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University and Community College Administrators' Perceptions of the Transfer Process

for Underrepresented Students: Analysis of Policy and Practice

by

Ruth C. Slotnick

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Adult, Career and Higher Education
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Donald A. Dellow, Ed.D.
Valerie J. Janesick, Ph.D.
W. Robert Sullins, Ed.D.
Thomas E. Miller, Ed.D.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in the loving memory Dr. Paula Frank Learner, my irreplaceable great aunt, intellectual role model, and consummate teacher of life. Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1907 she was one of the first females to earn her medical degree in 1934 at the University of Leipzig pioneering research on acid reflux (published in 1938). Each time we discussed my dissertation at length (up to three weeks before her death) she would always reply in her thick German accent, "Yes, I understand your research, but what are you doing to *fix* the American school system?" She died on September 28, 2008 at the age of 101 in Boynton Beach, Florida after residing in the United States since 1935 and practicing medicine in Buffalo, New York for 40 years.

Acknowledgements

Although writing a dissertation can be a seemingly solitary act, it entails the unwavering efforts of an invisible community behind the success of the one-woman show. I would therefore like to thank all the wonderful human beings who helped me "to keep the momentum going." First, to my chair, Dr. Donald Dellow who championed the oversight of this dissertation. Second, to the members of my committee, Dr. Janesick, Dr. Robert Sullins, and Dr. Thomas Miller, for their thoughtful guidance and careful critique of my work. In particular, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Valerie Janesick, my cherished mentor, who entertained countless philosophical discussions on methodology and spurred me on. Several colleagues have steadily guided me, too. Nancy Mills and Tamar Ascher—my qualitative soul mates. Thank you. To my good friends Ronald and Christine Olney who held up a mirror for me to reflect. To my loving parents and brothers who unfailing asked, "How are things progressing?" To my brother Joseph Slotnick on his literary assistance. I would also like to thank my peer and outside reviewers as well as Myrna Patterson—my wordsmith extraordinaire. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the college and university administrators who freely shared their time and insights to talk with me. Finally to Katie Scott, who unwaveringly endured more on this journey than we ever wanted or expected.

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ABSTRACT

This study describes and explains purposefully selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students. The theoretical framework that undergirds this dissertation is three-fold: social constructivism, philosophical hermeneutics, and interpretive policy analysis (Yanow, 2000). In particular, the local level knowledge consisting of six university and six community college administrators (also referred to as policy implementers), was assessed through face-to-face interviews, document analysis, and field notes. The researcher reflective journal (Janesick, 2004) is asserted as a crucial link to analyzing the three frames as way to record the history of the project and integrate the ever-present voice of the researcher while lending credibility to the research findings. All three cases were examined for themes and subthemes using cross-case analysis guided by the study's research questions. Three types of policy implementers were apparent: policy experts, technocrats, and generalists. Three categories also emerged: policy proximity, policy fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented students. An administrator's policy proximity was found to be reasonably congruent with his or her policy fluency. This held

true across all implementer types. Perceptions of underrepresented students, however, varied greatly; some administrators saw no differences, while others perceived major differences for underrepresented transfer students. A major finding of this study—that all administrators perceive no differences in the state articulation agreement for low-income, first generation in college, and racial and ethnic minority groups—ran counter to a recent study by Dowd, Chase; Bordoloi Pazich, and Bensimon (2009) which found seven state transfer policies to be mostly colorblind.

Future studies on the transfer process incorporating more community college and university administrators both in Florida and in other states could continue to explore how different policy actors interpret and understand state and institutional policy; especially for the growing populations of underrepresented minority groups. The researcher reflective journal may be a useful tool for policy analysts to record more intensive micro-rich views of how policy knowledge is generated, perceived, and perpetuated (or not) from the inside.

Chapter One

Introduction

Transfer access from the community college to the four-year institution has received much scholarly attention over the past four decades. As a route to the baccalaureate, it is still the most heavily traveled path to higher education, especially for low-income, first-generation in college, and racial and ethnic minorities (Rosenbaum, Person, & Deil-Amen, 2006). Both state-mandated and inter-institutional articulation agreements, along with institutional policies and practices have helped to facilitate the transition from the community college to the four-year institution. Common course numbering systems, transfer blocks of course credit, specially designated transfer centers, transfer orientations, and transfer advisors, have also been used to expedite this process. While several higher education policy scholars have emphasized the need for more research that makes educational policy more transparent (Rosenbaum, 2007), that encourages clear communication between two and four-year institutions when implementing transfer and articulation agreements (Ignash & Townsend, 2000), that integrates useful conceptual frameworks and theoretical models in policy implementation studies (Richardson, 2004), that focuses on bridging policy research with institutional practice (McLendon, 2003), that underscores the importance the examining state policy for racial and ethnic biases (Dowd, et al., 2009), only a nominal amount of studies have

centered on problems with policy implementation at the institutional level including the garnering of the perceptions of university and community college administrators.

Examining where policy implementation breakdowns occur at the institutional level may help to determine transfer policy effectiveness (Person, Rosenbaum, & Deil-Amen, 2006; Rifkin, 1996). Furthermore, scholars researching transfer access for rapidly increasing underrepresented populations (i.e. low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students), have noted that these policies receive the least amount of policy attention (Dowd, et al., 2009; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). This finding is particularly troublesome given that some states are experiencing a dramatic growth of underrepresented students moving through the K-12 pipeline to community colleges, with a large percentage of these students indicating their intent to transfer to a four-year institution. Despite repeated calls to states and institutions to repair the policies and practices in order to smooth the transfer pathway, barriers to access still exist and continue to expand for underrepresented transfer students (Person, et al., 2006). This is a growing concern for higher education scholars and state-level policymakers alike who point to the widening income and racial and ethnic minority participation gaps in higher education and who question the future of an uneducated American workforce (Callan, Ewell, Finney & Jones, 2007; GAO, 2006; Laden, 2004; Reindl, 2007).

Transfer access is a major concern for low-income students in Florida who enter the community college as the principal route to the baccalaureate. According to the US Census Report (Campbell, 1997), by 2025, Florida is expected to be the third most populated state in the nation, with a growing number of racial and ethnic minority public

high school graduates. A recent policy report by the Western Interstate Commission for

Higher Education (2008), *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School*

Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022, projects that Florida will see

profound changes in the demographics of its secondary education graduates: 78%

increase in Hispanics, 76% increase in Asian/Pacific Islanders, 11% increase in Black

non-Hispanics, and a 16% increase in American Indian/Alaskan Natives. By comparison,

a 1% increase in Whites is expected.

Recent budget cuts in the Florida State University System (SUS) have resulted in

drastic enrollment reductions and policy changes for transfer students. For example, in

Fall 2007, the University of South Florida (USF) admitted 5,026 transfer students. For

Fall 2008, approximately 3,200 students will be admitted (L.E. Brigman, personal

communication, March 23, 2008). This 35% enrollment reduction—along with increases

in grade point averages required for students transferring without an Associate of Arts

(AA) degree—will mean that many students will not be accepted at USF. Such policy

changes place emphasis on the community college AA as a means to success and transfer

access. If Florida is placing more weight on the AA for successful transfer, then the

states and institutions that accept these students may want to evaluate their program

mechanisms to assure that institutional policies are in compliance with state rules.

Another viable but contested pathway to the baccalaureate degree in Florida has

been through the Community College Baccalaureate (CCB). Presently, fourteen

community colleges have expanded their institutional missions by adding four-year

programs to meet the widening demand for professional degrees in their state, while

increasing access to higher education for underrepresented groups. Florida leads the

nation in the number of community colleges offering CCBs, which may accelerate over

the next few years due to severe budget cuts and changes in the admission requirements

for the eleven Florida state universities as institutions curb enrollments in response to

these financial constraints. Proponents of this model believe that the community college

is poised to expand its open access objective of conferring baccalaureate degrees (Floyd,

Skolnik, & Walker, 2005), while opponents view the incorporation of the CCB into the

community college as institutional drift and mission creep. They believe that the

community college should aim to promote transfer access to the university for

baccalaureate degree attainment (Eaton, 2005; Townsend, 2005; Wattenberger, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Despite a student's socio-economic class, educational background, race and

ethnicity when pursuing a baccalaureate degree attempts to transfer from a community

college to a four-year institution, his or her transition can be stymied by personal and

institutional barriers that prevent smooth access. Personal barriers identified include

transfer shock (Hills, 1965), in adequate academic preparation (Townsend, 1995), and

social and academic integration issues (Astin, 1984; Gratto, Gratto, Henry, & Miller,

2002; Kuh, 2000; Laanan, 2001; Tinto, 1993).

