanted us to figure out how to do it. She gave us the structure and then allowed input. We had the basics of these are the classes we need to teach … and the entire faculty used poster boards and decided where the content was going to go. Content had to be fitted in somewhere because some classes weren't there anymore.

This faculty member stated that her department chair addressed the reasons for change through multiple methods of communication.

> She uses everything she has. She shows us articles about what is going on so we can see the research and reasoning behind it. She does it via email, she does it through one on one communication … and then she does it in a group setting."

When leaders were able to effectively communicate a shared vision for student success at these institutions, faculty were willing to embrace the vision for change. The shared vision bonded individuals across roles toward a common cause. Faculty who felt connected to the vision were motivated and engaged to contribute to its realization. However faculty at these

institutions were not confined to only embracing visions for change, they also felt empowered to initiate and lead visions for change.

Faculty Feel Empowered to Initiate Change

The examples provided above began to illustrate the second subtheme related to communicating a shared vision of student success. In those descriptions, faculty indicated that having input in the implementation of the change mattered and contributed to high levels of engagement. But the organizational cultures at these institutions extended beyond just allowing faculty to have input in how change was implemented. Faculty were inspired to experiment with new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, initiate changes by partnering with leaders, and to take instructional risks to improve student learning. Most faculty shared experiences of initiating change either by leading the change or partnering with leadership to shape the direction of the change initiative. Faculty-initiated change efforts were rarely the result of a single faculty member. Instead faculty collaborated to bring about changes they believed would improve student success.

Innovating instructional practice. The inspiration and sense of security to initiate change or lead student success efforts that impacted the classroom resulted from a culture of trust. At both institutions, leaders showed confidence in the expertise of faculty by trusting them to know how to promote student success in the classroom. As a PCC faculty articulated when implementing a discipline-specific success initiative: “a big piece was that we had some ownership of it, we had some accountability of what it became. It didn't just have to be [my department chair’s] vision, her way.” Faculty engagement was emphasized by a developmental education faculty member at UCC who emphasized a faculty collaboration to lead the integration of reading and writing.

> Faculty members were involved in this initiative and it was faculty driven. We got together and we brainstormed ideas, came up with instructional materials, created assessments and so forth and so on. It was pretty much hands on. The chair is there working with us doing minimal facilitation work, but that's it.

Similarly a math faculty described a reversal of roles where faculty led the change vision and administrators made some of the decisions regarding implementation.

> [Leadership's] mindset is nobody knows our students like you do, so you design the curriculum. They were very supportive but hands off at the same time. Because they knew that this is where we are the experts. And so they let us do what we needed to do. I felt like they trusted us and we trust when they have to make some decisions regarding implementation that they are making wise decisions as well.

Being given the opportunity to explore alternatives and choose one that eventually fails was described by a health sciences faculty at PCC. She explained that faculty selected a strategy different from the one proposed by her department chair but was empowered to try it and see if it improved student outcomes in the program.

> There was a lot of pushback [to her proposal]. We asked: "Can we do it as a class instead? Can we do it as this instead?" Our director said "you can try that, you can try that." She was really good about hearing our concerns and saying "try it, see if you like it." She allowed us to do it a different way and then we noticed that there were even bigger gaps that way. But for me, it was her allowing us to figure that out. And then to bring it back to her and her saying, "Okay, I'm on board. I figured that that would happen. But I wanted you to see it." When you have a director that doesn't say "I told you so but maybe it could work, I wanted you to try it and see." To me that demonstrated she trusts

> me to do my job. So I'm going to trust her to do her job. And next time, I'll just try it without questioning it and without trying to change it. Just give it 100% and see what happens.

At UCC, a faculty member who had been at the college for 40 years noted “the climate to me seems to have changed over the last 10 years to encourage us more and more to try new things in our classroom and make our classrooms much more interactive with our students.” Other UCC faculty provided examples that reiterated the link between faculty engagement and feeling empowered to lead. For example, an English faculty member said “I was basically given full creative range to create this non course based option. And so being provided with that autonomy really gave me a chance to sit back and think about all the challenges that I had recognized in students when tutoring them in reading and writing, what their challenges were throughout the semester.” Another faculty member stated “I just feel like this is a culture of trust and communication and support. They seem very trusting in us as professionals in the classroom. They haven't tried to micromanage anything because they believe that we know what's best for our students in the classroom.”

Faculty at these institutions felt empowered to lead change particularly at the classroom level. Administrators demonstrated confidence in their expertise as faculty and encouraged them to try new approaches to teaching which engaged faculty in improving their practice.

Initiating change in partnership with leaders. While not all faculty shared examples of leading change, most of them did describe opportunities to partner with administration to develop the change vision or to initiate changes to the vision. Currently, UCC is having conversations about moving to eight week courses and leaders are relying on faculty to help shape the vision for how that happens at their institution. One faculty member noted that “they’re

open because it seems like there are a lot of moving parts to this…There are a lot of technical programs that have clock hour demands that may not work for an 8 week session. For those of us down in the trenches, we can see some of the issues that perhaps someone that hasn't taught for years might not see."

Faculty at both institutions described having a voice in success initiatives to use open education resources (OER) to replace costly textbooks in courses. At PCC, faculty who have an interest in OER are empowered to drive those efforts in their area. The business faculty member emphasized that faculty in her department who have an interest in OER are encouraged and supported by leadership to seek out additional information through trainings, conferences, and visiting other colleges who use OER. A collaborative approach has allowed business faculty who are passionate about OER to create a shared vision for its use in their department. She concluded the interview by saying "any innovation that you want to get involved in for student success, leaders are 100% behind it." At UCC, faculty were encouraged to use resources in their classrooms that most benefitted students and their success. A math faculty described the autonomy faculty have in making decisions about the materials they use in their courses.

> In the last couple of years, the college has encouraged us to use open education resources to save money for the students. However, the college hasn't mandated it, we have some choice in the matter. And at the same time, the college wants us to help the students to save money and help them to not get behind in their classes because they can't afford their books. But they also know that we want to use quality materials.

Shared governance organizations representing the faculty body were viewed as important structures through which a shared vision was created with administration. Faculty at both institutions mentioned their shared governance organizations as being actively engaged by their

presidents to make collaborative decisions related to campus wide initiatives. One institution has a student and employee engagement program that was mentioned by most faculty interviewed from that institution. The faculty organization collaborated with administration to make decisions about the structure of the program. When the leadership wanted to start the program, one faculty member who spoke highly of the program said "they did not implement [the program] on us. They came to our faculty organization and shared with us the benefits and asked what we thought about it." At UCC, a faculty member who serves on the faculty organization described how the change vision had been modified as the result of collaboration with their president. "She definitely listens to what we have to say…We've had a lot that has been heard and changed. I think it's definitely gaining trust in individuals when they see those changes taking place because of something faculty requested."

Alternatively when faculty did not feel empowered to lead change or to partner with administrators they expressed concerns about the implementation of the initiative. A developmental math faculty who participated in transitioning developmental math to a math studio concept following a directive from her dean shared that "we were all panicked. It was hard to communicate to non-math people the challenges of using a keyboard for difficult math questions. They thought if you had numbers on a keyboard, then it was all good."

Faculty appreciated opportunities to contribute to the change vision. Sometimes these opportunities occurred at the initiative's inception or to modify the direction of an ongoing initiative. When they felt their voice was heard, engagement was strong but when it was not, they expressed feeling of apprehension.

Taking instructional risks to improve student learning . While faculty rarely used the phrase "risk taking," many of them described a sense of security in experimenting with practices

that had uncertain outcomes, particularly in their classrooms. At both institutions, the welding faculty led classroom reform efforts that originated from personal reflections on what skills their students needed to have when they entered the workforce. Both faculty have implemented creative classroom practices to prepare students for business and industry.

At PCC, the welding faculty member shared his efforts to implement practices to improve soft skills in his students. He had noticed that his students had trouble with time management, using cell phones during class, and lack of communication skills. With the support of his department chair, he took the initiative to introduce strategies to improve their habits and skills in these areas by changing the "way things had always been." He stated the problem as: "They just take it easy, so the same habit will go to the industry and industry people don't tolerate it." He uses "ticket to class" assignments that have eliminated student tardiness and created a cell phone box where he and all students put their phones during class time. Describing one of the strategies he implemented, he explained:

> I wanted to change the tests. The tests were all objective - fill in the blanks and true/false. I saw in our students a lack of communication skills and being able to write down their thoughts. It is very easy to write A, B, and C, but I really wanted them to critically think about it and give me the answer … So we changed our tests … and their writing and thinking skills improved.

Following his success with revised tests, the data was shared with his colleagues and they have collaborated to change the format on all tests in the department. Once he took the initiative to make changes that proved to be successful, other faculty followed his lead. He mentioned that another faculty member has introduced a strategy to ensure students use the learning management system throughout the semester to help them develop technical skills that many of

the students in the program lack. Now the faculty member interviewed is collaborating with that faculty to do similar things in his classes.

At UCC, the welding faculty member has led similar change efforts in her classroom. She recognized that the general education outcomes for the institution were not being effectively achieved by her students. She felt that her students did not see the value in demonstrating these outcomes in a welding curriculum. Therefore she redesigned how she delivered information to make it more applicable to these students. She utilized journaling to help students analyze how they spend their time, a campus scavenger hunt to expose students to support services, and a mid-term paper to highlight jobs in their local and regional industries. As she stated,
"I can teach my students how to weld but I'm only doing half my job if I don't prepare them for a job in industry."

Both of these faculty have also persuaded their department chairs to allow them to teach the welding curriculum in an abbreviated format to meet the needs of students. While both department chairs had some hesitation, the faculty members were able to convince their chairs to allow them to try it by promoting the benefits to students. While the abbreviated format is not appropriate for all students, it has been successful for students who can attend daily with extended hours.

Empowering faculty to initiate change resulted from high levels of trust in the expertise of faculty and an institutional culture of shared responsibility for student success. Leaders engaged faculty by seeking input, partnering with them to develop the vision for change, and inspiring them to lead student success initiatives.

Faculty are Surrounded by Highly Effective Individuals

A second theme that emerged during analysis of the faculty interviews was that faculty believed that they were surrounded by highly effective administrators and faculty colleagues. Effectiveness was described through two subthemes: (a) the core responsibilities of others are performed effectively and (b) communications are transparent and intentional. Leadership roles discussed ranged from the top leader of the organization to the faculty's immediate supervisor. Faculty most often talked about the faculty in their own departments when discussing faculty competence and communication but occasionally referenced faculty from outside their departments.

Core Responsibilities of Others are Performed Effectively

Faculty demonstrated an overall confidence in their administration and faculty to carry out the core responsibilities of their roles and collaborate with others to achieve positive student outcomes. The depth at which they described their abilities varied depending on the role.

Leaders collaborate and demonstrate integrity. In describing the competence of upper administrators, faculty comments were more general and focused on behaviors such as demonstrating integrity and collaborating to make good decisions for the college. Faculty members often connected the competency of their leadership with their own job satisfaction. A UCC faculty member made the following comments about her top administrative team:

> This is the first time I feel like I have good leadership all the way up the line…. I trust my bosses that they want to make decisions that are good for student success. And at the same time, they don't want to harm faculty… I'm very happy about working hard and going the extra mile. I feel like all my needs are met.

A PCC faculty member stated “I have a lot of confidence in them. I have no doubt that they want to do what's good for this school, for their students and for their faculty. I just feel like I'm in a really good place.”

The integrity of administrators was considered important by faculty at both institutions. At PCC, a faculty member viewed vulnerability and passion as signs of integrity in her administration.

> There's a lot to be said for the integrity of a person when they can get up in front of a room of people that don't all agree with what is being said, but completely open themselves up and be vulnerable about why they care and why they're passionate. I've seen almost every single one of the administrators here tear up about something on campus. And to me that shows honesty and integrity because if you're willing to get up in a room of 100 people and show it, then you believe in it with all your being.”

A number of faculty at UCC described the difficult decision of the top administrator to eliminate an athletic team. While it was an unpopular decision, faculty viewed the decision as one that ultimately was in the best interest of the college and carried out with integrity by the leader. As one faculty described:

> They have to make some hard decisions. For example, they got rid of a nationally ranked sports program here. But the President has an obligation to the school not to spend that much money on a small number of students. She explained that she knew that this was something that was disappointing and she carried out her duties with integrity. She looked for different places for the coaches to work so that people didn't lose their jobs. So I think they show a lot of dependability in what they're doing.

Collaborating with one another to perform their duties as upper administration was described in various ways. Faculty knew the acronyms of the leadership teams, knew when they met, and often knew some of the content of those meetings. Having information about the high level conversations occurring among the executive team created transparency and knowledge that was valued by faculty. The collaborative nature of administrators was expressed by a faculty member who had been at the institution for 15 years:

> With the administration we have now, I've seen how they handle not only the position they're in but the tasks that they've been charged with doing. I see that they get a lot of buy in and they validate. I have a lot of confidence in them carrying [their responsibilities] out because it's not going to be just a one person show. It's going to be a compilation of ideas.

Another faculty member discussed the leadership team's ability to work together to develop and implement policies and procedures.

> I do trust that [administration] is doing what is best for the college to make sure that we stay accredited. They put in a lot of work on procedures and policies. Sometimes you look at those and say "Argh". But when you're working with those policies and procedures, you can see how they're making things better. So I think there is a high level of trust.

Faculty believed their leaders carried out their duties with integrity and collaborated effectively to achieve the goals of the institution. They viewed policies and procedures to be in support of student success.

Department chairs support faculty. When discussing their immediate supervisors, faculty members provided more specific examples of trusting them to carry out their core

responsibilities. In many instances, the comments focused on having supervisors who were willing to provide support and assistance to faculty in getting their own responsibilities accomplished. One faculty member shared “she will do anything for you. She has offered to sit and help you build a curriculum or help you get the stuff loaded into Blackboard.” Another faculty member recalled “she worked with me trying to help me find different clinical sites. She would sit down with me and say let's figure it out, let's brainstorm and she would give me ideas.”