Institutional barriers, on the other hand, have received considerable less attention.

Encumbrances include K-20 policy signaling issues (Bueschel & Venezia, 2006; Kirst &

Venezia, 2001), policy issues related to remedial education and disadvantaged

populations (Shaw, 2001), communication breakdowns between the two and four-year

sector (Laden, 2004; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006), problems with statewide

articulation agreements (Dowd, et al., 2009; Rifkin, 1996; Roska & Keith, 2008; Shulock & Moore, 2007; Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Zamani, 2001), inconsistent academic advising (Britt & Hirt, 1999; Lee, 2001; Hagedorn, Moon, Cypers, Maxwell, & Lester, 2006; Ignash, 2008), and social equity issues for minority students (Huber, Huidor, Malagon Sanchez, & Solozano, 2006; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso & Solozano, 2006).

With increasing numbers of underrepresented students transferring from the community to the university, institutional barriers must be identified and addressed (Rosenbaum, et al., 2006). Community college and university administrators responsible for overseeing and/or implementing state-level and institutional policies and practices related to transfer, may be unaware of institutional obstacles inhibiting the underrepresented populations of students. However, while an extensive body of literature addresses transfer issues between community colleges and their four-year counterparts, few qualitative studies explore the perceptions of administrators (Cedja & Taylor, 2001; Perna & Scott, 2008). This study applies a methodological framework of interpretive policy analysis (how policy is perceived), social constructivism (how meaning is constructed), and philosophical hermeneutics (how words are interpreted) are employed to examine the emergent themes from twelve semi-structured interviews with administrators at one large urban research university and one of its community college feeder institutions in Florida.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain purposely selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students.

Research Questions

The following exploratory questions guided the collection and analysis of information from the interviewees to describe and explain university and community college administrators' perceptions on the transfer process for underrepresented students.

1. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

2. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of institutional policy and practice in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

3. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' suggestions for improving the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

Importance of the Study

The importance of this qualitative study is three-fold: (1) to contribute to the understanding of policy implementation theory and practice in higher education research,

(2) to provide policy recommendations at the institutional level, which could refine strategies for retention, and remove barriers within the policy implementation process itself, and ultimately (3) to provide recommendations to improve transfer access and improved baccalaureate degree attainment for low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students. Since the majority of empirical studies on transfer access have been quantitative (e.g. Adelman, 1999, 2004, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2006), this study solely relies on qualitative methods for data collection and analysis.

Methods

A total of twelve university and community college administrators in Florida were purposely selected to describe and explain their perceptions of Florida's statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students. Selected interviewees included academic deans, vice provosts, articulation officers, enrollment directors, directors of admissions, directors of transfer services, directors of academic services, and diversity and equity coordinators. The primary sources of data for this study were interview transcripts (Appendix A), state level documents, reflective journal entries (Appendix B), and field notes (Appendix C).

Upon informed consent, individual interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and sent via email for participants to review for accuracy and clarity. Telephone calls and/or e-mail follow-ups with participants were sought in advance in the case further clarification of the interview was needed. To analyze the data, the interviews were originally coded and sub-grouped into hermeneutic families to identify themes units

by hand and using Atlas-ti (Appendix D). A final list of categories and codes were compiled (Appendix E). The topics that emerged from these first-hand accounts were analyzed using cross-case analysis as a way to compare and contrast university and community college administrators' perceptions of the transfer process. Validation of the data included interviewee member checks of their transcriptions; one outside reviewer, and two peer reviewers (Appendix F) who examined the results to triangulate the data by crosschecking participants' responses to questions. Reflective journal entries recorded throughout the course of the study along with field notes serve as useful repositories for documenting first impressions, integrating theoretical literature, and exploring ideas for further study, also lend credibility to the research findings.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are two-fold: first, the total number of selected administrators should be reduced to half and each individual should be interviewed twice. Two face-to-face interviews would have increased the richness and thickness of the descriptive data while deeply probing the nuances of perceptions not fully captured in a single interview. Next, the research questions could be strengthened to focus more on an administrator's definition of state policy and of underrepresented transfer students. Perhaps this may have provided further insights into each individual's belief system and how local knowledge is understood and shared. As Yanow (2000) states, "The 'data' of interpretive analysis are the words, symbolic objects, and acts of policy-relevant actors along with policy texts, plus the meanings these artifacts have for them" (p. 27).

Definitions of Terms

  Policy. This study follows Jenkins' (1978) definition of policy as, "a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve" (as cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 2003, p. 6).

  Policy implementation. "In its most general form the act of 'implementation' presupposes a prior act, particularly the 'cognitive act' of formulating what needs to be done and making a decision on that" (Hill & Hupe, 2002, p. 4).

  Transfer intent. When students indicate their intent to transfer from one higher education institution to another.

  Transfer student. A transfer student is any student who officially transfers from one institution to another, and when the new institution becomes the "home campus". This study will focus exclusively on vertical transfers, on moving from a 2-year college to a 4-year institution, and on transfer.

  Transfer process. The transfer process includes both the process of a student moving from one a community college to a four-year institution and the articulation of the policies that guide the transfer of course credits between institutions.

Underrepresented students. In this study, the term refers to low-income, minorities, and first-generation college transfer students. This definition was adapted from Dowd et al. (2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the purpose of this study: to describe and explain selected administrators' perceptions of transfer policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented students. While a rich body of quantitative literature addresses issues of transfer between community colleges and their four-year counterparts, few studies probe administrators' perceptions from the perspective of policy implementers.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain purposely selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students. This literature review will consist of five sections: (1) an overview of policy implementation research and policies studies on transfer, (2) Guba's (1984) policy typology, which serves as literature review framework, (3) advantages and drawbacks of the Florida statewide articulation agreement, (4) institutional barriers to successful transfer, as well as (5) community college and university administration perceptions of transfer policy.

Overview of Policy Implementation Research

Policy implementation research has been described as gritty, complex (Weaver-Highertower, 2008) elusive, unanticipated, fluid, and transitory (McLaughlin, 1991) because no single theory, conceptual framework, or model exists describing how to analyze its effectiveness. However, the groundbreaking work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), Lipsky (1980), and Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981) offers a wide range of policy models and conceptual frameworks in education that include traditional top-down to bottom-up perspectives. As a result, even a simple model of policy

implementation must be viewed cautiously in order "to render what is incredibly complex and idiosyncratic in any individual case into a set of relationships that are both simpler and more recurrent" (Ripley, 1997, p. 3). The usefulness of a model, framework, concept, and or even a metaphor, is that it can serve as a tool to discover common themes, patterns, and explanations to analyze an extremely complex process.

Cerych and Sabatier (1986), in their seminal work, *"Great Expectations and Mixed Performance: The Implementation of Higher Education Reforms in Europe"* argued that one challenge to implementation for higher education includes state and/or national regulations that compete with those of faculty and administration. In the United States, a multi-layered hierarchy exists, with policy mandated by state and federal legislators, and implemented at the "street-level" by vice provosts, deans, directors, chairs, faculty, and staff persons at colleges and universities.

Focusing on how a state's governance structure, politics, economics, cultural, historical, and demographics shape higher education policy, Richardson, Bracco, Callan, and Finney (1999) developed a model to compare governance systems. Using their model, one can see where the mechanisms of control lie and why the power of some states or institutions have a greater or lesser influence on various higher education work processes. In 2004, Richardson expanded this framework to evaluate the performance measures of access, participation, degree completion rates, per capita costs, and benefits of individual institutions for national and international comparative studies of higher education (p. 8-10). The framework incorporates an adaptation of Ostrom's (1999) Institutional Analysis Design and moves from macro to micro view of policy operating at

the institutional level. The micro view includes the perceptions of institutional actors who must interpret and implement state or national policies.