A different type of department chair support was shared by a faculty member who had a potentially dangerous situation with a student. She recalled:

> Last semester in many years of teaching, which is actually 21 now, I was afraid of one of my students and I hadn't had that happened yet. But I received a very alarming, very long email and I was afraid that the worst case scenario might happen. My student had military training and was enraged and I thought I might be the target. So I didn't hesitate to tell my boss about it. And we worked through the appropriate channels to allow others to be informed related to discipline and alerting campus police. At that time, my boss substituted this class for a week and moved me off campus. Things did get resolved and even in a surprising manner. But I felt supported by my boss.

In this case, the department chair supported the faculty by being emotionally and physically available and providing support to guide her through the procedures to report the behavior to the appropriate areas.

Support from immediate supervisors also came in the form of advocating for faculty. A criminal justice faculty member stated: “He'll fight for us. If he agrees with us, then he'll let that be known, that I stand behind my instructor 100% on this issue … He’ll go to bat for us.” A liberal arts faculty member noted: “I've come to him with a lot of concerns and I've never felt he

disregarded any of them. In fact, he has usually gone and done more than what I've expected, which has been awesome." Another faculty member pointed out: "My department chair would come into the classroom just to make sure we were okay, to see if we needed anything."

Other core responsibilities of immediate supervisors discussed by many faculty members included effective communication, mentoring and developing faculty, and providing resources. Each of these responsibilities are discussed in the following sections as they emerged as separate but related themes or subthemes.

Faculty are dependable and collaborative. The core responsibilities of effective faculty were characterized as showing dependability and collaborating with colleagues to achieve student learning outcomes. An interesting trend occurred throughout the interviews at both institutions. When asked how well faculty carried out their core responsibilities and collaborated to promote student success, many faculty viewed their department as unique, special, or different. While most provided the caveat that they could not speak about other departments, they often followed with phrases such as "our department is different," "my department is special," and "this particular department is like a big family" or "really close knit." In general, faculty really enjoyed their work and the colleagues they worked with daily.

Dependability among faculty was characterized by carrying out responsibilities and following through when making commitments. All faculty provided at least one example of being confident that their faculty colleagues would effectively carry out their core responsibilities. These responsibilities included showing up for classes and meetings, teaching students the knowledge and skills to meet the student learning outcomes for their courses and preparing them for the next courses in the program, and representing their interest when elected or appointed to certain committees. At UCC, four of the nine faculty had worked in team

teaching situations and discussed sharing responsibilities through the division of labor. As a math faculty described:

> Next week [faculty name] and I have divvied up what we're going to do. I have to go through and edit and make some new worksheets and she knows I'm going to get it done and she's taking the last part of the week and I know if she says she's going to do it, she's going to do it. And the same with the other teachers I've worked with. If somebody says, I'm going to do it, you don't even worry that it's going to get done. Everybody has that level of dependability. When they said they're going to do it, you know it's going to get done. Nobody drops the ball.

At PCC, a health sciences faculty member described a similar process but between faculty at two campuses teaching the same course:

> We teach simultaneously. The beginning of each semester you have to get your courses prepared and you have to do your syllabus and that kind of stuff. Since we're one program at two sites, a lot of that can be split. If we have to do the syllabus, the calendar, and make sure all the dates are still correct, you can split that up. I think that has developed confidence whenever you can say X, Y, and Z needs to be done, I'll start with X, why don't you start with Y. And then we'll meet up at the end of the week and see how we can tackle Z. And then in the middle of the week, they text or call you and say, “Hey, I finished this, I'm going to start with that.” I think that's the dependability piece.

When asked how their colleagues showed dependability, most faculty provided the example of substituting for classes. At PCC, the president is the only person who can cancel classes and in the last five years, he has never done so. Therefore, no faculty member can cancel an individual class per college policy. All seven faculty members interviewed at this institution

provided the example of covering classes as an indicator of dependability. As one faculty member stated: “I know if somebody says, “Yes I'll cover your class,” it is going to be covered. I'm very comfortable that the faculty do what they say they going to do, and no one drops the ball.” UCC faculty also indicated that covering classes was one way faculty showed dependability. At this college, one faculty member said her department did not cancel classes and that she could count on her colleagues if she could not meet her classes.

> I know that in our department, we don't cancel classes. If somebody gets sick, or if the street's flooded, or whatever it is, we have a substitute from within our department. If there's no one available and we're all teaching, our chair will sub the class himself. I feel like we do help each other out.”

Another faculty shared “in order for me to do this interview, I actually have another instructor in my class, who came in with no pay, to make sure I have the ability to come up here and do this.”

Fifteen out of 16 participants identified collaborating to advance student success as a key component of faculty responsibilities. Effective collaboration generated trust in one another and promoted engagement in reform efforts. Many faculty acknowledged the importance of working together to achieve student learning outcomes. In particular, faculty discussed the need for faculty collaboration within a program to ensure that knowledge was built over the sequence of courses. Faculty teaching more advanced courses needed to rely on instructors who taught introductory course to instill necessary knowledge in the students. Faculty from both institutions described processes by which faculty collaborated to evaluate and refine the delivery of information to ensure student learning outcomes were achieved. One faculty member described the process within his department:

> We're constantly talking about what we need to change in certain courses to make sure that we are hammering in certain concepts. Because if I get someone from a class and I think they should have known something and they didn't learn it, then I can say to that teacher "Hey, you know what, they're not learning this in this class. So we need to do something different to try to make sure that when they move on to from foundational class they get these things." And so as far as student initiatives, when we look at our program on that level, we try to make sure that they have foundational things as they go from cohort to cohort. We constantly get together to make sure that students are learning these things before they go to this next class.

He further described a structured process by which faculty at PCC engage in this type of collaboration every few weeks: "We have what are called PLCs, professional learning communities. We do those as departments. When we do those, we are constantly reviewing and evaluating the course mapping and learning outcomes. It is a consistent thing." A similar process was described by a UCC faculty member:

> When we talk about curriculum and we're talking about initiatives, our goal obviously is to have our students pass the [licensure exam name] on the first time. We've looked at things such as [discipline specific assessment] scores and identified that foundational scores were not where they needed to be for students to be successful in the next course. As a faculty we talked about how important this is. What can we do or how can we help the foundations faculty? I think we work really well. There's not a lot of backbiting because we know that my success is only as good as the success of us all. So I'm really supportive of the people that teach before me because if they don't have what they need then I'm certainly not going to have what I need.

Many faculty discussed collaborations aimed at continually improving instructional practices and student success in individual courses. An example shared earlier demonstrated the collaboration across instructional sites when common exams were given to make sure equitable student outcomes were achieved. A faculty from the other institution shared a similar account:

> Last fall we implemented some changes in the curriculum for our co-requisite class called [name of combined math course]. The changes are made across the district but then each campus meets frequently to talk about how these changes are affecting students. We share our opinions about our own classes and express our concerns, like the textbook that we used. Everybody is very open and willing to listen to what's going on in each other's classrooms and then decide what's best for every class on our campus. I think people were really respectful. And we tried to just come up with a group decision on what we should do at our campus for our students.

Another faculty member discussing a similar co-requisite class in which faculty team teach said:

> It's amazing the collaboration. We are constantly working together tweaking things. We are never satisfied with what we have if that makes sense? [Name of co-requisite course] has been going on for awhile and we're still tweaking our worksheets. We have made in house worksheets for students. Everybody is working together like oh let's change this part and let's do that. We work with other campuses to collaborate and share but I think the main collaboration obviously is with our faculty on our campus. We are very high in collaboration here.

At UCC, a career technical faculty member discussed how faculty continue to have academic freedom to deliver information in the classroom but some consistency has been established across courses to ensure all students can demonstrate certain outcomes.

> Our faculty work fairly well together, we work as a team. We have the ability to teach the students the way we feel is the best, but we needed some sort of consistency and we did it without taking the ability to give the knowledge that you have. So every one of us has different areas of industry we're in and we have certain knowledge that can be given to the students, we don't want to take that away. But when it comes to grading, it's very hard to have somebody just look at a [product] and give a grade on it. So together, the three of us actually created grade format sheets. I think the whole process went so well and now this is the first year that all instructors - all full time and part time instructors - in the our department at our campus will be utilizing them. But the three of us worked together …. And shared it with one of our part time instructor who [has certain expertise]. We've kind of gone back and forth adding to it; we feel we might need to add this or add that. So far I think everyone's been really happy and the other part-time instructors are saying "when do we get this, we want this too." So I think we have a really good working relationship in this building.

Another faculty member alluded to academic freedom when discussing respect for different teaching styles. While he reported many times that his department collaborates to implement initiatives, he did not feel like they collaborated on teaching style and that was not necessarily a negative.

> In my department, the collaboration level is rather low because we have two different teaching styles - student centered and lecture based. We respect each other's instructional style of teaching … [but the two styles do not] necessarily match perfectly. In that case, we have a high regard and high respect for everybody's own teaching style, choice of style.

The majority of faculty trusted that their colleagues on all levels would carry out their duties effectively. They conceptualized competence in carrying our responsibilities differently depending on the role. A final quality that faculty considered a key responsibility for all of their colleagues was open and honest communication. This quality emerged to such an extent that it was categorized as a separate subtheme of highly effective individuals.

Communications are Transparent and Intentional

Communication was mentioned frequently by faculty members and was categorized in two primary ways: (a) transparent and (b) intentional. Faculty expectations for transparent and intentional communications crossed over all roles. Open and honest communications from administrators and among faculty were valued by the participants. When communications were transparent, faculty expressed feeling high levels of trust with others. By structuring opportunities to communicate, leaders created environments where faculty felt confident that information would be shared at predictable intervals.

Transparent communication. Transparent communication was described as sharing information openly and honestly. Information sharing occurred in all directions, from the top down, from the bottom up, and laterally. Open communication in these two institutions contributed to a culture of idea sharing and collaboration to successfully improve student success.

Faculty had knowledge of when leadership meetings occurred, how frequently they met, and some of the content of those meetings. For example, a career technical faculty at PCC said "when they have their administrative meetings, they send us the notes. They email them to all faculty and staff so we know what they have talked about in their meetings. They do a good job of that." According to a UCC faculty member, a similar process of sharing occurs there as well:

> Any project that we have, things are posted online on our internal website. You can go through and look at the meeting minutes, and you can look at the next action list and see what things are currently in the process, and what things have been decided. Again, [leaders are] very transparent about the decisions that have been made or projects that are in the works. Anytime you want to look at a project, you can go into however much detail you want and the information is available.

Administrators at both institutions shared information with faculty when policies were being developed or modified. Transparent communication along with the opportunity to provide feedback was noted by faculty as influencing their trust in administration.

> My confidence [in administration] is high. They're very transparent in the changes that are made. Any time policies change or projects change they are updated and sent to us for review before it's approved by our board. And everybody has a say in suggesting changes or making revisions. So I think they've shown us that we can trust them. We trust them to use the core values of the college when they make their decisions."

In one instance, a faculty member interpreted the president of PCC's open and honest communication as a way to show his faculty and staff that he did not consider himself to have an elevated role at the institution.

> I think he's doing a good job of making himself not feel distant and not feel like some higher power. He's like, I'm with you in this and I respect you and I appreciate what you're doing. And here's my way of showing it to you. I'm going to put on an apron and a hair net, and I'm going to give you some eggs and breakfast. Little things like that show who they really are. They really do care about you - not as a person who generate students - but as an employee, as a person, just by yourself.

Every faculty member indicated that open communication was an important factor in feeling trust toward their department chair. Being physically accessible to faculty was discussed in terms of the immediate supervisor having “an open door,” being a good listener, and being available through multiple methods and at any time. Providing emotional and social support was also an essential quality of being an effective department chair.

Being able to openly and honestly communicate with department chairs was viewed as a key attribute of a trusting relationship with faculty. A science faculty at UCC related her department chair’s openness to the mutual trust between them.

> My supervisor always has his door open. He's very supportive, I can tell anything to him like it is. It's a really good working relationship. We both trust each other, he trusts me to do a good job, and to have the students’ best interest at heart, and I trust him as well.

A social science faculty member at PCC made a similar connection between honest communication and the integrity of his department chair.

> I really can see the difference that a good department chair can make. It just makes things easier - you worry about a lot less. Because you know that when you ask a question, it being answered honestly, and sometimes the answer is I don't know. But I also know that if I have a concern that it would be carried forward.

A faculty at UCC appreciated that her department chair openly communicated which eliminated the need for faculty to try to decipher what was happening. She said her department chair was “very open about this is what it is. We don't have to worry, we don't have to try to figure out what's going on. She's very transparent about what is going on.” She went on to say that the chair occasionally had to make difficult decisions in order to advance student success

such as reassigning faculty but that she would openly and honestly communicate with the individual faculty why those decisions were made.

Faculty also openly and honestly share with one another, however most often that sharing occurs in an effort to improve teaching and learning which is a subtheme related to the theme of faculty learning. Therefore, most of these communications will be shared in that section. A few other incidents of transparent communication were described by faculty and were related to civility. When asked about how well faculty showed respect toward one another by listening and valuing others opinions when working together on initiatives, faculty indicated feeling comfortable expressing alternative opinions. A PCC faculty members described "sometimes we have to reign somebody in and say you're doing too much of your own thing and your class is looking too different" but there were "no screaming matches" and "no incivility." Similarly a UCC faculty member said "if we hit a snag we talk about it and everybody comes to the table to try to hammer that out," jokingly adding with "bumps and bruises."

Openly sharing information in an honest manner was valued by faculty. Faculty indicated that communication of this type supported improved collaboration and sharing of ideas to enhance student success.

Intentional communications. This coding subcategory had more instances than any other subcategory with 65 from 14 faculty members. Communication at these institutions is not haphazard or accidental. Instead leaders are intentional about communicating and provide structured and predictable opportunities to do so.

Intentional communication occurred through opening meetings at the beginning of each semester, regularly scheduled meetings at various levels, and information sharing through written means. Less structured communication occurred through check-ins by department chairs

and open opportunities to communicate with top leaders. Both institutions have designated days and times for meetings when classes are not scheduled. At each institution, many communication opportunities are named and faculty consistently identified them by name during the interviews.

Top administrators ensure there are periodic gatherings for all personnel and use these opportunities to share information. The UCC president holds a meeting at the beginning of each semester to share information with her faculty and staff. A faculty member described her recent communication at the spring meeting:

> We have one day a semester where the President talks about the initiatives that we have. She talks about where we're going. For example, this semester the state legislature is in session, which is always horrifying for anybody who wants funding. She told us this is where we're at, this is what we've asked for, this is what we're looking for, this is where we may be asking you for help. And she always does that. She sends out emails and she keeps us really well informed.

At PCC, periodic open forums are held twice a month with the president and other top leaders when specific student success efforts are discussed. A faculty member described these forums:

> We all do [name of open forum] twice a month and they are with the entire school. They do them on Thursday afternoons or Friday mornings so most can get there during one of those times. During that time the vice president over institutional effectiveness or the academic vice president or the president usually speaks and give an update on student success in general. There's constant updates in that sense and so I really feel like this college is taking a positive approach on that instead of communicating “you will do this or you'll be fired.” It's more of a pep rally and “look at what you're doing.” They say that

> to us all the time. They're like Aspen came to visit us because of what you all are doing. It's not because I'm the president. Other community colleges come here to learn about us or go through leadership trainings with us because of what you all are doing. So I feel like leadership really tries to take it to us. So for me, I love that.

Others at this community college talked about the same open forum meetings as being important to community and trust building. One faculty noted:

> At every meeting, you're hearing the same things, every meeting you're seeing the same things. For some that maybe haven't figured out why [we meet so frequently] yet, what they're missing is that it's a community and you are getting a piece of that every single time we meet.

At the end of these forums, the president saves time for the audience to share their perceptions and to positively recognize their colleagues. Faculty descriptions of these opportunities included: "They appreciate our efforts and they ask us if we want to add something new" and "one thing that the president does … I appreciate is that he opens up [the forum] for us to recognize each other."

At the beginning of each semester, faculty return to both institutions with the expectation that a number of days will be used for meetings and professional learning opportunities. In all cases, faculty spoke positively of these opportunities. There were general gatherings for all personnel and more specific sessions related to faculty interest and cross-collaboration. One faculty member at UCC described their opening session:

> We do [opening session name] on a [specific day] at the start of a semester. There are no classes and all faculty meet at the main campus. We do different breakout sessions and [leadership] has the day broke up. We actually had a meeting and discussed the

> relationship between faculty and the enrollment area. So we actually talked with them. And it was really funny because sometimes you have that division between admissions and us - like oh the counselors don't know what they're doing, and so on and so forth. But once we actually sat down and talked with each other, it was really kind of nice. And I thought that was smart of upper management, bringing us together to figure out a better way to communicate with each other.

Another faculty member described leaders intentionally creating cross-functional groups to promote collaboration to improve student success:

> At a lot of sessions we are purposely mixed around with other campuses and departments, which is kind of annoying at first. But then it's interesting because you get to see other points of view from other campuses and other departments, and the ways those faculty members see their students and what issues they have. Together we try to find solutions to try to help our students.

When discussing new student success initiatives, faculty described a clear process of sharing information starting at the macro-level and then moving down to the micro-level. A faculty member described the process at UCC:

> Usually when [leaders] implement [initiatives] it's during [specific name] week. Once they've done all the meetings and discussions among them, then they come and they discuss it with us as a group. Then they actually get down to the smaller departments. We have our main meeting which includes all our campuses and is with everyone. And then it kind of breaks down. Our dean will have a meeting with all her departments, and then our department chair will have a smaller meeting with us. So we go through it three different

> times, and that kind of narrows it down to different disciplines and what their feelings and concerns are.

This process was reiterated by other faculty members who stated “in our [specific name] week they have the overall meeting and a big topic is talked about” and “we keep Friday mornings open for meetings. It can be on a department or division level, or it can be meetings about some of the new initiatives. We have plenty of chances to share.” Another faculty member specifically connected effective communication, trust, and engagement:

> When we start a new project or start a new committee, [leaders] will be there for the inaugural meeting, just to get everybody introduced and things like that. They talk about what the potential goals are for whatever project we are working on. And then after that, they let us work through it, they want us to hash it out. There will be several meetings that they are not there because they know that whoever they have chosen for that project, they're going to get the work done. They'll come in at various times for an update but there's a lot of trust happening.

Intentional communication was expressed in written form as well. The academic vice president at UCC made it a habit to write a personal note to each faculty member that was mailed to their home addresses along with information about the first week back after summer break. A number of other faculty mentioned the packet and personal note. As one faculty member reflected:

> We get these packets every year - the beginning of the year packet about [specific name] week and everything we're going to do that week. Mine had a little note at the bottom from [the top academic leader] saying “I hope you got a lot of rest this summer and I

> appreciate the work that you're doing." In fact, I have the letter right here in my drawer. That gave me enough energy to come back and herd cats.

Email was another form of communication that provided faculty an opportunity to become engaged. One faculty member shared:

> Whenever [department chair] learned new information, she'd let us know. She'll give it to you informally so that you can start pondering and thinking about it. By the time you get it in a formal email, you're ready to respond and ready to start working on whatever initiative.

Another stated:

> My email is always blowing up with, we're going to do this, we're thinking about doing that, let's do a task force. So there is constant involvement and engagement and they let you know that you're a viable part of whatever we're doing…They listen. And I think that's important for human interaction, for trust. If there's something coming down the pike, we will get a communication email stating we're going to be talking about this initiative or we're starting that initiative. We need you on this task force to help us discuss this thing or you to help us hammer out some of the what ifs. So you make it a part of your agenda for that year. And it's a part of your merit pay. The more you're involved, it helps to increase your pay which is good incentive. But it also helps in validating you, with a task force we are able to give our two cents worth. No pun intended.

Checking in was another form of intentional communication by leaders. While this type of communication was not as structured and predictable as those described above, it did emerge as a form that faculty appreciated. At one institution, a team of faculty and staff were working on a student success initiative as part of their accreditation process. One team member explained

that the top leader and the academic leader periodically dropped in on their meetings to get reports: “She came in and actually told us how much she appreciated all our hard work and she was very pleased with our work. For our President to come to a meeting like that doesn't happen that much.” Another faculty member was impressed that his top academic leader did frequent follow ups on how construction of his new instructional space was coming along:

> “She'll ask me did they come and paint this wall when they are doing the construction. It's not really her job to be concerned with that, but she's concerned about it. So I felt like they've gone out of their way to develop some of those relationships.”

Most often though, it was department chairs that were recognized for checking in. In one example, the chair was described as someone whose daily communications kept faculty engaged: “I feel like the chair with any initiative has one of the hardest jobs …because they communicate daily with you side by side, keep that morale up, and keep everyone moving on the same page.” A career technical faculty shared: “I think there's always a period of time where she checks in, and it's not at the end, when we're expecting results. It's usually at the beginning of it.” Additionally, a transfer faculty noted: “She’s checked in with us, making sure everything was okay in the middle of semester. My department chair would come into the classroom just to make sure we were okay, to see if we needed anything.”

The importance of communication and trust in generating faculty engagement was captured in these quotes from a general education faculty: “There's been a lot of communication. And I feel like it's interesting that when there is good communication, then everybody is engaged” and “as far as trust and building trust, I do appreciate the communication…the more open and really honest it is, the better.”

Faculty Learning is Integral to Student Learning

At these two institutions, faculty learning is a priority. This priority is clearly communicated to faculty and directly linked to student learning. The leaders at these institutions consider faculty learning to be integral to student learning and therefore commit substantial resources to ensure high quality, relevant instructional practices. Therefore, the two subthemes that emerged related to this theme were that: (a) continual improvement in teaching and learning is an expectation and (b) investments are made to ensure high quality teaching and learning.

Continual Improvement in Teaching and Learning is an Expectation

Utilizing data to continually improve instructional practice was one way that faculty were expected to learn. Both institutions have established procedures for providing feedback to faculty on the effectiveness of their teaching and learning. At UCC, all employees write key performance indicators (KPIs) related to their roles. Faculty update their KPIs twice a year to reflect the goals they have for the initiatives they are implementing in their classes. One faculty member shared that "the chair has access to [her KPIs] all year long and provides feedback. Then the chair meets with us at least two or three times individually per year about the projects that we're doing." PCC department chairs examine data across the different campuses to ensure equivalent student outcomes. A faculty member discussed this process:

> The beauty of our program is that it's run in two different places but together so we have to collaborate. There are students 45 minutes away taking the same test that my students are taking. We look at data and run analytics together. You're able to say, 'Okay, my students all got this right. None of your students got this right. What happened? Did I say something in class? Did you not say something in class?' It's mentioned after every test that the instructors that teach those two courses should be having a conversation about

> that test and what the analytics look like across groups. We know that the director is going to ask how the analytics are looking between the sites. So we know there's that accountability piece.

PCC's performance evaluation process includes formal observations of faculty by middle leaders. The feedback sessions provide data that motivates faculty to get engaged in success initiatives. A faculty member provided this account of that process: "We have observation feedback sessions here. Formal observations [are conducted] by your dean, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, or your department chair. You get your success rates and your drop rates for the last three years. Then underneath your rates are the college's rates, so you're seeing how you compare to the college." She connected the sharing of data to getting faculty who are hesitant to change to try new things: "When you do sit down in that level of communication and you are shown the proof in the numbers, with the deans or chair around the table and the faculty is saying but students are having the hardest time retaining information or it's not enough practice. But then they say but why are your success rates like that? It's kind of hard to argue with that when you have the numbers."

Faculty were accustomed to examining data to improve student learning outcomes. Structured opportunities allowed them to collaborate with supervisors to discuss data and methods for improvement. Well established processes at the institutions set the expectation of continually improving teaching and learning.

Investments are Made to Ensure High Quality Teaching and Learning

Investments in teaching and learning included allocating financial resources as well as committing time. When discussing the investments of administrators, most often faculty discussed professional learning opportunities that required financial resources. When discussing

the investments made by their fellow faculty, they discussed devoting time to helping one another improve their instructional practices.

Faculty felt supported by administrators to seek out relevant professional development and confident that resources would be available to help them learn. A number of categories of professional learning were identified by faculty from mentoring one another, to attending conferences, to continuing their formal education. Administrators were recognized frequently for their efforts to seek out and make available resources for faculty members to become better at their profession. To succinctly capture the many comments in this area, Table 3 summarizes the types of support faculty received from leaders to grow in their role.

Table 3

Faculty professional learning supported by administrators

Type of Opportunity	Faculty Examples
Mentoring	We have a new faculty academy. When we get here, we're not left in isolation. We form a community, where the new teachers get to meet one another every two weeks. And they work with the best of the best faculty here to figure out what's expected and how to adapt to the culture here. I think it's a pretty smart thing that the college does. They probably reduce turnover, which, of course, is really good. It was something that I had to do when I came along. It was one more thing to have to do but it was very good, it was enlightening and it was enjoyable. (UCC faculty) Last semester there was a person in my department who was a little anxious about team teaching. And I know that the department chair was very encouraging to her saying “I know that you can do this and I'm going to pair you with somebody that's very experienced.” You have to get used to somebody else watching you teach and that can be a scary thing. So I know for that particular person our department chair was very affirming to her and helped her to become comfortable with teaching. (UCC faculty)

Table 3 continued

Type of Opportunity	Faculty Examples
Attending conferences	It's been nice to be a part of the different initiatives. If you feel super passionate about getting involved with say, OER (open educational resources), then they'll send you to conferences. Right now I'm wanting to bring back competency based education for some of our workforce staff. They just sent me to Salt Lake City to go to a training there. And so I think engagement-wise and initiative-wise that if you are passionate about something, they will find a way to put you on that committee or send you to a conference because we're a very innovative campus. I think anything you want to do to get involved in that is innovation for student success they're 100% behind it. (PCC faculty) Our director acknowledged that we were babies and she created opportunities within that first year. As a faculty we went to [a discipline-specific conference] where we learned and strategized. I think creating opportunities for us was a big piece for her. She recognized that we were babies, she recognized that we didn't have expertise. And then she generated avenues for us to become experts. (PCC faculty) I feel like the school has to make good decisions with resources. Last week the department chair asked if there was anything we needed for the rest of the semester that would help us to do our job better. And I know that they have to be concerned about budgets and diminished funding but the Dean allowed me to go to a conference. Whenever I've asked to go to a conference, it's always been granted. I don't ask too often but I can think of three conferences that cost the college money in my five and a half years. And that's pretty good. (UCC faculty)
Training opportunities	For student success, our department chair's vision is that if we have the technology, we can teach [students] better. More than two million people are going to retire in welding and we need to produce skilled people. We need to know about the new technology so we can teach our students 10 years in the future. If he learned from '73 and he's still going to implement like '73, it's not going to work. That's why he takes the initiative and tells everybody to get training. We just went to one of the biggest company in manufacturing. I think it's a Fortune 500 company and they have the brand-new technology. They're welding with lasers and that kind of stuff. (PCC faculty)

Table 3 Continued

Type of Opportunity	Faculty Examples
Instructional resources	I think the college and the department go out of their way to have funds for things like faculty professional development, any kind of simulation lab, or classroom enhancement. In fact I just sent off for some stuff for my class because we have extra money. Also our department chair actively looks for grants to help. I think the college does a really good job of funding professional development, technical support, and things like that. (UCC faculty) Communication was more about: What do you need? What are the resources? What can we do to help your students? Do you need anything? For example, we have money we can spend for our classes. What kind of extra things do you want to spend the money on? So the communication was really about what can we do to support you in the classroom. (UCC faculty) Our Vice President, she applies for a lot of grants and things like that so that we can get financial support for our initiatives. We've got money now and are asked what we need for our classrooms. They support us in that way. (UCC faculty)
Additional education	A lot of college prep faculty don't have the right credentials. We needed more people to be credentialed to teach on the academic side and so our Vice President has gotten grant money so we can go back and take classes. I just needed three classes so they have reimbursed me on two and I'm getting my third one this semester so that I'll have my 18 math hours and then will be credentialed on the academic side. So I think that they've been very helpful and dependable to get us what we need to supplement our degrees. I think that's been helpful that they said they would do it and then they did it. (UCC faculty)

Faculty to faculty professional learning occurred as well. Mentoring each other was the most common method by which this occurred and was noted in nearly all interviews. In some cases the mentoring was a formally structured opportunity, as mentioned above, but most often it was organic and occurred informally between faculty members and through collaborations.