Also focusing on the micro view, McLaughlin (1991) was one of the first educational policy analysts to underscore the importance of portraying the implementer's perspective. She argues, "Organizations don't innovate or implement change, individuals do" (p. 189). Her analysis explains how a first generation of policy analysts "discovered the problem [with policy implementation] and sketched its parameters" (p. 186) whereas "the second generation began to unpack it and to zero in on relations between policy and practice" (p. 187) by recording the experiences of those who carry out policies. She posited that third generation analysts incorporate the "multi-level, multi-actor complexities" to establish "a regular system of feedback for actors at all levels of the system" (p.194). Other researchers such as Hill and Hupe (2006) echo this call but suggest that future studies in higher education include more organization and leadership theory.

Higher education scholars, Perna and Scott (2008) examined top-ranked higher education journals and found only a handful of studies centered on the micro institutional aspects of student success with a lesser amount applying qualitative multi-field designs. The authors' findings include a broader review of the higher education literature and a lack of policy implementation research using qualitative methodology.

For this dissertation study, an analysis of higher education journals incorporating policy implementation theory, resulted in finding four peer-reviewed studies (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Mills, 1998; Mills & Hyle, 2001; Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Mills and Hyle (2001), for example, investigated faculty interpretations of a top-down policy on

mentoring, noting that policy implementation literature does not get directly translated into organizations; rather, it must go through "additional rounds of interpretation and negotiations at the implementer level" (p. 455). The translation process elucidates how a policy is perceived, understood, put in place, and evaluated. None of these peer review studies focused specifically on underrepresented populations.

Next, a scholarly paper presented by Mulholland and Shakespeare (2005) provides a synthesis of some of the most frequently used policy implementation models depicting top-down or bottom-up studies, and makes suggestions for their application. Additionally, a small group of unpublished dissertations have examined student tracking systems (Gonzalez, 2008), transfer and articulation policies and practices (Schaffer, 2000), and the impact of online learning programs for distance learning (Mitchell, 2006) using a policy implementation framework. Again, underrepresented students were not examined.

In a final example, Weaver-Hightower (2008) borrowed terminology from the sciences, and proposed a multi-dimensional ecology metaphor as a departure from the policy implementation stage models (top-down, bottom-up). While applying a scientific model to the human sciences can be problematic, Weaver-Hightower' s metaphor succeeds in depicting the complexity of policy process. He argues that this metaphor may shed light on the "regularities and irregularities of any policy, its process, its texts, its reception, and degree of implementation" (p. 153). Weaver's proposed ecology metaphor takes into account that an entire system can be interpreted from multiple angles and multiple-actors' voices and not just top-down or bottom-up perspectives.

For decades, higher education policy scholars have underscored the need for more research (1) to make educational policy more transparent (Rosenbaum, 2007, p. iv), (2) to encourage clear communication between two and four-year institutions when coordinating transfer and articulation agreements (Bogart & Murphey, 1985), (3) to integrate useful conceptual frameworks and theoretical models in educational studies (Hartmark & Hines, 1986; McLendon, 2003), and (4) to focus on bridging policy research with institutional practice (Altbach, 1998; Hartmark & Hines, 1986; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Majchrzak, 1984). Moreover, in order to determine how well a transfer policy is functioning, community college, university administrators, faculty, and advising staff who work with transfer students must be able to interpret, understand, and incorporate the explicit rules. Scholars researching the effectiveness of transfer for underrepresented populations (i.e. low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students), have noted that transfer and articulation policy implementation is understudied (Dowd, et al., 2009; Hurtado, et al., 1998). Cejda and Kaylor (2001), who applied case study method to study transfer students, lamented the overall lack of qualitative methodology in the field. The next three sections will apply Guba's (1984) policy typology to examine transfer literature from state, institution, and student's viewpoint and integrate relevant literature on underrepresented students.

Literature Review Framework

Guba (1984) synthesized thirty years of public policy literature and developed a typology to guide researchers and individuals who formulate, interpret, and implement

policy. As a research tool, Guba asserts, a policy typology adds clarity and consistency

in terminology. In his article *"The Effect of Definitions of Policy on the Nature and*

Outcomes of Policy Analysis," he presents eight policy definitions with a list of questions,

types of data collected, data sources, methodology, and possible outcomes, depending on

the lines of action being explored. The eight definitions are then parsed into three major

categories: policy-in-intention (policy making), policy-in-action (policy implementation),

and policy-in-experience. Included in each of the three policy types are determiners

(policy actors), their proximity to the point of action (policy implementation), and end-

means for each type (policy outcomes). This study will organize the salient literature

concerning the transfer process as it relates to underrepresented populations in post-

secondary education integrating Guba's typology.

     Policy-in-intention. Currently, 48% of community college students are located

in California, Florida, Illinois, New York and Texas (Wirt, J., Choy, S., Rooney, P.,

Hussar, W.J., Provasnik, S., Hampden-Thompson, G., 2005). Moreover, 78% of

community college students attend institutions in states that have established legislated

policies on transfer and articulation (p. 84). As a case in point, such policies adhere to

Guba's policy-in-intention, where the determiners are state level policymakers and/or

legislators responsible for establishing and enacting statewide legislation on transfer and

articulation. In this situation, the relationship of the particular strategy in the form of

goals is considered to be a means to an end. Therefore, once a policy is passed in the

legislature, the process is complete, and the bill moves to the next level. Depending on

the state's governance structure (see Richardson, et al., 1999), the policy is transmitted

through rules and tactics to the community college or university with a set of standing decisions, discretionary actions, and problem solving techniques via a governing board, state agency, or department of education.

The outcome of a state legislated policy on transfer and articulation from the community college to the four-year institution has a distinct benefit to the state. States use transfer agreements as a policy lever to reduce course duplication costs and to decrease lengthy degree completion rates for students (Callan, et al., 2007; GAO, 2006; Roska & Keith, 2008). However, a careful examination of the transfer literature with an eye towards policy-in-intention reveals mixed results as to the effectiveness of these state-legislated policies. Roska and Keith (2008) compared the language of several state policies and concluded that transfer polices work to preserve credits, assure inter-institutional coordination, and decrease additional costs to the state (p. 242-243), but are not effective in increasing transfer rates. Institutional and individual barriers are still the major hurdle to raising these rates and are "susceptible to policy influence" (p. 243). In 1990, Richardson noted a similar finding, and said, "while mandates removed barriers, they do not produce the changes in institutional values or behaviors essential to the retention and graduation of more diversely prepared racial and ethnic minorities" (p. 19). Many states, on the other hand, are more interested in conserving costs than in measuring whether policy improves transfer and degree completion rates. Roska and Keith (2008) conclude that further evaluations of the effectiveness policy are needed stating, "Articulation policies have the potential to serve both student and state interests. However, as of yet that potential has yet to be realized" (p. 250).

Researchers have also noted that state-mandated policies need updating in order to serve the changing populations of students attending higher education. Townsend (2001) highlights how a new generation of highly mobile students is changing traditional (vertical) attendance patterns, including an increase in "swirl", where students choose multiple avenues or serial transfer, moving back-and-forth between institutions until they arrive at their final four-year destination (McCormick, 2003). It behooves state level policymakers to reconsider these new attendance patterns since most articulation agreements assume vertical movement from a community college directly to a four-year institution (Pusser & Turner, 2004; Townsend, 2001). Pusser and Turner note that state level transfer and articulation policies still favor "full-time, 18-to-24-year-old students" (p. 38). Possible implications of changing state-articulated policies might mean that traditional institution-based transition agreements (Flaga, 2006) might have to adjust policies to include students entering from multiple pathways.

Policy-in-action. With Guba's (1984) second category, policy-in-action, the determiners are street-level bureaucrats—a term borrowed from Lipsky (1980)—of faculty, staff, and administrators at community colleges and universities. Street-level bureaucrats "operate at the individual level"; [they]"interpret organizational action as the problematic and often unpredictable outcome of autonomous actors, motivated by self-interest" (McLaughlin, 1991, p. 194). These determiners are responsible for interpreting and carrying out the statewide policies on transfer and articulation; yet, studies in the transfer literature that have used microanalysis have been sparse. As Rifkin (1996) argues, even though transfer and articulation are a state concern, "what takes place at the

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institutional level is ultimately what determines the effectiveness of transfer and articulation practices" (p.83).