Formally structured mentoring opportunities were often organized by leadership to encourage peer or cross-functional collaborations. These included some of the examples previously described such as new faculty orientation programs, reviewing student learning outcomes, and cross-functional discussions between faculty from different campuses or between faculty and other areas of the college. Additionally, opportunities arose during daily interactions that allowed faculty to work together and share knowledge to improve instructional practices. These opportunities occurred frequently at both institutions. As a career technical faculty at PCC described: “My co-workers are great. It's always been a mutual ‘come in my class, let me show you’ or I'll come sit in your class and I'll give you some pointers, that kind of thing. Communications always be great.” He continued indicating that sharing knowledge occurred across disciplines when structured opportunities to share evolved into more informal follow-up collaborations.

> I think we borrow from other departments as well. We have professional development week every time school starts. Different departments will give presentations on what they do in their classrooms. So we borrow and steal from each other all the time. We email somebody and ask ‘how do you do such and such?’ We're very good about that. People are very good about sharing their stuff, and not trying to keep it to themselves.

A UCC math faculty described a willingness to share resources and knowledge freely with colleagues as a result of having high trust among her colleagues. She described:

> We’ve always had a department that collaborates well and shares resources. We don't have anybody that's trying to make a name for themselves in either department, whether it's the academic side or the college prep side. People say ‘I've got this, let me give it to you.’ I think there is that trust that you don't think anybody's trying to throw you under

> the bus and everybody is out for helping our students and wanting to support each other. So there's definitely a high level of trust and that helps us.

The developmental math faculty that co-teaches with her reiterated: “We know if we're struggling anywhere [our colleagues] are going to help us out. We all provide resources, we share whatever we have to help each other.”

The institutional cultures at these two colleges demonstrate a clear commitment to student success through the development of faculty. Leadership establishes that culture by communicating that continual improvements in teaching and learning are expected and by allocating resources to allow that to happen. In examining the strategic plans of both institutions, these commitments are prominent and in writing. Furthermore, faculty at both institutions indicated when new faculty are interviewed, hired, and onboarded they are made aware of what will be expected of them in their roles. Examining data, particularly at the course and program level, is built into the routine and responsibilities of faculty members and supported by robust institutional effectiveness departments.

Genuine Care and Appreciation for Others is an Institutional Norm

The climates at these institutions were viewed by the majority of faculty as being exceptionally positive. Faculty frequently referred to their colleagues as family and friends and some acknowledged spending more hours at work than was required because of a strong culture of care. When faculty were asked how their leaders and faculty colleagues showed genuine care for one another by going beyond their formal roles to show that care, the majority of the participants could readily identify examples. Only one faculty member at each institution did not provide an answer when asked about their administrators but all shared examples of care from their fellow faculty members. Faculty felt appreciated by their leaders and colleagues through

public acknowledgements of their contributions and celebrations of success. Two subthemes emerged as faculty discussed feeling cared for and appreciated: (a) faculty are known as individuals and (b) faculty feel valued and recognized for their contributions.

Faculty are Known as Individuals

Personalized and individualized care and appreciation was demonstrated to faculty across all levels of interactions. Faculty felt like others knew them as individuals not just as a person filling a particular position at the institution.

Administrators engage in personal interactions. Knowing faculty as individuals was expressed by administrators from the presidents to the department chairs. One way leaders expressed this was by demonstrating personal regard as defined by Bryk and Schneider (2002) in their concept of relational trust. Faculty described numerous examples of leaders showing genuine care for them as individuals by going beyond their formal roles to show that care.

Administrators knowing their names made an impression on faculty. At both institutions this practice was noticed and described as contributing to improved trust levels. A UCC faculty member referring to a prior president provided this account:

> When we had a new president come in, he remembered everybody's name. I don't know how he did that. He would say, “Hey, [faculty name], what's going on in your area?” First you are like, How does he know my name? But he would just talk about things and he'd say you let me know if there's anything that I can do. And so there was a lot of trust building happening automatically with him. And then after that I would see it happening with his vice presidents … and it kind of just scaled down from there. It was just a very different approach to administration.

Similarly, a faculty at the same community college remarked on the current administration:

> One thing that they do very well is they come up to us and they know us by name. And so for me, that was really important. There are a lot of faculty here and they know you by name, they ask how you're doing, how are your classes.

At PCC, a faculty member trying to find the interview room for this study ended up in the president's suite which was across the hall. He shared:

> I know they try to learn everybody's names. And they get to know everybody. I was looking for this room and went over to that area, which is the president's office and ended up talking with them a little bit. So everybody recognized me.

Department chairs use personalized approaches. Leaders also engaged in interactions that allowed them to learn about each faculty and determine what motivates each of them individually. Once they determined their preferred communications, leaders tailored their communications to maximize the faculty member's engagement. Examples of personalized approaches typically applied to their immediate supervisors rather than upper leadership. One faculty member at UCC described how her department chair did this.

> One of the things I know she does with me is she looks at whatever skill set I have and how I can contribute to whatever efforts we're doing. And I think she does it with everyone. We took a skill finder or personality test. We thought it was kind of a campy thing to do at first. But we saw we all have a purpose. We have one person who is woo-er and so now that's her nickname, the woo-er. And so when our department chair pushes us to get out there and advertise for our program and college, we send out the woo-er first. She looked at everybody's skill set and incorporated that into the process. So everyone can contribute their best.

A PCC faculty member said “he knows me and my personality. I'm a person about the results, it's about the results. So if you can show me something works, and you can show me the results, then I'll do it.” Another faculty expressed a similar experience with her department chair.

> She's done a really good job of figuring out her staff. Knowing some like to be told on a daily basis, “I heard you're doing a really good job.” And she knows those that don't. She knows those that like data. I think that took time on her part to figure it out and test the waters and say, “Okay, [faculty name] doesn't like the fluff, she likes the data. So that's what I’m going to give her. And this one doesn't like that.” So that, to me, speaks a lot because it shows you care about what I appreciate, and what I need to know to keep going. And so she just gives me data.

As did a business faculty when she described how her department chair tailored her communications:

> And that's another thing the chair did at the time … was really knowing how your people communicate. There are the ones that want you to walk in their office and sit down and make them feel like they get a say - even though they probably don't get a say in 8 week courses. Or they ask them: “Would you want to offer a weekend college? What do you think you would want to teach there?” Or the ones that would rather just have an email so they can read it real fast or a text. I think communication-wise that is something the chair did really well - to know how your people want to be communicated with.

The other way leaders showed they valued their faculty was by showing genuine care for them by going beyond their formal roles. Faculty members cited various examples of how this was expressed, from handwritten notes to showing up at funerals. One UCC faculty member shared:

> My father passed away three years ago, and I was very close to my father so it was a really rough time. [My top academic leader] sent a personal card to me to my home address and shared how very sorry she was about the loss of my father. It was a very personal card. It was a very thoughtful thing that she did. Another thing she did is one year my purse got stolen out of my office. Then I was at a conference and she was there and said "I was so worried about your purse, do you need anything?" So just showing concern for me as an individual.

This is the same leader that sends personal notes to faculty with their welcome back packets described earlier. Another faculty member described the note she received one summer with her packet:

> I had suffered through some health issues over the summer break. One of our administrators always sends out the calendar for [specific name] week. She had written on my calendar that was sent to me in the mail a handwritten note with her phone number and said "call me anytime." And so I was like, wow, it wasn't just a mass mailer that came out. She took the time to do that. Since then, every time I see her, she asks me how I'm doing. So at least with that one specifically, it's helped me to have someone at that level who shows true concern for someone's well-being.

Another shared that two top leaders came to her hospital room when she was ill.

> The president called and said he and the vice president were on their way over to visit me and I go "Oh please no. I look like roadkill, I feel like roadkill". And that would have been 25-30 miles away because I live quite a distance from here. They're just very caring.

One other faculty described a time when she was an adjunct and the president came to her father's funeral:

> Right before I started teaching full time, my father passed away and our President came to his funeral. I didn't even know she knew or that she had come to the funeral. You don't really pay attention to who's there, but I went back through the guest book and she had signed her name. So I was like, I'm a person, I'm not just an employee.

Other forms of genuine care included examples such as: allowing a class to make that the faculty member was passionate and enthusiastic about even then it did not quite have the numbers (today it has a waiting list); protecting the health of faculty and staff during building renovations; recognizing years of service and hosting retirement celebrations; ensuring that staff associated with an athletic team had positions when sports were eliminated at the college; and providing tuition assistance to developmental education faculty to gain necessary credentials. These expressions of genuine care impacted faculty and contributed to their willingness to be engaged.

Faculty genuinely like one another. Faculty at both institutions unanimously expressed care for one another as individuals. Among faculty, getting to know each other as individuals led to the development of close, personal friendships and expressions of concern in times of need.

Many faculty reported having friendships with their colleagues that continued beyond their work hours. They socialize in the evening and weekends, know each other's families, and celebrate special occasions together. At PCC, a faculty member described her relationship with her co-workers.

> I think we go out of our way to carve out time to be around each other and it not just be about work. We always get together and have a really nice dinner after all of the programs have graduated - not to talk about next year, not to talk about what we just did, just to talk about each other. We see each other's kids and let them play together. We

> really care about each other as friends, not just because we teach the same classes and that's how we know each other. I know your kids, I know your husband, and I'm looking forward to this. I think when one person is experiencing something, we all sort of experience it. If somebody's husband is sick, we're all aware of it. We're all asking about it. We're all lending a hand. I've driven to another school to help teach a course when that faculty member couldn't. And I know that would be reciprocated if I needed it. You think that's done in a formal role but they don't have to come over and do those things. They don't have to bring soups and stuff when you're not feeling good. They do that because they care about you not because they care about your role."

A developmental reading and writing faculty at UCC felt the same way about her colleagues. She said:

> We have group text messages, we talk all the time, we send funny things to each other. I've really developed close friendships with them, I consider them friends before I consider them colleagues. We have pool parties, we go to lunch often and we help people when they're feeling ill or take their classes if they can't be there. Everyone in the department knows all you have to do if you need something is tell us and we'll get it done.

Another faculty member at UCC said "we do silly things like for birthdays, we'll decorate offices. We just want to make sure they feel special and they do the same for us."

These faculty also showed genuine care when faculty members were experiencing hardships. Many talked about showing support during illnesses or loss of loved ones. For example, a career technical faculty member at PCC showed up to be interviewed because his colleague who was originally scheduled was out with her mother due to illness. As he explained:

> One of my colleagues, who actually was supposed to have been here, her mother is ill, and so she's been out the last few weeks to tend to her mother. Everybody's been very supportive and very understanding. We've been communicating with her and her classes have been covered. There's been no pressure on her even though it's the end of semester. I appreciate that. Even though it's not me, I appreciate how we're treating her in allowing her to do what's most important and that's take care of a loved one. I think when a situation comes up or when life happens, then people are very understanding and considerate and compassionate as it should be.

At the same institution, two faculty from different departments mentioned helping faculty members who were having financial difficulties. A welding faculty shared that someone in his area was "hurting" and needed their support. He said they have provided personal vehicles, money, and a place to stay for him. An automotive faculty member who had recently moved to the area did not have a bed or sufficient food and was taken care of by other faculty members. The faculty member being interviewed said his response was "it is crazy how you all really care for each other." She elaborated later in the interview by saying "the [college] family is the real deal. You may work here so many hours sometimes you don't see your own family but everyone here is really close and you really do look out for each other and that's been a good experience."

A faculty member at UCC lost her home during a hurricane. She described the considerable support she received from her college family:

> I got hit by a hurricane and I lost my house. I lost everything in my house. And I was homeless. I ended up living in an apartment so I had nothing. The faculty got together money for me personally so I could buy some clothes. I had no clothes, I had nothing.

> They gave me over $1,000, so I could get clothes and get cookware to cook for my family.

Faculty formed genuine friendships with their peers. They extended care to one another well beyond their formal roles and engaged in social interactions outside of work expectations which contributed to their commitments to working together on institutional projects.

Faculty Feel Valued and Recognized for their Contributions

Recognizing faculty as valuable assets to the institution and acknowledging their hard work and contributions to improving student success was a second subtheme that emerged in how genuine care and appreciation was demonstrated. This subtheme was specific to administrators.

Leaders provided faculty with opportunities to showcase their expertise and abilities at both institutions. One faculty member said “a lot of us serve on committees for accreditation. When the stakes are that high, I don't think they would call on us if they didn’t value us. Or when we've been up for an award, such as the Aspen award, they interviewed faculty.” Another commented “I’ve been able to go to a few conferences. The first one we shared with others about what we do with our co-requisite model and the success that we’ve had. The other one we talked about interdisciplinary teaching.” Another talked about faculty being asked by leadership to share the college’s initiatives with a state board:

> The Board has come and visited our campus. The [leaders] have invited them to come sit in our courses. I feel like that is affirming to us that somebody from [board name] is going to sit in on our classes because our leaders feel like they're going to get a good idea of what we're doing. And so they are trusting in our expertise in that way. They know that we're doing the initiatives they want the leaders at the state to be able to see.

Acknowledging the contributions of faculty was described at both institutions. Administrators created opportunities to publicly celebrate the accomplishments of faculty. A faculty from UCC shared that faculty are recognized for publications and earning additional credentials by the top leadership at their board meetings.

Faculty at PCC felt like leaders showed integrity by giving them credit for their contributions to student success. The student and employee engagement program at PCC was mentioned over and over. This program allows those who engage in college activities to earn points which accumulate and are paid out in money for employees. The program has a name which was mentioned 23 times by 5 out of the 7 faculty interviewed from that institution. All references to this program were positive with one exception. While that faculty liked the program, he wished more one-on-one positive reinforcement occurred as well. Comments about this program included: “we have celebrations as part of [program name] where the president plays basketball. If he makes it, we get double points and just little things like that. That's genuine care for creating an environment where people want to be;” “there’s definitely a lot of conversation, like almost bragging, look at your success rates, because they really were higher. They weren't making this stuff up but really bragging;” and “whenever the president mentions the work that you're doing, and praising you on that scale, it's like, hey, you're a good guy.” One faculty member described how administrators show personal regard at the celebrations associated with this program:

> They're mentioning the same success stories, reminding us of what the overall goal is, reminding us we've touched this many students, we've helped this many students go to college for the first time. When all of the big administration, the president and all the VPs, are still getting emotional and passionate about the things that we're doing in the

> classroom, it's not being overlooked. That's not being brushed under the table, like that's my student up there that you're praising. And they do a really good job about praising the students. But then referring that back to this is because of great faculty. You know, it's not to toot themselves, it's to really just shine a spotlight on the real outcome - and that's the students.

While this method of showing faculty they were valued was not mentioned as frequently, faculty did recognize monetary rewards for their hard work and efforts. Because of the program described above which attaches rewards to engagement activities, monetary incentives were mentioned more by faculty at PCC. However one faculty member at UCC did point out that they are rewarded through merit pay when they are engaged in efforts to improve student success.

Faculty at both institutions felt cared for, valued, and appreciated. As a result, they were willing to put forth extra effort to engage in efforts to improve student success. This statement from a faculty member captured the positive environment at UCC:

> There's a reason I'm at the college I'm at. It’s because I love the people I work with. We're like a family. And it makes me happy and I am in a happy environment … and I never once look at the clock. I always say that that means something. I tell my students when you can work a job and you're not looking at the clock that means something.

Faculty enjoyed working at their institutions because they felt like they were valuable to the organizational purpose. Administrators frequently acknowledged their expertise and contributions and created reward structures to positively reinforce their engagement.

Faculty Have a Positive Mindset

While no questions were designed to explore the internal characteristics of faculty engagement, 14 out of the 16 faculty interviewed shared information that was categorized into 49

separate incidences of faculty mindset. Faculty mindset is defined in this study as the established set of attitudes and beliefs held by individual faculty. These beliefs and attitudes often surfaced when faculty talked about how they felt about their own openness to change and their students' ability to learn. Therefore the two subthemes for this theme are: (a) faculty are open to change and (b) faculty have a growth mindset about students.

Faculty are Open to Change

The majority of faculty interviewed expressed an openness to trying new things, learning best practices from others, and a willingness to go to great lengths to help students. A faculty member from UCC said "if we didn't do things differently, we wouldn't get any different results." Another UCC faculty expressed that "change was the new normal" and that was considered to be a positive by most faculty interviewed. A number of faculty had previous careers working in K-12 and for them change was nothing new and moved at a slower pace at community colleges. One PCC faculty expressed:

> Change is welcome to education, like that's what we do. In K-12, we were adopting a new curriculum every year, it seemed like we were always changing. So that was my normal. But I do think it may be hard, if that's not the normal.

Another UCC faculty member described his department as "a bunch of do-ers" who did not need to be externally motivated to be engaged in change. When something was perceived to be in the best interest of students, then they worked together to get it done. A PCC faculty member shared a similar sentiment on being internally motivated when she stated that her passion for students motivated her to "take [the initiative], run with it and do the best I can."

These faculty were open to making changes to their own preferred styles of teaching if they felt it would benefit students. As a UCC faculty said "I'm very open to new ideas. I will

challenge if I think the idea is going to hurt the students but otherwise I'm open minded to trying new things." A PCC career technical faculty talked about his initial resistance to change because he wanted to stay in his "comfort zone." When he first came to the institution it was following a long career in a very structured and regimented profession and he described himself as "old school." The college was implementing strategies to increase student engagement in the classroom. He discussed having to give up control to allow his classroom to become more interactive and he leaned on his peers for assistance in implementing. But he was willing to "set his ego aside" and make changes because he saw it worked for his students.

Impressively, the faculty member who had the most experience at her community college, 40 years, was one of the most open faculty members to making change. She was very involved in the programming provided by the college's center for teaching and learning and actively engaged in book discussions through her participation and by leading them with students. She makes continual improvements to her instructional practice and identified a list of things she has volunteered to try with her students this academic year.

Faculty at these institutions embrace change. Many expressed an openness to change as a result of their own personality or from prior experiences. Even faculty resistant to change had been willing to try new things and became more open once they experienced positive outcomes.

Faculty Have A Growth Mindset About Students

Not only were these faculty open to change, they also expressed a clear belief that community college students are capable of success. Growth mindset is a phrase used by Carol Dweck (2008) to describe an individual mindset of believing that if one works hard and is committed that abilities can be developed and strengthened. In this case, faculty mindset refers to

faculty believing if they can create the right conditions that their students can develop abilities and talents.

These faculty recognized that their students may not come through the community college doors with the knowledge necessary to be successful. As a faculty at UCC acknowledged:

> We send out all kinds of reminders because most of our students are first generation. They have parents that love them generally, but their parents can't help them maneuver an educational environment. So we do a lot of nurturing. These are some very bright kids. Our students can eventually maneuver that environment but many of them could not when they first come to us.

Another faculty from PCC who actually completed his degree in the program in which he now teaches said “I'm teaching because of the college’s effort. All those people, they're working for students. The financial aid staff, the scholarship staff, the faculty - all these guys are working together to change the lives of students.” As another faculty member explained “we're open admissions, we have students who come here with skill sets from zero to 100. And the contribution you make as a faculty member is going to really show in the students.”

Faculty were empathetic to the barriers that community college students face and did not apply an one-size-fits-all approach to their classrooms recognizing that each student is an individual who needs personalized supports. A PCC health sciences faculty shared her shift in mindset in interpreting why students did poorly on exams.

> We had to wrap our minds around, well what if they weren't able this week. Creating exceptions instead of rules. What if this was a week they couldn't prepare because their babies were sick and their husband was on call so they couldn't carve out time to listen to

> all those lectures? Are we really going to wash our hands and say, “Okay, well, tough luck.” I think so much of it was about experiencing that look, or that feeling whenever a student sits down with you. They tell you why they thought that and why they chose that answer. There is substance behind it, it wasn't just a guess. But then you can give them one piece of information and they get it. I think whenever you see that moment for your students that makes you hungry for more of those moments....Those students come to you and say “this was an off week and I couldn't get it done this week.” And this is why I'm here. You meet with them, you give them tools, and then you don't have to meet with them again. And those are the ones that kind of drive you to keep doing it.

Another faculty from PCC, who had initially been resistant to change in his classrooms, teaches a larger number of dual enrolled high school students. Now he has created a variety of instructional practices designed specifically for supporting the learning of that population.

> But the younger students, if you can engage them, they are willing to do anything. We've had rap videos where they're rapping concerts, we've had plays, we’ve had mock trials in some classes and they are so engaged, they love doing those things…They're full of energy if you can tap into it. The key is figuring out how to tap into it.

These faculty are motivated by knowing that they can change lives by doing their jobs well. The faculty member teaching in the program he graduated from shared his personal story and related it to his mindset toward students.

> I like that we're changing the lives of the students, we're changing the lives of the community and the people. College changed my life. I was working in the malls and every day was a different day. I was worried about getting fired. “What am I going to do? I only know how to sell the cookies.” When I came to college, I learned a skill. From my

> very first day, they talked to me and told me, "Hey, you can do it," and because of the people I was able to do it.

As a faculty member at PCC, he is proactive in ensuring that his students get the wraparound support and the workplace skills they need to be successful. A faculty at UCC reiterated the notion of giving back when she said “I want to do the best I can, especially by the students, and I want them to have opportunities like I did, I want for them to reach their goals, and to have a good quality of life. “

A faculty from UCC summarized the passion that was evident in the faculty interviewed for this research study:

> Absolutely it's a good place to work and we are very blessed to what we do. I think our students see our passion. I think we are passionate about … taking away the roadblocks that students have had. To be able to be a part of that for your students makes a difference for us. We're just excited to be a part of that for students and to know that we're helping them achieve their goal.

Faculty at these colleges believed in their students and that it was a shared institutional responsibility to nurture them, help them overcome obstacles, and provide the right conditions to allow them to learn.

Summary of Results

This study explored how relational trust promotes faculty engagement in community colleges. Participants were 16 faculty members from two community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program for achieving exceptional outcomes. Engaged faculty were purposefully selected to be in this study with a cross section of disciplines and longevity at the institutions represented. Through transcribing, coding, and analyzing semi-

structured interviews, themes emerged indicating engaged faculty feel high levels of relational trust when: (a) environments are collaborative with a shared vision of student success, (b) faculty are surrounded by highly effective individuals, (c) faculty learning is integral to student learning, (d) genuine care and appreciation for others is an institutional norm, and (e) faculty have a positive mindset.

This study also aimed to examine which components of relational trust were most influential in promoting faculty engagement. All components were determined to be influential with competence and personal regard receiving the most unique coding instances. From analysis of data no single quality emerged as most influential, instead a combination of qualities comprised each of the subthemes.

Investigating the differences within and between the community colleges was also an intent of this study. With the exception of one faculty at each college, faculty within each college expressed very similar perceptions of the relational trust they experienced with their administrators and peers. At PCC, one faculty member was not forthcoming in her answers and did not project a positive perception of administrators. At UCC, one faculty member declined to answer most questions about trust with his administrators. A few differences between the two colleges were noted. While both colleges have department chairs that do not share the same discipline as the faculty they supervise, only faculty at UCC mentioned the incongruence as affecting their relationships with department chairs. They did not indicate anything negative about the abilities of the chair to lead but did indicate a different level of support and engagement. The other difference was the unique program at PCC that generated significant engagement by faculty which did not have a parallel at UCC. In the next chapter, these results

are interpreted in light of the existing literature on relational trust, faculty engagement, and community college reform.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how relational trust promotes faculty engagement in educational reform efforts at community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program for exceptional student outcomes. The study was also designed to explore which components of relational trust were influential in engaging faculty as well as the differences in faculty engagement that might exist within and between two community colleges. This study expands the literature on relational trust by examining it through the lens of faculty at community colleges. Both the unit of analysis, faculty, and the setting, community colleges, have received minimal to no attention in the literature on relational trust.

This chapter discusses the research findings, implications for research and practice, and directions for future research.

Key Findings and Discussion

To date no study has examined faculty perspectives on relational trust within community colleges, therefore this study adds new information to the research literature on relational trust. It also adds to the very limited body of knowledge examining relational trust at the community college level. In addition, the multiple case study method allowed for comparisons between community colleges to identify nuances in the expression of relational trust that may influence faculty engagement.

Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theory of relational trust which developed from research conducted in the K-12 sector was utilized to examine faculty engagement. The faculty that participated in this study were deeply engaged in the student success initiatives at their community colleges and their insights may help other community colleges identify what institutional conditions promote engagement by their faculty. Thus far much of the literature available specific to community college reform focuses on structural modifications rather than

interpersonal aspects of the culture. Additionally, these reform efforts have largely overlooked the role of faculty as key contributors to the success of those efforts. Therefore, this research study may contribute to a more holistic understanding of transforming an institution to achieve better student outcomes.

In describing the key findings of this basic qualitative study, the following sections will reiterate the importance of faculty engagement in improving student success and then integrate the literature on relational trust, faculty engagement, and community college reform.

The Importance of Faculty Engagement

To meet national completion goals and address the economic imperative of creating a skilled workforce and improving social mobility, community colleges have received not only increased attention but significant funding from both the federal government and private foundations to improve student outcomes and the competitive advantage of our nation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2017; Drummer & Marshburn, 2014). For the last two decades, reform efforts have swept across community colleges with an early focus on more traditional models of reform aimed at “fixing” certain parts of the student experience (i.e. advising, developmental education, instructional supports) and a more recent focus on reforms that comprehensively redesign the entire student pathway (Bailey, 2017). However, the majority of these reform efforts have failed to engage faculty in meaningful and significant improvements in assessing student learning and continually improving the teaching and learning environment at community colleges (Stout, 2018).

For decades an understanding has prevailed that effective pedagogical approaches must accompany successful educational reform efforts (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Chickering & Gamson, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2012). Vincent Tinto (2012), in his research on

college completion, stated “For many students, especially in community colleges, if involvement does not happen in the classroom, it is unlikely to occur at all” (p. 68). Substantial research has demonstrated that faculty-student interactions are key to student success, particularly for underserved and under-represented students (Kuh et al., 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). A host of positive student outcomes have been associated with quality and frequency of faculty-student interactions such as persistence (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000; Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2003; Wang & Grimes, 2001), completion (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh et al., 2006), improved grades (Anaya, 1992; Anaya & Cole, 2001), and the mastery of general education outcomes and “soft” skills development (Bjorkland, Parente, & Sathiyananthan, 2002; Martin, 2000; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). Given the strong connection between faculty engagement and student outcomes, faculty need to be intimately and actively engaged in comprehensive reform efforts to improve student outcomes.