Only a handful of studies refer to policy theories in the transfer literature as a framework despite the fact that researchers have reiterated the important role of policy implementation in evaluating the effectiveness of statewide policies and inter-institutional cooperation. In the context of discussing policy implementation, Bogart and Murphey (1985) noted the value of open communication is key to implementing a successful transfer process between community colleges and universities (p. 20). Another study by Hurtado et al. (1998) points out that while the issue of race has garnered a great deal of policy attention on campus, policy implementation incorporating the goal of educating diverse students" receives the least amount of attention (p. 281). A historical review of the transfer literature beginning with Knoell and McIntyre's 1974 study on transfer and articulation and ending with a recent dissertation that incorporates policy implementation research in the exploration of academic tracking systems is included in table one. The table indicates the small extent to which the integration of policy theory has been incorporated on transfer. The first four studies make a general mention of policy theorists such as Dror (1989) or Wildavsky (1979), but do not use a policy implementation lens through which to view the micro-aspects of system affects as do both Gonzalez (2008) and Schaffer (2000).

Schaffer (2002) developed interview protocol similar to Guba's policy typology integrating state-level, institutional-level, and students' experiences with the transfer process. Gonzalez (2008) incorporates Weick's (1995) concept of "sensemaking"—a way to study the perceptions of academic advisors responsible for implementing an

Table 1

Transfer Literature Integrating Policy Implementation Theories

Year	Author(s)	Policy Implementation Researchers Cited	Topic of Study	Focus on Underrepresented College Students?
1974	Knoell, D and McIntyre, C.	Dror, E Wildavsky, A.	Planning Community Colleges	Yes
1985	Richardson, R.C.	Wildavsky, A.	Baccalaureate for Urban Minorities	Yes
1989	Richardson, R.C.	Wildavsky, A.	Minority Achievement	Yes
2000	Schaffer, L.J.*	Bardach, E. Dye, T. Sabatier, P. Yanow, D.	Implementing Transfer Policies	None
2008	Gonzalez, J.M.*	Elmore, R.F. Hill, H.C. Lipsky, M. Mazmanmian, D. Pressman, J. Sabatier, P. Wildavsky, A. Yanow, D.	Academic Tracking Systems	None

Note. *Unpublished dissertations

academic tracking system—by reviewing how they interpret policy. To build her case for

the relevance of a qualitative study, she drew on Elmore's (1980) theory of backwards

mapping, which is well-supported by Hearn and Holdworth (2002) who note that it is "a

useful framework for examining the impact of various policies on colleges and

universities" (p. 11). Backward mapping requires that the analyst chart the policy from the end to the starting point.

Gonzalez (2008) chose to interview academic advisors on their turf to discover if the university tracking system was working as intended, as opposed to upper level university administrators who are the first to learn of policy changes and to communicate them through department chairs and directors of academic advising.

Policy-in-experience. This section examines the experiences of underrepresented transfer students, which is Guba's (1984) third type. Existing literature reviews on low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college transfer students revealed the following themes: growth of racial and ethnic minorities in the community college (Ayers, 2005; Hagedorn, 2004; Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Laden, 2004; Tatum, 2006; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003), equity and access issues (Huber, et al., 2006; Solorzano et al., 2005; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006), rapid increase in minority transfer students (Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003), "at-risk" populations and the need for intervention strategies (Perez, 1998), regulated and deregulated articulation agreements between colleges and universities regarding transfer credit (Ignash & Townsend, 2000), and state policy development and implementation issues (Hagedorn, 2004; Ignash & Townsend, 2001). An abundance of literature exists on the student adjustment process, such as transfer shock (Hills, 1965) where a student's grade point average can drop due to the transition to the university, academic student adjustment issues (Townsend, 1995), social issues (Laanan, 2001), and acclimating to the campus environment (Astin, 1984; Gratto, Gratto, Henry, & Miller, 2002; Kuh, 2000; Tinto, 1993).

More than two decades ago, Rendon (1981) urged an increase in retention, recruitment, and research efforts focused on the rapidly growing number of Hispanic students entering the community college and transferring to the university. While she went to great lengths to underscore the advantage of preparing in advance for this incoming influx of Hispanic enrollments, her later research depicts how institutions of higher education largely ignored her call. A separate study conducted by Rendon and Mathews (1989) identified that poor articulation agreements contribute to the "barrier-filled maze" that minority students face when transferring (p. 321). Moreover, the authors warn that ignoring issues of access for minority students will result in a nation where "one-third of the population will be impoverished, disconnected from mainstream America, poorly educated, and unable to participate in positions of leadership, authority and policymaking" (p. 312). In 1993, Rendon and Valadez underscored the need for more empirically-driven studies focused on transfer policies and practices as a way to increase access and baccalaureate degree attainment for both minority and transfer students. In another study, (Rendon, 1995) described the fragmented, incoherent relationships among secondary schools, community colleges and four-year institutions that become "difficult to navigate" as institutional obstacles to minority transfer (p. 11).

Lee (2001) used focus groups and semi-structured interviews to investigate the transfer experiences of twelve African-American students who successfully moved from a community college to a large research university. She discovered that state-mandated articulation policies, inter-institutional transfer agreements, transfer programs, and people were cited as either facilitating or deterring transfer. Policy implementation and policy interpretation were found to be major impediments to successful transfer. Lee states:

The articulation agreements, under ideal circumstances, are a means of

standardizing the transfer process and theoretically should enhance the chances of

movement through the educational pipeline. Although the process is specified on

paper, the implementation of the process is subject to interpretation by many

within both institutions. A policy that is intended to make the process clear and

specific is, in effect, a source of confusion and frustration for the students whom it

is intended to benefit" (p. 40).

To mitigate this situation, she recommends a greater commitment to advising—that it

become even more transparent and that institutions become "more intrusive in

disseminating transfer policy" as a critical steps to improving transfer (p. 41). Lee also

notes that, "Verbal language, tone of voice, and body language are all essential elements

in cross-cultural communication that institutional staff members should consider form the

students' perspective" (p. 43). These elements form her definition of cultural

competency, something that students in her study said was lacking from faculty and staff,

and are vital to successful transfer.

Hagedorn, et al. (2006) analyzed the experiences of minority transfer students at

urban institutions. Five thousand students were surveyed using a 47-item questionnaire

which attempted to ascertain their perceptions of the transfer process. Transcript analysis

was used to reveal course-taking patterns. The results of this study indicated that each

minority group had varied success depending upon course-taking behaviors, gender, and

cultural background. Factors other than ethnicity—such as income, gender, age, and first

in the family to attend college—can play a substantial role. The article concludes with

the recommendation that student-to-advisor ratios at community colleges be reduced to help students to interpret course requirements and to choose transfer programs carefully.

Suarez (2003) used case study methodology to examine the experiences of Latino students when transferring from a California public two-year college to a comprehensive university as a way to identify factors that had the greatest impact on successful transfer. The results of her semi-structured interviews with higher education administrators, academic counselors, and Latino students yielded three categories: institutional, individual, and environmental factors. Suarez found that a student's intrinsic motivation to succeed, pre-collegiate education, and career outlook greatly influenced the possibility of Latino students moving on to a university (p. 107).

Florida's Statewide Articulation Policy

Florida is known for having the most extensive transfer and articulation system in the United States. In 1959, the state established a transfer block of credit that later transformed into the 2+2 articulation agreement (1971) between colleges and universities. The state statute contains three sections: (1) Section 1007.23 specifies that the State University System (SUS) must accept 60 credit hours of lower division course work earned through an Associate of Arts Degree from any of Florida's 28 community colleges. Once admitted, transfer students can complete the remaining 60 credit hours of upper division coursework at the university, for a total of 120 hours or a Baccalaureate Degree. The only exceptions to this rule are limited access programs, teacher certification programs, and any major that requires an audition like music or theatre or portfolio review such as visual art. Transfer students planning to enroll in these programs

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must meet the criteria specified by college departments. In return, the university must treat transfer students in the same way that native university students are regarded (Florida Department of Education, 2007, p. 1-2); (2) Section 1007.24 specifies that the "Florida Department of Education will develop, coordinate, and maintain a statewide common course numbering system for public postsecondary institutions and participating nonpublic postsecondary institutions to facilitate course transfer" (p. 2); and (3) Section 1007.25 addresses general education courses, common course prerequisites, and other degree requirements.