In a recent address, Karen Stout, President and CEO of Achieving the Dream stated that student success initiatives “have lacked an explicit focus on improving teaching and learning as a primary lever for institutional transformation” (Stout, 2018). Her addressed titled “The Urgent Case: Centering Teaching and Learning in the Next Generation of Community College Redesign” highlighted the limited focus on faculty engagement and emphasized that excellence in teaching and learning will require specific commitments from leadership. She detailed principles and building blocks that institutions should consider to ensure that “excellent teaching and support for quality instruction [is] at the core of [community college] reform work.”

While comprehensive reform efforts at the national level have not had an explicit focus on faculty engagement, institutions engaging in these change initiatives have been recognized for creating healthy cultures that support excellence in teaching and learning and as a result are

achieving impressive gains in student outcomes. The faculty at two of those institutions were interviewed for this study. For the purposes of exploring the role of relational trust in promoting faculty engagement, it was important to identify faculty at these institutions who were actively involved in student success initiatives to gain an understanding of what influenced their engagement.

From semi-structured interviews with 16 faculty at two institutions, these factors emerged as promoting their engagement in initiatives: (a) environments are collaborative with a shared vision of student success, (b) faculty are surrounded by highly effective individuals, (c) faculty learning is integral to student learning, (d) genuine care and appreciation for others is an institutional norm, and (e) faculty have a positive mindset. The first four themes seemed to emerge as the result of institutional conditions while the last one was interpreted as an internal characteristic of the faculty member.

While these five themes are organized as separate findings, they are interconnected and often intersected in the answers the 16 community college faculty provided to the interview questions. Collaborative environments exist when effective individuals create conditions that motivate individuals to work together. Shared visions for student success highlight continual improvement processes which promote environments where faculty learning is supported. Faculty who are positive are more likely to thrive in institutional environments that value and appreciate them.

In addition, Bryk & Schneider's (2002) components of relational trust did not neatly fit into a single theme; instead, they combined to create the institutional conditions that promoted faculty engagement at these two community colleges. As evidenced in Table 2 in the results section, the themes and related subthemes included various components of relational trust. This

study provides new information on relational trust by examining it through the lens of faculty at community colleges.

Environments are Collaborative with a Shared Vision of Student Success

According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust "is the connective tissue that holds improving school together" (p. 144). In exploring how relational trust influences faculty engagement in two community colleges, faculty demonstrated that trust with leaders and fellow faculty contributed to a cohesive professional community working together toward a shared vision of student success. This sense of cohesiveness was shared by faculty members at both institutions when they connected the initiatives in which they were engaged to the overall college vision of student success. In *Lessons from the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence* (2014b), the Aspen Institute recommends that executive leaders "communicate a clear vision explicitly focused on student success" (p. 12). At both institutions faculty articulated a student success focused vision. A UCC faculty member simply stated that vision: "I think student success is at the helm of what we do. And if it doesn't benefit the student, then we don't want to do it."

Both these institutions had strong presidential leadership. It was evident that these two individuals brought new perspectives to the institutions and significantly influenced the direction of their respective cultures. Not only did they set visions clearly focused on student success but they also created conditions conducive for changes in personnel, policy, and overall direction. While a clear vision communicated by leadership is important, this research further discovered that the vision must be embraced by faculty to empower them to engage in it. The idea of a shared vision aligns with Chickering and Gamson's (1997) recommendation to administrators when engaging faculty to "create a strong sense of shared purpose." (p. 5). A social science

faculty member from PCC indicated that a student success focus promoted faculty buy-in which according to Byrk & Schneider (2002) is a crucial factor in successful reform: “It's important to have the focus on students and what's in their best interest. There has been big buy-in that this initiative benefits the student and when people see that the trust becomes stronger.”

When there is relational trust in organizations, all parties feel empowered to put forth effort to make the shared vision a reality. Improving student outcomes requires the efforts of many, therefore an interdependence exists among parties to achieve success (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A best practice from the Aspen Institute (2014b) captures the mutual reliance among community college professionals by suggesting that institutional cultures must be cultivated to promote a “shared responsibility for student success” (p. 13). Faculty confirmed feeling empowered to contribute to the vision both through involvement in college-wide efforts as well as discipline-specific efforts. Their involvement could range from participating in the direction and implementation of initiatives to actually initiating and leading the initiatives. Many felt inspired to explore innovative approaches to teaching and learning such as using Open Educational Resources (OER) or new delivery formats for courses. Faculty members talked about “being given full creative range,” having “ownership,” and being encouraged to “try new things in the classroom.”

When mutual dependencies exist to reach shared goals, mutual vulnerabilities will also exist. However when relational trust is high, these vulnerabilities are reduced creating environments where individuals are more open to putting forth extra effort associated with reform (Byrk & Schneider, 2002). Vulnerabilities are reduced when faculty can discern that those around them demonstrate trustworthiness through expressions of competence, respect, integrity, and personal regard. Faculty in this study provided numerous examples to demonstrate

their leaders and fellow faculty demonstrated these qualities. As a result, the sense of risk associated with leading change was reduced and they felt empowered to be fully engaged in a shared vision of student success. These community colleges have put into practice a building block promoting faculty engagement identified by Stout (2018) by designing a "truly student-centered institution through teaching and learning."

Faculty are Surrounded by Highly Effective Individuals

Relational trust occurs in an educational community when all parties responsible for academic achievement have established a shared understanding of their role obligations in relation to others and role expectations from others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The faculty interviewed for this study had clear expectations for their leaders and faculty colleagues and in most cases felt they met their obligations on a daily basis. Their expectations were distinctive for each leadership role but similar across the faculty role. Presidents and their leadership teams were trusted to "make decisions that are good for student success," "do what's good for this school, the students, and for their faculty," "get buy-in," and create sound policies and procedures that advanced student success.

Chickering and Gamson's (1997) research on faculty engagement supports the obligation of leadership to develop policies and procedures that advance the shared vision for student success. While faculty indicated that ensuring sound policies and procedures were adopted and implemented by administrators, they also valued being involved in their development when they impacted the faculty role. Faculty were frequently engaged at these two community colleges through presidential interactions with shared governance organizations and structured opportunities to provide feedback to top administrators. This finding supports the literature from K-12 demonstrating that when decisions are made collectively that include the faculty

perspective, relational trust flourishes and reform efforts are successful (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

While research has demonstrated that relational trust is more easily nurtured and sustained in small schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), intentional processes were established in these medium to large institutions to communicate information and ensure all personnel were well informed. These intentional processes allowed faculty to discern the competence of the top leadership team with whom they did not have daily interactions. Minutes were shared from meetings, transparent communications occurred from leaders to faculty, and structured and predicable opportunities for face-to-face interactions were scheduled. Both presidents utilized all-personnel gatherings to share information and demonstrate transformational leadership qualities. Faculty were overwhelmingly positive about both presidents and indicated a confidence that they were being led effectively.

Expectations for department chairs that were shared across participants included supporting faculty on a daily basis, keeping faculty informed through open communications, and advocating for them. Department chairs at these colleges could be relied on to help faculty solve problems and provide support that allowed faculty to be more effective in their roles. These faculty felt that department chairs kept them well informed and were effective listeners and problem solvers. Faculty also believed that chairs would advocate for them with others when it was appropriate. One faculty member captured the support his chair provided when he said: "I've come to him with lots of concerns and I've never felt he disregarded any of them. In fact, he's usually done more than I've expected, which has been awesome." Transparent communications with department chairs reduced the anxieties of faculty and promoted a sense of security. Speaking about her chair, a faculty explained because her chair openly communicated

"we don't have to worry, we don't have to try to figure out what is going on. She's very transparent."

The faculty role at the two institutions was perceived very similarly by the participants from the two institutions. In particular, faculty were expected to be dependable and collaborate to improve student learning outcomes. Every faculty interviewed expressed positive perceptions of the faculty with whom they worked most closely. This statement by a faculty at PCC captured the unanimous sentiment among faculty that they could depend on one another: "If somebody says, I'm going to do it, you don't even worry that it's going to get done. Everybody has that level of dependability… Nobody drops the ball." These perceptions confirm research examining relational trust and teacher-to-teacher interactions in K-12. "When teachers trust each other, it is more likely they will develop greater confidence in their collective ability to be successful at meeting their goals" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, p. 127). Research confirms that high levels of trust among faculty is associated with improved collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), greater teacher satisfaction (Houtte, 2006), increased teacher effort (Lee, Zhang, & Yin, 2011), and improved student outcomes (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

Improving student outcomes must be accompanied with knowledge of how students are performing at various levels. As a result of explicit expectations of continual improvement at these institutions, faculty recognized and executed their responsibilities to work together to examine data related to student learning outcomes in courses, programs, and at the institutional level. As two community college recognized by the Aspen Institute, faculty confirmed they engage in self-reflection as well as team reflection which includes utilizing data to drive improvements in teaching and learning (The Aspen Institute, 2014b). Faculty reported "we are constantly talking about what we need to change in certain courses to make sure that we are

hammering in certain concepts … [and] reviewing and evaluating the course mapping and learning outcomes," "I'm really supportive of the people that teach before me because if they don't have what they need then I'm certainly not going to have what I need," and "we are always working together to tweak [instructional materials]." Collaborations were strong among these faculty and their colleagues and included honest and respectful conversations focused on teaching and learning practices.

The ability to have honest and respectful conversations demonstrates that relational trust is strong. In K-12 environments, high levels of relational trust fostered social discourse among teachers. The ability to listen and value the opinions of others was an important factor in realizing school improvements (Byrk & Schneider, 2002). Every faculty interviewed agreed that when working on success initiatives with their faculty colleagues there was no incivility and all conversations were respectful even when there were disagreements. As one faculty member shared "if we hit a snag we talk about it and everyone comes to the table to try to hammer it out." Another talked about having to "reign somebody in" who was not achieving successful student learning outcomes in a course but that it was not done with "incivility."

These faculty also perceived that their administrators, from the president to the department chair, had appropriate role expectations for the faculty role. When asked to share ways that leaders showed confidence in the expertise of faculty, the majority described leaders who trusted them to know what was best for students in the classroom. As one UCC math faculty involved in a program redesign described, leadership's "mindset is nobody knows our students like you do, so you design the curriculum. They were very supportive but hands off at the same time because they know that this is where we are the experts." As a result of administrators' trust

in their knowledge and abilities, faculty felt empowered to lead initiatives related to instructional practices.

Because student outcomes rely on the efforts of many, all parties are mutually dependent on one another to achieve and sustain organizational change. As previously described those dependencies can create vulnerabilities that inhibit engagement. However when relational trust is high, those vulnerabilities are reduced promoting action among all parties responsible for student success. To reduce vulnerabilities and increase trust, faculty must discern that others demonstrate the four qualities of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). When faculty perceived that those around them were highly effective in their roles, they shared examples that demonstrated behaviors reflective of competence, respect, integrity and personal regard for others indicating high levels of relational trust.

Faculty Learning is Integral to Student Learning

The integral role faculty play in student learning is supported by substantial research. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, faculty engagement is key to student success, which is particularly true for the population of students served by community colleges (Kuh et al., 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). However, understanding the role of faculty in student success does not always lead to a realization that faculty learning is key to student learning. Far too often faculty are expected to implement success initiatives without the requisite knowledge and abilities to achieve success. As the Aspen Institute (2014b) has emphasized, leaders must not only effectively communicate a student success vision but must also “ensure that all the institution’s work and resources aim toward that goal” (p. 12). Furthermore, to build a faculty culture of student success, leadership must demonstrate a commitment to student success by visibly devoting resources to efforts that are aimed at

improving them (The Aspen Institute, 2014a). Byrk and Schneider (2002) would equate this to demonstrating integrity; leaders who say the institution is focused on student success show consistency by confirming their words with real actions such as the allocation of resources. These two institutions have recognized that faculty learning is integral to student learning and have committed significant resources to ensure that faculty are well equipped to demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning.

As Stout (2018) also recognized in building the case for faculty engagement in the community college success agenda, “leaders must invest in Centers for Teaching and Learning” and ensure that “faculty are using inclusive evidence-based instructional practices to foster student learning.” Chickering and Gamson’s (1997) identified “adequate funding appropriate” for advancing a share vision as a leadership recommendation to increase faculty engagement. At both institutions invests are made in faculty learning. From on-campus centers designed for faculty learning, to training and conferences, to onboarding and mentoring experiences, to work-based internships, these institutions provide financial support for faculty to learn and become better at their practice.

Because faculty learning is viewed as integral to student learning at these institutions and substantial resources are devoted to improving faculty learning, well designed processes exist at these institutions to ensure that data is used systematically to examine student learning outcomes for continual improvements in instruction and that structured opportunities exist for faculty to work together to examine data and collaborate on improvements (The Aspen Institute, 2014b).

Two practices at these institutions provide opportunities for faculty to reflect on student outcomes. The first practice occurs as part of the faculty performance evaluation process. At PCC, feedback sessions occur periodically with middle leaders to discuss classroom observations

and other performance measures along with course specific data compared to institutional data. At UCC, faculty establish goals with key performance indicators (KPIs) as a part of their formal evaluation process. Throughout the year, chairs meet with faculty to collaborate on their progress toward achieving their goals by examining data related to their KPIs. A second way data is utilized to drive improvements is through structured collaborations among faculty to examine student learning outcomes. These occur through professional learning communities at PCC and through discipline-specific meetings focused on examining data to determine how modifications to instruction has impacted student learning at UCC.

When relational trust is high, faculty feel safe experimenting with new instructional methods and having open, respectful conversations with their colleagues and administrators about how they are working (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Faculty expressed feeling empowered to try new methods in their classrooms and were comfortable sharing honest results from those methods. One faculty member compared her experiences at another institution where there was pressure to be dishonest about results to how she feels at UCC.

> At this school, I feel like we get to try things and we get to tell it like it is. Even after last year's [initiative], we all got together and we got to discuss things, the good, the bad, the ugly. It's just a nice thing when you feel like your job doesn't depend on pretending that something is effective when it isn't.

When institutions recognize that faculty learning is vital to student learning, faculty are willing to proactively engage in improvement efforts in their classrooms. To examine the effectiveness of their efforts, these faculty desired opportunities to examine the results of those efforts to continually improve their practice and outcomes for students. When respect and integrity are present in their relationships with others, they feel secure in having open and honest

dialogue about the effectiveness of reform efforts and to improve them. As Bryk and Schneider (2002) have concluded when relational trust becomes an organizational property it enhances the organization's "collective capacities for more complex subsequent actions" (p. 137).

Genuine Care and Appreciation for Others is an Institutional Norm

Institutional climates that are positive create conditions where faculty can thrive (The Aspen Institute, 2014a; Chickering & Gamson, 1997). Byrk and Schneider (2002) identify personal regard for others as one quality individuals consider when discerning whether to trust others. Personal regard occurs when individuals are willing to go beyond their formal role obligations to show genuine care for others. Deliberate efforts were made at these two institutions to cultivate a culture where expressions of personal regard were customary. Personal regard was demonstrated by individuals at every level and in every direction, from top down, bottom up, and laterally.

Faculty felt genuinely cared for and appreciated by their colleagues. Many faculty indicated they felt like they were known as individuals and not just viewed as a person filling a position. These institutions are medium to large community colleges with multiple campuses spanning large geographical areas. However, this did not prevent leaders from showing care. Leaders, including the presidents, knew faculty by name, visited their classrooms, and reached out to them in times of hardship. Top leaders visited hospital rooms, showed up at funerals, and sent personalized notes of sympathy. Department chairs took the time and put forth the effort to know their faculty's talents and preferred styles of communication and then altered their own communication styles to provide individualized approaches to leading and motivating them. Fellow faculty stepped up to help out other faculty in times of need which extended from

covering classes to providing money during times of tragedy. Faculty had authentic friendships with their peers and spent time outside of the workplace socializing.

In addition to showing care, faculty felt valued and recognized for their contributions. Faculty accomplishments in the classroom were showcased at each institution in public ways. Faculty were identified to participate in high-stake interviews and share best practices with external entities. Leaders showed their appreciation through celebrations, acknowledgements, and rewards. In the Aspen Institute's publication, *Building a Faculty Culture of Student Success* (2014a), celebrating successes was a recommendation for keeping faculty engaged.
While only a few examples emerged related to appreciation during the interviews at UCC which included merit pay and board recognition for advanced degrees and publications, almost every faculty at PCC shared ways they were appreciated. In most cases, appreciation was shown through events associated with a comprehensive program to encourage and reward student and faculty engagement. During these events, top administrators shined the light on students and the faculty's role in creating their successes. As one faculty member described: "the President and VPs are getting emotional about … what we are doing in the classroom. They … praise the students but then refer back to [the success] is because of great faculty."

These varied experiences and expressions of care allow for low-risk interactions with others. Kochanek (2005) expanded upon Bryk and Schneider's seminal work on relational trust in the Chicago schools by examining how trust developed in those schools. She discovered that positive experiences promoted the growth of relational trust. Through low-risk interactions, such as the ones described above, individuals demonstrate respect and personal regard for others. Kochanek (2005) found that these low-risk interactions were necessary precursors to high-risk interactions which might include observing classrooms, sharing failures, and collaborating for

improvement. Expressions of personal regard created positive environments at these community colleges and faculty were genuinely happy in their jobs. These faculty were also willing to engage in collaborations, expose their vulnerabilities through honest conversations, and be truthful and transparent about the data related to their efforts. Therefore, it is likely that low-risk interactions set the stage for the higher-risk interactions that were necessary for implementing comprehensive reform efforts to improve student success.

Faculty Have a Positive Mindset

A positive faculty mindset was not an anticipated theme of this research study. However, this theme emerged strongly during the interview process. Engaged faculty held specific attitudes and beliefs that influenced their involvement in comprehensive student success efforts. The nature of this study did not allow the researcher to make any determinations about whether faculty held these beliefs as part of their own dispositions or personalities, or if these beliefs were a consequence of the positive environment in which they worked, or some combination of both. Byrk and Schneider's (2002) concept of relational trust includes integrity as a key quality. Beyond just being true to one's word, integrity is also identified by being guided to improve student success because of a moral and ethical imperative to do the right thing. These faculty had perceptions on student success that indicated they were guided by personal integrity.

In order to engage in comprehensive success initiatives, individuals must be open to change. The faculty interviewed welcomed change. Some welcomed change because change had been their "normal." Others recognized change as "the new normal." A faculty member expressed her openness to change by saying "if we didn't do things differently, we wouldn't get any different results." And others shared that it was just part of who they are. We are "a bunch of do-ers" and "I'm very open to new ideas." Some had been resistant to change because they

"were old school" or didn't want to get out of their "comfort zone" but had come to believe in change after seeing results. While the faculty were selected for this study because they were significantly engaged in change, they did share that others who had not been open to change had struggled at the two institutions. Both sets of faculty alluded to turnover as a result of the level of change occurring at their institutions. Byrk and Schneider (2002) discovered that principals who needed to reshape the school vision to promote student success often also had to reshape the composition of their teachers. As confirmed by document analysis, these institutions have had to make changes to their personnel in order to advance their missions and shared visions of student success. The faculty interviewed perceived these changes to be positive with the result being a clear majority of faculty who wanted to be change agents and improve student outcomes.

Not only did these faculty believe in their own efficacy to make impactful changes, they believed that their students were capable of learning and being successful within and beyond the walls of their institutions. Kuh et al. (2006) determined that faculty having a growth mindset related to their students' abilities to learn was positively associated with credential completion. These faculty had a growth mindset about their students and believed that if the right conditions existed at their institutions then students would thrive. Many of them shared their students' stories and acknowledged the barriers that they must overcome just to show up for class. They recognized the potential in their students and believed they had the ability to learn. The belief in their students was accompanied by a belief in their own abilities to teach. As a UCC faculty passionately stated: "I want to do the best I can, especially by the students, and I want them to have opportunities like I did, I want them to reach their goals, and to have a good quality of life." A PCC faculty said "if you are willing to engage them, they are willing to do anything" to learn. Finally, faculty were energized by their students and excited to put forth extra effort to help them

learn. As a UCC faculty member expressed “then you give them one piece of information and they get it. I think whenever you see that moment for your students that makes you hungry for more of those moments … those are the ones that drive you to keep doing it.”

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of relational trust in engaging community college faculty in comprehensive student success reform efforts. The majority of the research investigating relational trust has occurred at the K-12 level. One conclusion from that research is that when relational trust is high, organizational change is deep (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moren & Hoy, 2000). Analysis of data from this study suggests that these two institutions, who have been recognized by the Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence, are experiencing deep change.

This study applied Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) framework to determine if community college faculty identified the four qualities of relational trust as influential in their engagement efforts. As described in this chapter, each of the four qualities influenced faculty’s discernment of the trustworthiness of others and contributed to the creation of a cohesive professional community striving toward a shared vision of student success.

In general, the two community colleges shared similar perceptions of relational trust. Very few differences were identified between the two institutions. Two are noteworthy. At both institutions, some department chairs supervised faculty outside their own discipline. At PCC this was never mentioned by faculty as influencing their engagement or relationships with their chairs. However, at UCC a number of faculty, particularly in the English and math areas, mentioned the incongruence. While they did not describe their department chair’s abilities as a leader negatively, they did indicate that it was more difficult to collaborate with the department

chair on discipline-specific initiatives. The second difference was PCC's unique program to spark engagement which significantly contributed to a strong sense of community. A common language existed around this program that was used by almost every faculty interviewed. This program was inspiring and generated exceptional levels of engagement across the college according to those interviewed. This engagement extends to everyone at the college including students.

As community college engage in transformational efforts to improve student outcomes, it is important to understand what unites them toward common goals and enhances their success. This research study provides initial insight into the interpersonal qualities of community colleges that promote relational trust and engage faculty in comprehensive reform efforts.

Implications

This study has useful theoretical and practical implications for practice. These implications have value for leaders, faculty, researchers, and philanthropic organizations collectively working toward the goal of improving college completion rates and other student success outcomes.

Theoretical Implications

This study has important theoretical implications as the findings supported the relational trust framework of Byrk and Schneider (2002) within a community college setting. In the book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015), the authors introduced the concept of relational trust as an important institutional quality for cultivating faculty and staff engagement in comprehensive and systemic reform efforts in community colleges. Primarily these researchers provided leaders with an understanding of how to actively cultivate such trust through the demonstration of personal integrity, professional competence,

and collegial respect. However, no empirical research has examined faculty perceptions of relational trust as a motivator to engage in institutional reform efforts at community colleges. This study adds to the applicability of the framework by demonstrating its use in a community college setting. It further confirms that competence, respect, integrity, and personal regard are qualities that community college faculty utilize to discern the trustworthiness of others. When those qualities are expressed through regular social exchanges, relational trust levels are high and faculty are significantly engaged in comprehensive student success initiatives at community colleges.

A potential shortcoming of the framework is that it does not explicitly take into account the mindset of faculty. In this research, a positive mindset strongly emerged as a factor in faculty engagement. Through the quality of integrity a connection can be made to faculty mindset in that these faculty were guided by a moral and ethical imperative to improve the outcomes of their students through engagement in reform efforts. Other internal characteristics such as faculty efficacy, high levels of intrinsic motivation, and having an internal locus of control may support an intrapersonal level to the framework.

Practical Implications

This study suggests several implications for practice for community college leaders and faculty seeking to comprehensively redesign their institutions to achieve improved outcomes.

Develop meaningful relationships. Faculty in this study expressed the importance of feeling valued, appreciated, and cared for at their institutions. These feelings derived from personal relationships with their leaders and their peers. Kochanek's (2005) research suggests that interactions that allow individuals to get to know one another lay the necessary foundation for developing a deeper level of trust that will eventually promote a culture of change. From the

findings of this study, leaders and faculty created structured opportunities for interpersonal interactions that were not always focused on work-related activities and were intentional about designing activities to facilitate collaboration among faculty and across the organization.

Invest resources in faculty learning. Leaders can demonstrate integrity by allocating resources to support the vision of student success they communicate. Stout (2018) proposes that "leaders must invest in Centers for Teaching and Learning" in the next iteration of community college redesign. Faculty at community colleges are often expected to do more with less as a result of the funding models at these institutions. However, institutions who engage in transparent budgeting processes and connect student success priorities to that process have been successful in promoting faculty learning and engagement (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; UCC document analysis). When resources are limited, leaders can devote time and space for faculty to share innovative practices and strategies with one another.

Utilize a department chair model. Institutional structures vary widely across community colleges. However the relationships these faculty had with their department chairs were instrumental in their engagement. The most effective department chairs were those who had both effective leadership and management skills and had teaching experience in the discipline of the faculty they supervised. Faculty identified department chairs as the individuals that most often supported them, shared information with them, and mentored them. Cohesion as a team with departments was a strong factor in promoting engagement in efforts to improve student learning and success.

Create a culture of continual improvement. Numerous lines of evidence confirm that creating culture of continual improvement is an essential component of successful community college reform efforts (The Aspen Institute, 2014a, 2014b; Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015;

Stout, 2018). This study found that faculty who have clear expectations to continually improve and work in environments with high levels of trust did not view data as an opportunity to be written up, to receive a bad evaluation, or be fired. Instead data was used to identify what worked and what did not work to inform continual improvements in their practice. Faculty welcomed data from the institutional level to the individual level and were open to discussions about where improvements were needed.

Align hiring practices to the qualities of exceptional faculty. The faculty interviewed for this research demonstrated qualities of exceptional instructors. These faculty were passionate about students, collaborated effectively with others, demonstrated collegial respect for their peers, were open to change, and had positive mindsets. Hiring practices should be closely examined and redesigned to attract, hire, and retain faculty with desirable characteristics that fit the mission of community colleges. The two institutions examined in this study lost employees who did not share the vision of student success promoted by new leadership and therefore they were able to hire new employees who had qualities needed to move the college in the right direction.

Involve faculty from the start. Too often institutions began community college reform efforts by addressing structural and procedural changes that are easier to address than improving teaching and learning. To impact significant change, faculty must be involved from the beginning. Their input and expertise is important in initiating and designing initiatives to impact student learning. As Stout (2018) recently stated, reform efforts "have lacked an explicit focus on teaching and learning as a primary lever for institutional transformation." While the other modifications to structures and procedures are important, it is unlikely these changes will lead to

significant improvements in student outcomes if the teaching and learning environment is not examined as well.

Directions for Future Research

This study was designed to explore the role of relational trust in promoting faculty engagement in community colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. Because it was exploratory in nature and the first to examine relational trust through the lens of community college faculty, the initial findings are an important foundation for future research. This section provides suggestions for future research to expand the knowledge base on the role of relational trust in faculty engagement in student success initiatives at community colleges.

First, this study was focused on colleges that have been recognized for being exceptional in promoting student success. This was intentional and allowed the researcher to examine two examples of community colleges who are successful at engaging faculty in reform efforts. Beginning with this sample allowed the researcher to interview engaged faculty with high levels of relational trust about their perceptions of their leaders and peers. As a result, there was minimal variation among the faculty in how they perceived their institutions. Future research may focus on selecting a random sample of faculty to get more varied perspectives on relational trust and more diverse mindsets or a comparison of institutions that have and have not been recognized by the Aspen Institute of Community College Excellence.