The Florida Department of Education Articulation Coordination Committee (ACC) was also established as a result of the statewide agreement to regulate the rules of articulation. This advisory group, whose members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education, consists of appointees from colleges and universities, public and nonpublic schools, independent institutions, and career and workforce education. A student member sits on the AAC as well. Among its many responsibilities—including supervision of the K-20 educational pipeline, common course numbering, general education approvals, the transfer of credits, upper level course substitutions, and overseeing of statewide policies—the advisory committee continually reviews and recommends revisions of the rules to the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors. Furthermore, the committee has to assure that the 2+2 articulation agreement maintain a "commitment to mutual respect, equitable treatment of transfer students, and strong inter-institutional communication" (Florida Department of Education, 2007, p. 1).

Section 6.004 of the Florida articulation agreement points out the rules and regulations associated with undergraduate transfer. The first rule makes clear that despite

the entrance of students into the State University System (SUS) via a Florida AA, each state university controls its admission policies. Transfer students that seek admission to the university without a regionally accredited AA degree, are subject to each university's admission criteria. As a result, lower level transfer students (students with less than 60 hours of credit and who lack a regionally accredited Florida Associate of Arts degree), and out-of-state undergraduate transfers, must satisfy the university admission requirements just like incoming freshmen. This rule affords the university great latitude to "cherry pick" its lower-level transfer students, whereas those students with a Florida AA degree are guaranteed admissions to one of the 11 state universities (personal communication, October, 2008).

Because of the current economic crisis, as state funding is withheld and budget cuts on college campuses increase, stricter admissions policies become necessary. Currently, all SUS institutions are having a freshman enrollment freeze through fall 2010. If institutions exceed their enrollment caps by admitting more students, state funding will not necessary follow, and the institutions will have to cover these costs (FLBOG, 2008, p. 1). However, this freeze only applies to freshman enrollment. The Florida Board of Governors specifically states that community college transfer students with an AA will be "held harmless" during these freezes (p. 2). Reasons for not holding transfer students harmless could be due to (1) maintaining the relationship between Florida's Community College System and the SUS, (2) providing access to higher education for community college students, and (3) using the constant influx of upper level transfer students to fill junior and senior level classes. Cheslock (2003) found this practice to be especially common for institutions struggling with upper-level persistence and retention issues.

Unfortunately, transfer students applying to the SUS without a Florida AA will face increased competition from their peers and may have to seek alternative routes to a baccalaureate degree. The Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) is potentially a viable alternative; and, Florida is the national leader of this model.

Problems. Outlining the articulation agreement's particular strengths and weaknesses, other researchers have focused on the statewide policy itself. While the greatest strength appears to be Florida's Academic Counseling and Tracking System (FACTS), an online computer-assisted advising system, Florida's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) reported the costliest flaw to be lower level course-taking patterns at the university. Ideally, Florida AA transfers will have completed their lower division course work before transferring, however, in 1999, the cost for this coursework taken after transfer was $13.8 million to the state and $8.7 million to students (2002, p. 1).

Reasons for lower division coursework taken after transfer included poor communication of common program prerequisites, especially for limited access programs, misinformed community college academic advisors, and students switching majors to complete program prerequisites for their new degree. The state, with its interest in decreasing costs and increasing degree completion rates, recommended that the legislature should take steps to alleviate this problem: (1) making sure common course prerequisites are updated and available to community college students and their academic advisors, (2) monitoring and reporting transfer and articulation problems at each university by the ACC, and (3) requiring that community college students choose and

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stay on a transfer track to their intended major. While these actions would hopefully decrease the cost to the state, the question still remains as to whether the articulation agreement benefits the state and not the transfer student. Roska and Keith (2008) argue that states adopted legislated articulation agreements to reduce costs to the state.

Analyzing the correspondence via e-journaling, Ignash (2008) followed a selected group of Florida community college students through the transfer process and found five major discrepancies: (1) students with or without an AA degree experienced difficulty transferring courses, (2) transfer coursework did not always count towards the major, (3) discrepancies were present in the common course numbering system for lower division course work, (4) transcripts delayed from the community colleges slowed down degree conferrals and transfer credits, (4) students were often misadvised, and (5) an institutional policy was found to be in violation of a state policy, resulting in unequal treatment of transfer students. As a result, these students were the last to enroll in courses, leaving them little opportunity to secure the necessary classes for their major. Ignash's findings mirror those of the state and emphasize that if Florida is placing more weight on the AA degree for successful transfer, then the institutions that accept these students may want to evaluate their program mechanisms to assure that institutional policies are in compliance with state rules. Doyle (2006) found similar national information on course credit acceptance issues and state and institutional barriers.

Emerging Issues. The emergence of the Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) and the newly established excess credit legislation by the Florida legislature may have an impact on transfer policy and underrepresented student populations in Florida.

Cook (2000) outlines the major reasons why community colleges in the United States are developing baccalaureate degree programs: (1) to increase "geographical and financial access to baccalaureate education" (p. 2), (2) to expand educational opportunities for place-bound and returning adults whose jobs require "training beyond the associate's degree" (p.1), and (3) to strengthen "postsecondary commitment to economic development regarding specific needs of local/state business and industry" (p. 2). Florida has large numbers of place-bound students who need low cost and accessible alternatives to the traditional two-to four-year pathway. Considerable shortfalls in bachelor's degree production in Florida have motivated the state to enhance the CCB degree. Recent attention has also been placed on the development of a state college system to boost undergraduate degree production. The state predicts that Florida will need 1.3 million more baccalaureate degrees by 2030 and that the SUS alone is unable to produce these numbers (FLBOG, 2008).

For some community college researchers, transfer policies remain at the heart of their concern about the expanding role of the CCB. Townsend (2005) stresses the need for more research on "the CCB's effect on transfer rates when students remain rather than transferring to the four-year sector." She adds that states that legislate the CCB should "monitor its impact on four-year colleges" (p. 185). Mission creep, program quality, accreditation, faculty credentials, library holdings, and costs of adding additional degree programs during an economic downturn were noted as questionable areas. Townsend warns that more proof is needed to show that the community college is well suited for its new role while still maintaining its commitment to open access and two-year degree programs. She continues by stating, "only research conducted at the institutional, state,

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and national levels can answer these questions" and that "unfortunately, there has been little research conducted about the development of the CCB and its effects on community colleges and higher education institutions" (p. 185). Townsend's criticism of CCB is relevant for Florida, as the transfer agreements and policies related to these degrees are still in their infancy, and the state guidelines on how to handle inter-institutional alignment of courses are still being created.

A second emerging issue is Florida's new excess credit hour legislation, which was approved by Governor Charlie Christ on May 27, 2009. This bill, originally vetoed by the Governor in 2005, states earning an excess of 120% of the hours required for their baccalaureate degree will be required to pay an excess credit hour surcharge. The effect of this policy on low-income, first-generation in college, and racial and ethnic minority groups who are poorly prepared for college and who are academically off-track in college, may shoulder the weight of this expense.

Transfer Process for Underrepresented Students

Institutional barriers. Research studies stress the removal of institutional barriers that may impede the goal of underrepresented students' successful transfer from a community college to a four-year institution (Laden, 2004; Rendon & Garza, 1996; Rosenbaum, et al., 2006; Huber, et al., 2006; Solorzano. et al., 2005; Yosso & Solozano, 2006). The literature reveals contradicting views on how well community colleges are accomplishing this goal (Laden, 2004). Laden studied two community colleges that have made systematic changes to reduce dropout rates of minorities, while increasing transfer rates to four-year institutions.

Laden outlined criteria critical to removing barriers: (1) endorsement of policies and procedures ensuring "equal opportunities for social and career mobility for culturally diverse groups" (p. 11); (2) gaining administrator buy-in; (3) hiring and promoting culturally sensitive academic advisors; (4) creating transfer programs and seminars that assist students to determine future career directions; (5) securing grant funding from foundations that support minority-related causes; (6) cultivating faculty support and development of inclusive curricula, implementing multicultural education across the curriculum.

Solorzano, et al. (2005) investigated transfer failure rates of Latina/o undergraduates in higher education and found the following: (1) students failed to meet the admission requirements of four-year colleges or universities, (2) students received inadequate academic advising, and/or (3) students were ill-prepared for collegiate education because of high school vocational tracking. The poor quality of remedial courses was cited as a reason for educational inequities. The authors state that "the reasons for their [Latinas/os'] inability to transfer often results from institutional structures that fail to support their academic needs and professional goals and aspirations" (p. 282). Solorzano, et al. conclude that as long as institutional practices and policies pretend to be value-neutral, concerns for minority students will continue to be minimized. In a follow-up study, Huber, et al. (2006) and Yosso and Solozano (2006) developed an educational pipeline flowchart showing a steady decline of Latina/os and Chicana/os moving from the K-12 to higher education. In both cases, poor remedial and developmental education, lack of transfer services, and absence of a transfer culture were found to be major roadblocks.

Person, et al. (2006) probed institutional structures of seven public community colleges and seven private colleges offering occupational degrees. They specifically analyzed institutional structures and procedures to see how institutions "can contribute to students' information problems and how colleges with alternative structures affect student information about college requirements" (p. 376). Given that some students lack both the social and cultural capital to navigate through systems, institutions must provide certain supports to accommodate them. The authors found that some institutional structures and procedures at the community college may be negatively impacting student success. Interviews with community college students revealed issues with academic advising and confusion around remedial education requirements counting towards degree completion. In comparison, the authors found that students in the occupational programs benefitted from tightly structured academic programs, mandatory academic advising, and peer mentors. In both environments, racial and ethnic minority students and first-generation in college students struggled most with making informed choices (p. 389).

A crucial link in promoting minority transfer relates to how well academic and faculty advisors comprehend institutional barriers encountered by students at the community college level (Rendon & Garza, 1996). Researchers maintain that community college faculty can help transfer students navigate through the system through class or career choices (Cejda & Kaylor, 2001; Tatum, Hayward, & Monzon, 2006). Tatum (2001) found that low transfer rates might also be attributed to a non-existent transfer culture or lack of knowledge about transfer services on the community college campus. They recommended including more faculty participation in activities such as new faculty orientations to raise awareness of transfer issues, increasing department level internships

to give transfer students more hands-on experience in their intended field of study, and training and monetary rewards for faculty experts who specialized in transfer advising (p. 204). Cohen and Brawer (2003) noted that academic advising needs to be comprehensive, not prescriptive (p. 202). Britt and Hirt (1999) found inadequate academic advising to be the greatest institutional impediment to transfer adjustment once a transfer student arrives at a university (p. 3).

Administrators' perceptions. Although perceptions of the transfer process from community college and university administrators are understudied, those studies which have succeeded in portraying the perceptions of community college and are illuminating. For example, Dymarkowski and Krout (2006) state that universities may perceive community college students as being "coddled" by their community college partners, community college classes are "watered down", and transfer students are at a higher risk than native students (slide 17). An opinion piece written by Jaschik (2009) for *Inside Higher Ed* argues that the failures of articulation agreements lie not with community colleges that obediently follow the articulation agreements, but with the four-year institutions that rebuff community courses for lacking sufficient rigor and quality (para 4). Another community college administrator interviewed for the article admits that while academic advising is key to successful transfer, this particular institution was not doing an adequate job of communicating the rules of articulation agreements to students (para 11). A four-year college administrator also admitted that his state-mandated articulation agreement failed to increase transfer rates and that regular inter-institutional advising meetings were an effective tool in smoothing out communication (para. 12).

Hayward, Jones, McGuiness, Timar and Shulock (2004) examined the California Community College system and found variable levels of academic rigor across campuses. Another concern for administrators was campus advocates who try to protect the "sanctity" of long-standing, continually funded programs at the "expense of better coordinated, more broadly inclusive efforts across the campus." (p. 21). Santiago (2008) noted that competition for students might result in tension between community colleges and the university (p. 18).

Shaw and London (2001) used in-depth, comparative analysis of community colleges and argued that one cannot analyze perceptions without taking into account the underlying organizational culture that influence institutional and transfer practices. To show the impact an institutional culture has on transfer, they anonymously presented three types of community colleges: "Standard College" whose faculty and administrators unwaveringly clung to its transfer mission and had little tolerance for part-time, returning adults, or students with children (p. 100), "Border College" whose faculty and administration displayed "a deeply held sense of responsibility for student well-being that extends from high level administrators to faculty to support staff" (p. 102). At Border College this ideology filters down to all aspects of the campus culture including proactive advising and "vigorously promoting" the importance of transfer while assisting poor and minority students overcome their particular challenges and advocating for them whenever necessary (p. 104). The third example is "City College" which strikes a balance, resulting in "programs and services (…) which transfer-oriented students find their way through the maze of articulation agreements, application deadlines, and financial aid forms" (p. 110). Shaw and London underscore that the community college

organizational culture shapes the perceptions of the administrators who work within it, which, they argue, can become a very "contested terrain" (p. 110), but is paramount to student success.

Chapter Summary

Drawing on policy implementation literature, this study probes community college and university administrators' perceptions of the transfer process for underrepresented students. The introduction provides an overview of policy implementation research and gives specific examples of policy theory in studies on higher education and those examining community college transfers. Guba's (1984) policy typology—describing three levels of analysis: policy-in-intention, policy-in-action, and policy-in-experience—serves as the framework to introduce the salient literature on transfer and articulation. A final section discusses institutional barriers to transfer for underrepresented students and perceptions of community college and university administrators on the transfer process.

Chapter Three

Methods

This chapter outlines the research methods used to describe and explain university and community college administrators' perceptions on the transfer process for underrepresented students. Choice of method, selection of participants, data collection, analysis, issues of credibility and ethical considerations are also addressed in this chapter.

Methodology

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that explicating the nuances of words is what gives qualitative research "the precision and stringency" equivalent to that of quantitative analysis (p. 30). Janesick (2004) describes an active agent of qualitative research as one who collects and analyzes words, ultimately shaping an interpretation of the data. This process of accumulating knowledge through words allows the agent to be reflective, critical, and active (p. 211). How the interpretation is presented depends on the philosophical paradigm from which the researcher draws, much like a statistician who chooses one theorem over another. For this study, the interviews are based on social constructivism, which holds that both the interviewer and interviewee influence meaning. Philosophical hermeneutics posits that any set of data has multiple text interpretations, and that no single interpretation is better or worse than the other. Both of these methods will be explained further in the chapter.

Research Questions

   This qualitative research employs philosophical hermeneutics and social constructivism to describe and explain university and community college administrators' perceptions of the transfer process for underrepresented students. The following three exploratory questions guided this study.

1. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

2. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of institutional policy and practice in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

3. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' suggestions for improving the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

   Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe data gathering and analysis as "iterative research design (p.16)," where the qualitative researcher simultaneously collects and analyzes data in an evolving process, and where the original research questions can sometimes become altered. Conducting interviews and the concomitant analysis of previously collected interview transcripts allow the researcher flexibility to "suggest further questions and topics to pursue" (p. 16). Thus, the researcher of this study

understands that the above-mentioned research questions can change as interview data is assembled and reviewed.

Role of the Researcher

I became inspired to delve into transfer and articulation research as a way of combining my interests in policy implementation, transfer students, and underrepresented populations. While reading about underrepresented students and the particular barriers they face when transferring from the community college to a four-year institution, I found little qualitative research in the literature examining policy theory and institutional practice.

However, several large national datasets (e.g. Adelman 1999, 2004, 2006) do exist that look at high school course-taking models, college persistence rates, and transfer patterns of community college students. Again, policy changes at the institutional level were given little mention; and, almost no studies investigated administrators at the institutional level. Further, there seemed to be a paucity of studies specifically concerned with underrepresented transfer students and administrators' perceptions of implementation state level policies institutional practices.

In my role as academic advisor for the College of Education at the University of South Florida in 2004-2007, I saw firsthand how policies influence the ease or difficulty of a student's progression from community college to university. My awareness and understanding of problems facing underrepresented students grew during the time that I was a full-time graduate assistant working for the Urban Transfer Research Study, a multistate project supported by the Lumina Foundation.

For the current study, I will keep a researcher reflection journal and will record

field notes during the interviews. Member checks of interview transcripts, a peer

evaluator, and an outside reviewer will also provide for triangulation of data (see

Appendix F).

Pilot Study

A pilot of the interview protocol was conducted on September 30, 2008 with a

mid-level administrator at a large metropolitan research university in southern Florida.