Second, Bryk and Schneider's (2002) framework of relational trust indicates that all parties responsible for student success contribute to the social exchanges that collectively create the distinct social patterns that generates relational trust. For relational trust to become an organization-wide resource there must be synchrony among the expectations and role obligations

of all partners in the institutions. Community colleges have very different structures than primary and secondary schools. In particular, community colleges have a host of support staff that are instrumental in achieving improved outcomes. Therefore, future research focused on all the parties responsible for student success at community colleges and how the interplay among those roles contribute to relational trust and the engagement of all partners is important.

Third, the perspective of students is missing from this research study. While parents are often included in the relational trust research studies at the K-12 level, students are not. In the case of community college research, students would be an appropriate unit of analysis and add to the understanding of how relational trust contributes to their engagement in the learning environment.

Fourth, this qualitative study would be complemented and the findings strengthened with corroborating evidence from quantitative or mixed method studies. These types of studies may be able to more thoroughly examine which qualities of relational trust are most influential in faculty engagement and identify the nuances within and between community colleges. This study aimed to address these questions but the basic qualitative nature of this study as well as the purposeful sampling of faculty made it difficult to decipher where those nuances existed.

Finally, a longitudinal study that examined faculty engagement across the life of a reform effort would contribute to the understanding of how trust influences engagement during the initial stages of getting buy-in, at the middle stages of sustaining efforts, and then when the reform becomes institutionalized and a part of the community college student experience. This study relied on the memories of individuals to describe the different stages of various student success initiatives and many faculty acknowledged it was difficult to recall relevant details. A

longitudinal study would capture how trust develops with faculty throughout an initiative and which qualities of relational trust are most influential in promoting their engagement.

Conclusions

To meet national completion goals and address the economic imperative of creating a skilled workforce and improving social mobility, community colleges have received not only increased attention but significant funding from both the federal government and private foundations to improve student outcomes and the competitive advantage of our nation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2017; Drummer & Marshburn, 2014). For the last two decades, reform efforts have swept across community colleges with an early focus on more traditional models of reform aimed at “fixing” certain parts of the student experience (i.e. advising, developmental education, instructional supports) and a more recent focus on reforms that comprehensively redesign the entire student pathway (Bailey, 2017). However, most of these reform efforts have failed to engage faculty in meaningful and significant improvements in assessing student learning and continually improving the teaching and learning environment at community colleges. In a recent address to educators, Karen Stout (2018), President and CEO, stated “creating greater urgency for teaching and learning in institutional reform is long overdue.”

Research is needed to better understanding what institutional reform around teaching and learning would entail. While structural changes will be necessary, interpersonal qualities will also influence the success of efforts to improve teaching and learning. The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to examine a specific interpersonal quality, relational trust, and how it influenced faculty engagement in comprehensive student success initiatives. To achieve that purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 faculty from two community

colleges recognized by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. The findings from this study suggest that engaged faculty feel high levels of relational trust when: (a) environments are collaborative with a shared vision of student success, (b) faculty are surrounded by highly effective individuals, (c) faculty learning is integral to student learning, (d) genuine care and appreciation for others is an institutional norm, and (e) faculty have a positive mindset.

This study has important theoretical implications as the findings supported the relational trust framework of Byrk and Schneider (2002) within a community college setting and confirmed that competence, respect, integrity, and personal regard are qualities that community college faculty utilize to discern the trustworthiness of others. Given the spotlight currently focused on community college as a viable avenue for improving the economic mobility of our nation and to restore the competitive advantage of our nation (Bumphus, 2015), identifying ways for community colleges to achieve better students outcomes is of vital importance. The findings from this study provide some insight into practices that achieve high levels of relational trust which can enhance the organization's "collective capacities for more complex subsequent actions" (Byrk & Schneider, 2002, p. 137). Leaders of community colleges should make commitments to developing meaningful relationships with their faculty and staff. Executive leaders and boards should invest resources to support faculty learning which will in turn improve student learnings. Organizational structures should provide a middle leader who has the capacity to provide leadership and management skills in support of faculty and optimally have content knowledge related to the disciplines of their faculty. Hiring practices should ensure a fit between the institutional mission and vision and the characteristics of the faculty member. Finally, faculty should be intimately and actively involved in student success reform efforts from their origination. These recommendations can be utilized by community college leaders to create

institutional cultures that cultivate trust and promote faculty engagement to improve student outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Initial Solicitation to Vice President

Email Script for Contacting Academic Leaders (to identify participants)

Hello, I'm Susan Burleson and I'm a doctoral student at North Carolina State University and work at Davidson County Community College. I am emailing you to ask for your assistance in helping me to identify faculty and department chairs who might be willing to participate in a doctoral research study. This study combines two research interests to examine the role of relational trust and communication in engaging faculty in comprehensive student success initiatives.

To examine these factors, I am looking for faculty who been engaged in recent comprehensive educational reform initiatives aimed at improving student success at your institution. I would also like to interview the department chairs for each of the identified faculty to understand their perceptions of communication and relational trust with faculty during comprehensive reform efforts.

Can you think of 6-8 pairs of faculty and department chairs who have worked at your college for at least 2 years, some from the transfer area and some from the career technical area, who would be a good fit for this research project? Can you tell me briefly about the student success initiative each pair is involved with and what role each has played?

Do you have any questions about the study?

Thank you for your help. I will be reaching out to each of these individuals by email to see if they are interested in volunteering to participate in this project. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (XXX)XXX-XXXX (researcher's phone number).

Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Faculty

Dear [insert name],

[Insert personalized greeting and how we have been connected, e.g. through nomination by academic leader]

I am coordinating a visit to your campus on [insert dates] to conduct dissertation research, which focuses on the role of communication and relational trust with faculty in their engagement in comprehensive reform efforts at community colleges to improve student success. My colleague and I will be interviewing faculty and their department chairs through interviews conducted by phone, video or in person. We would value your insights about your engagement in student success initiatives and specifically your perceptions of communication and relational trust with your department chair during comprehensive reform efforts. If you are willing to participate, I ask that you participate in a 45-60 minute interview at a time and location of your choosing. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview to ensure it is an authentic representation of what was conveyed during the interview. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up phone or email conversation for clarifications.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. A decision to participate (or not) will have no bearing on your employment activities or status. If you are willing to assist, please let me know by responding to this email. Once I hear from you, I will follow up with more details about next steps.

Thank you for your support of this project! I look forward to talking with you soon should you choose to participate.

Susan Burleson, Doctoral Candidate
Adult and Community College Education
North Carolina State University

Appendix C: Informed Consent for Research

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Factors Promoting Faculty Engagement During Student Success Reform Efforts at Community Colleges: The Role of Communication with Middle Leaders and Relational Trust (#14324)

Principal Investigator: Susan Burleson and Connie Wolfe

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Audrey Jaeger

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of how faculty communicate with middle leaders and experience relational trust at institutions that have effectively and actively engaged faculty in improving student success.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those who participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above or the NC State IRB office as noted below.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of the study is to explore factors that promote faculty engagement in comprehensive student success reform efforts. In particular, this study will explore the role of communication with middle leaders and relational trust in community colleges.

Am I eligible to be a participant in this study?
In order to be a participant in this study you must be a faculty supervisor (i.e. department chair) or faculty member who has participated in a student success reform effort at your college. You cannot participate in this study if you have not participated in student success reform efforts at your college.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 45-60-minute interview through phone, video or on campus at a time and location of your choosing. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview to ensure it is an authentic representation of what was conveyed during the interview. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up phone conversation for clarifications.

Risks and Benefits
You will be asked questions about the conditions of your work environment. If you find any of these questions to be too sensitive in nature, you may skip any question you prefer not to answer or to stop the interview all together with any record of your involvement destroyed immediately.

Appropriate measures will be taken to protect your confidentiality; however there are potential risks that could result from a breach of confidentiality. A breach of confidentiality could result in psychological harm (in the form of embarrassment, guilt, stress, etc.) or social/economic harm (in the form of alterations to your relationships and/or employability).

There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. The indirect benefits are knowledge gained that can assist community colleges in improving faculty engagement in student success reform efforts, thereby improving student success in community colleges.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. You will be identified by name in order to follow-up if necessary. Identifiers will be de-linked from the data and managed by use of codes. The identifiers, data files, and key will be managed and stored by the researchers in secure, password-protected files. Encryption will be used to protect the master list while stored. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Compensation
You will not receive anything for participating.

What if you are a college employee?
Participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment at your institution. See the Risk and Benefits section above for more information about potential risks.

What if you have questions about this study?
If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researchers, Susan Burleson at [address], sededmon@ncsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX, or Connie Wolfe at [address], crwolfe@ncsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the NC State IRB Office via email at irb-director@ncsu.edu or via phone at 1.919.515.4514. You can also find out more information about research, why you would or would not want to be in research, questions to ask as a research participant, and more information about your rights by going to this website: http://go.ncsu.edu/research-participant

Consent To Participate
"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Participant's signature_____Date _____

Investigator's signature_____ Date _____

Appendix D: Faculty Interview Protocol and Questions

Study Participants

Paired Department Chair and Faculty

- 6-8 department chairs (first-line faculty supervisors) at each college
- 6-8 full-time faculty (a faculty member who reports to the department chair) at each college
- Include representation from general education and career-technical departments.
- Have been at the college, in these positions, for at least 2-3 years.
- Department Chairs and faculty will respond to the questions regarding the same change effort or change initiative.

Faculty Interview Protocol

I have worked as a faculty member and department chair in community colleges and have since moved on to upper administrative roles. I have participated in student success reform efforts at community colleges as a faculty member and a chair and believe that faculty engagement is a crucial component of successful change efforts in community colleges. I believe that the interactions between faculty and chairs play an important role in achieving successful student outcomes. Despite this, not a lot of research has been done on the role of faculty and department chair communication and relational trust during change efforts in community colleges.

Definitions

Communication - a process through which organizational members interact verbally, nonverbally, electronically, and in writing with individuals and groups in formal and informal settings.

Change process – while change can be unpredictable and nonlinear, the change process can be broadly defined in phases with a beginning, middle, and end. Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model of change describes the process as unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. The system must first be thawed from its present way of doing things, then move toward the new way of doing things, and finally stabilize and "freeze" the new way of doing things so it becomes the new norm.

Social support – interaction that addresses the anxiety and fear that often surrounds change and focuses on change users' emotional needs.

Relational trust – is viewed as an organizational property that develops through the repeated social exchanges that take place in a group setting. These exchanges incorporate a dynamic interplay of respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Through repeated interactions, individuals understand their own role obligations and hold some expectations about the role obligations of the others.

Faculty Interview Questions

General

1. How long have you worked here?
2. What is your position at the college?
3. What other jobs have you held here or at other community colleges?

Engagement in Student Success Initiative

4. Can you provide an example of a student success initiative with which you are familiar?
5. Can you explain where the college is in the initiative?
6. Walk me through your experience of the initiative.

General Communication

7. How have you interacted with your department chair during this initiative?

Information Sharing

8. How was information about the change effort shared by your department chair throughout the change process:
    a. during the initial stages of moving away from the old way of doing things,
    b. during implementation, as you moved toward the new way of doing things, and
    c. during the final stages, as the new way of doing things became the new norm?

Vision and Motivation

9. How did your department chair communicate a vision for the change effort throughout the change process (unfreezing, changing, and refreezing)?
    a. Can you give me a specific example of what that looked like?
10. How did the chair motivate you throughout the process?
    a. Can you give me a specific example of what you mean by…?

Social Support

11. How did you receive social support from your department chair throughout the change effort (unfreezing, changing, and refreezing)?
    a. As a reminder, social support is interaction that addresses the anxiety and fear that often surrounds change and focuses on change users' emotional needs.

Conclusion

12. Is there any other information you'd like to share with me about your communication with your department chair during this initiative?

Trust

13. How important has trust in administration been in engaging you in the work?
    a. As a reminder, relational trust is viewed as an organizational property that develops through the repeated social exchanges that take place in a group setting. These exchanges incorporate a dynamic interplay of respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Through repeated interactions, individuals understand their own role obligations and hold some expectations about the role obligations of the others.

14. How has the level of trust between faculty and administration changed during this initiative?

15. How important has trust in your faculty colleagues been in engaging you in this work?

16. How has the level of trust among faculty changed during this initiative?

Respect

17. In what ways have college leaders been genuinely attentive to your needs, concerns and frustrations related to this initiative?
    a. Can you give me a specific example?

18. In what ways have they demonstrated confidence in the expertise of faculty?

19. When working with your faculty colleagues on initiatives, how well does the group listen and show value for each other's opinions?

Competence

20. Describe the confidence you have in college leaders to effectively carry out their core responsibilities.

21. How well do these leaders collaborate with others to collectively achieve desired outcomes for students?

22. Describe the confidence you have in faculty as a whole to effectively carry out their core responsibilities.

23. How well do faculty collaborate with others to collectively achieve desired outcomes for students?

Integrity

24. In what ways have college leaders shown dependability (demonstrated follow through on promises/obligations, carried out duties with integrity, showed consistency between what is said and done, and taken responsibility for their actions)?

25. In what ways have faculty shown dependability (demonstrated follow through on promises/obligations, carried out duties with integrity, showed consistency between what is said and done, and taken responsibility for their actions)?

Personal Regard

26. In what ways have college leaders shown genuine care for others as individuals and been willing to go beyond their formal roles to show that care?

27. In what ways have your faculty colleagues shown genuine care for each other as individuals and been willing to go beyond their formal roles to show that care?

Conclusion

28. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your engagement in student success efforts at your institution?

29. Do you have any questions about this research project you'd like to ask?