This administrator works directly on policies related to transfer students and with the

articulation of course credits among institutions. After the interview was conducted,

questions were modified for clarity and to remove any perceived bias. In the pilot study,

the respondent was eager to discuss transfer policies and practices for well over an hour,

suggesting that others will have a similar positive reaction.

Method of Data Collection

Qualitative studies exploring the perceptions of administrators from the university

and community college on the transfer process for underrepresented students are sparse.

Transfer studies are dominated by national, state, and institutional-level quantitative

analysis and by some mixed method studies including survey questionnaires (Kozeracki,

2001). The majority of qualitative studies have been focused on the experience of the

transfer student from his or her perspective. To augment existing investigations, this

study will focus on administrators' perceptions of policy implementation as it relates to

transfer access for the underrepresented, using a semi-structured interview format as the primary method of inquiry.

Data collection for this study included: 12 semi-structured individual interviews (Appendix G), institutional and state level public records, the researcher reflective journal (Appendix B), and field notes (Appendix C). An interview script was developed to guide each interview (Appendix H). A demographic data form (Appendix I) along with an IRB approval form (Appendix J) were given to each interviewee to review, complete, and sign before the start of the interview. The general time frame for data collection from start to finish is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Study Time Frame

Steps	Activities
Step I: Identifying Interviewees (April 2008)	• Interviewees will be selected based on their level of experience and direct contact with transfer students, policies, and practice • Interviewees will be contacted by an introductory e-mail and through telephone calls • Those who agree to participate will receive an e-mail with a consent letter to sign, a confirmation of their interview date and time, as well as a document requesting demographic data
Step 2: Interviewing & Transcription (May 2008-July 2008)	• One-on-one Interviews • Transcription of Interviews • Transcribed interviews sent to each interviewee for member check • Ongoing analysis of transcribed interviews
Step 3: Data Analysis (August 2008-December 2008)	• Identify and code variables using Rubin and Rubin's (2005) steps for data analysis
Step 4: Findings (December 2008-Janurary 2010)	• Compare results for consistencies and inconsistencies in emergent themes and evidence, peer and outside member checks, report findings

Stratified purposeful sampling. The strength of the stratified purposeful sampling allows the researcher to control the selection of subgroups and to facilitate comparisons within and among institutions (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). Public lists of community college and university administrators available through the Florida Department of Education website as well as organizational charts found on institutional websites provided the researcher with the names of eligible participants to be directly enlisted via email or telephone using a recruitment script (see Appendix K). Where necessary, e-mails and/or telephone calls were used to locate individuals within the respective institutions who possess the greatest knowledge of transfer students, programs, policy and practices (see Appendix L). The method of asking for insiders as potential participants is common practice in qualitative research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 66-69). Final selection of prospective interviewees was based on an individual's knowledge, interaction, and/or involvement with transfer students and transfer policies, availability, and timely response to the interview request (see Table 3).

Participants from each institution included the following level of administrators:

1. Senior vice-provosts, vice provosts, and/or academic or undergraduate deans.

2. Directors of admissions, enrollment, and articulation officers who are instrumental in implementing state-level transfer and articulation agreements as well as developing and executing changes in institutional and inter-institutional transfer and articulation agreements.

3. Directors, assistant directors, or those that who oversee campus-wide academic advising, academic support services, and diversity and equity policies.

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Table 3

Administrators Interviewed by Position and Institution Type

Administrative Position	University	Community College
Academic Affairs	Vice Provost & Dean, Undergraduate Studies	Executive Vice Presidents & Chief Learning Officers
	Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies	Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs
Admissions & Enrollment	Associate Vice President Academic Development & Retention	Assistant Vice President, Admissions & Records
	Associate Vice President Student Development & Enrollment Services	Assistant Vice President, Curriculum & Articulation
Student Services	Director, Regional Student Services	Vice President, Student Services
	Director, Transfer & Transition Services	Assistant Vice President, Educational & Student Services

Research Sites

In Fall 2008, the university chosen for this study had a minority population of nearly 30%, with African American and Hispanics as the predominant racial and ethnic minorities (NCES, 2005). The annual transfer-in enrollment is approximately 5,200 students per year. Total undergraduate enrollment is >40,000. Seventy-five percent of the student body is full-time, with 82% age 24 or younger. More women than men attend the university. Close to 65% of the students take 6 years to earn a bachelor's degree. The Carnegie classification for this university is high research activity.

One of the university's feeder community college had a total minority population of close to 40%, with relatively large numbers of African American and Hispanic students (NCES, 2005). The total enrollment number for this community college is medium (<14,000 students). Approximately 60% of the student body is part-time with 40% attending full-time. More than half of the students are female and most of students attending the community college are 24 and younger. The Carnegie classification for this community college is Associate's--Public Suburban-serving Single Campus.

Social constructivism and interviewing. Janesick (2004) notes that the strong interactive nature of the interview is what sets it apart from the act of observing (p. 71). Her definition is as follows: "Interviewing is a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic" (p. 72). Some words describing this process are: exchange, meaning, communicating, and joint construction.

According to social constructivists, "all interviews are interactional events" where "…they are constructed in situ, a product of talk between interview participants" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 2). Social constructivism rejects the post-positivistic practice of treating the interview as a unidirectional "pipeline for transmitting knowledge" (p. 3). Instead, it argues that the interview is a process by which the researcher and the interviewee construct meaning together through social discourse. A minimal set of well thought out open-ended interview questions guide the discussion on a particular topic. Planned prompts or probes are inserted where necessary to focus the respondent on the topic being explored (McCracken, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In the

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constructivist paradigm, "respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge—treasuries of information awaiting excavation—as they are constructors of knowledge in association with interviewers" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 4).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe interviewees as "conversational partners" (p. 14), a description that echoes Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) definition of "inter-view" which they call "an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2). In sum, the interviewer and interviewee participate together in synthesizing administrators' perceptions on the transfer process as it pertains to underrepresented transfer students moving from a community college to a four-year institution.

Long interview format. This study used McCracken's (1988) long interview approach, useful when time is scarce and/or the interview subject is unwilling or unable to be interviewed extensively over long periods of time. McCracken states that the qualitative interview can capture a person's lived experience, "warts and all" (p. 10). Further, qualitative social science research is instrumental in integrating a "binocular" glimpse of the phenomena being studied to "situate these numbers [gleaned from quantitative studies] into their fuller social and cultural context" (p. 9). Part of what gives this interview format its strength is the four-part method of inquiry developed by McCracken.

Field notes. Field notes were used to record interview observations before the start of the interview, during the interview (if possible), and immediately afterwards. The

researcher's insights, concerns, or thoughts about the interview, along with physical descriptions of the interview setting, the participants, and the logs of email and telephone correspondence were recorded. These measures are consistent with Gubrium and Holstein (2003), who state that field notes serve as another tool to collect "necessary partial interpretive accounts" (p. 283) of the interviews. Field-based insights can be integrated into the reflective journal and revisited during data analysis as a way to give an overall account of the events that occurred during the interview and to add to the study's credibility. Examples of field notes can be found in Appendix C.

Researcher's reflective journal. When conducting qualitative research, one must enter into a quiet space in order to absorb ideas while moving back and forth from a macro to a micro view or vice versa. Janesick (2004) calls this practice a "meditative focus" (p. 95) where one's self-awareness is enriched and sharpened by the process of reflective journaling. The researcher's journal becomes a place for insights on the dissertation study consisting of well-developed thoughts in the form of paragraphs, poetry, prose, fragments, or sketches. Writing reflectively allows the researcher to resolve cognitive dissonance before she writes within an academic viewpoint; it is here that she can weave journal writing into the dissertation.

Documenting the benefits of this process, Janesick lists five ways in which reflective journaling can strengthen the dissertation:

(1) Focuses the study

(2) Sets the groundwork for analysis and interpretation

(3) Acts as a tool for revisiting notes and transcripts

(4) Awakens the imagination

(5) Becomes the written record of thoughts, feelings, and facts (p. 149)

Reflective journaling throughout this dissertation was used as a process to clarify thoughts, develop ideas, connect to theory, and explore intuitions. Examples of the researchers reflective journal entries can be found in Appendix B.

Site documents and transcripts. Public records including institutional and state level documents on transfer policies and processes were obtained from online course catalogs and from Florida's Department of Education website. Digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and kept in a file in its hard-copy form.

Interview format. Janesick (2004) states that interviewing a person can be a "complex and challenging act" requiring the delicate art of carefully detecting both verbal and non-verbal nuances to unearth "rich and substantive data" within the questioning process itself (p. 71). McCracken (1988) refers to the interview protocol as a "rough travel itinerary with which to negotiate the interview" (p. 37). Thus, the very first question asked is particularly important since it opens the interview up for discussion. Planned prompts (McCracken, 1988, p. 35) guide the inquiry, keep the respondent on topic, and, when necessary, further probe for disparities that may arise from the dialogue. All participants selected for this study were questioned only once using the semi-structured interview guide listed below:

1. In what capacity do you work with students who transfer to the university?

2. Please share with me your thoughts on Florida's state-level transfer policy?

(Probe) How does this policy facilitate or hinder the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

3. Do you think there are institutional policies or practices (either at your institution or at other partners in the transfer process) that facilitate the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

    (Probe) What about institutional policies and practices that hinder the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

4. Please share with me any thoughts you may have on changes to state-level policies that could facilitate the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

    (Probe) What about changes in institutional-level policies and practices that could enhance the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

5. Are there other barriers that you think should be addressed to facilitate the transfer process?

    (Probe) What about for underrepresented community college transfer students?

6. Any concluding thoughts?

Follow-up telephone calls and e-mails to respondents were made after the interview if the transcript was unclear or more clarification was needed.

Data Analysis

Opinions about how data should be analyzed can be found in the qualitative literature (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A central point of contention exists between a post-positivist and an interpretivist paradigm. Post-positivists believe that qualitative inquiry should follow a framework similar to that used in the natural sciences, in which cause-and-effect reasoning dominates, and where the researcher mines the hidden meaning inside the spoken text to test a hypothesis. For the positivist, there can be only one interpretation of data. This process runs counter to interpretivist philosophy, in which multiple textual readings are possible.

Inside the interpretivist paradigm, debate has emerged on the role of the interpreter. Yanow (1996), an interpretivist, portrays the processes of data collection and analysis as an interwoven event (p. 35). More than an impressionist's glimpse of the data, qualitative analysis provides penetrating views that lend themselves to copious description, interpretation, and meaning (p. 54). My role as an analyst also mirrors Rubin and Rubin's (2005) description of the photographer, who chooses how to frame a shot, and who incorporates the actual elements found in the viewfinder (p. 10-11) into his photograph.

The recording of field notes and reflecting journaling occurred immediately before and after each interview. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy including member checks. Using Atlas-ti, a qualitative software program along with hand coding using Microsoft WORD, hermeneutic analysis was used identify categories and codes, which later became themes and subthemes (see Appendix D & E).

Philosophical hermeneutics. In its most basic definition, "*Hermeneutics*

(emphasis in the original) is the study of the interpretation texts" (Kvale & Brinkmann,

2009, p. 50). Schwandt (2000) notes that a classical definition of hermeneutics views the

researcher as an interpreter who objectifies the interviewee in the process of analyzing

the text. Philosophical hermeneutics, on the other hand, states that, "understanding is not

a matter of setting aside, escaping, managing, or tracking one's own standpoint,

prejudgments, biases, or prejudices. On the contrary, understanding requires the

engagement of one's biases" (p. 195). As some qualitative researchers have shown, the

engagement of these biases can be artificially controlled, but not completely abolished.

McCracken (1988) suggests that researchers can "manufacture" a certain distance

from their own biases, where as Rubin and Rubin (2005) employ the terms "self-

reflection" or "self-awareness" (p. 32). In this case, during the interview, the researcher

recognizes self-held bias or difference of opinion, but remains engaged in the interview

process, nonetheless. Alternatively, Moustakas' (1994) theory of transcendental

phenomenology assumes the possibility that the interviewer can put aside her biases. A

philosophical hermeneutic viewpoint holds that, while one's own judgments can be held

in abeyance, they cannot be divorced from the collection and analysis of data. This is the

paradigm from which my data analysis drew.

Found data poems. Using the interview transcripts, found poems (Janesick,

2010) were created for each interviewee as a way to "express distillations and

crystallizations" (Prendergast, 2006) of their perceptions. Janesick (2008) states that "the

substance of poetry can be artistically rendered" and further, that these poems can

"represent the critical meaning in the data" (para. 1). Chapter four contains twelve found data poems developed directly from interview scripts.

Credibility

This study embraces an interpretive framework for analysis. Therefore, this section will not discuss internal and external validity, reliability, or objectivity. Instead, the Rubin and Rubin (2005) alternative criteria of interviewee selection, thoroughness and accuracy, believability, and transparency are applied to define the trustworthiness of the data, (as) in the way that these modes of qualitative design evaluation align with an interpretative paradigm.

Rubin and Rubin see knowledgeable, experienced interviewees with varied perceptions as lending credence to a qualitative research study (p. 64-67). To assure credibility, the individuals selected for this study ranged from high-level administrators to mid-level and director-level positions from both the community college and the university. Chosen from job position descriptions and website lists provided by the Florida Department of Education, the selected interviewees possessed knowledge and experience related to transfer policies and practices at their respective institutions. Some individuals were relatively new to these positions whereas others had more longevity inside the system or institution, adding to the diversity of perspectives on the topic of transfer.

Regarding the number of selected participants, Kvale (1996) states that interviews should be conducted to the point of saturation (p.102); thus, purposeful sampling was adequate to meet the study's purpose. The latter also mentions the importance of

choosing individuals with a variety of perceptions as a way to comprehend the problem

under investigation (p. 65). The interviewees for this study were therefore selected to

"gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that

different individuals hold (p. 65)."

Planned prompts and follow-up questions establish the thoroughness of

interviewees' responses while accuracy was established by integrating member checks

and outside evaluators. Member checks allowed the interviewees to read their transcripts

for clarity and accuracy. Peer and outside evaluators reviewed the transcriptions for

completeness of responses (Appendix F); they also worked with the researcher to confirm

emerging themes found in the analysis.

Believability was incorporated into this research design in three ways: (1) careful

selection of individuals who were knowledgeable and informed about policies and

practices as they pertain to transfer students, (2) use of a semi-structured interview

protocol with planned prompts to reach redundancy or a consistency of responses, and (4)

sourcing of state and institutional documents, where necessary, to cross-check

interviewees' potential inconsistencies or omission of information in their answers. To

facilitate transparency, examples of field notes (Appendix C) allow readers see how the

descriptive data was collected and assembled to form first impressions. The researcher's

reflective journal contains specific details of the coding process for the analysis,

theoretical references, and methodological solutions for questions raised in throughout

the study (Appendix B).

Ethical Considerations

Upon this study's approval by University of South Florida's Institutional

Research Board, each selected participant was e-mailed a letter of invitation to join the

study (see Appendix L). This letter includes the study's purpose and process of inquiry,

as well as a request for informed consent, thereby assuring individuals of confidentiality.

Individuals were neither identified by name nor traced by descriptive writings in the

findings. Participants indicating a willingness to take part in the study were e-mailed a

consent form in advance, which was collected by the researcher prior to the start of each

interview. If ethical problems arose in the study, they were addressed instance-by-

instance. In addition, a demographic data form was sent to the participants prior to the

interview and collected during the interview (see Appendix I). A copy of my human

participant protection certificate can be found in Appendix M.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain selected university and

community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation

agreement and to identify institutional policies and practices as they pertain to

underrepresented students. A methodological framework of interpretive policy analysis

(how policy is perceived), social constructivism (how meaning is constructed), and

philosophical hermeneutics (how words are interpreted) are employed to extrapolate the

emergent themes from twelve semi-structured interviews with university and community

college administrators. Each administrator was purposefully selected based on his or her

direct or indirect involvement with transfer policies or practices. Since the transfer

pathway is traditionally described as one where a student moves from a community college to a university, one of each type of institution was selected for this study. Both are public institutions and have large populations of underrepresented matriculating students. The interviews, which provided the data analysis, were transcribed verbatim; field notes, the researcher's reflective journal, and relevant documents and artifacts added additional information. Peer and outside member checks lend credibility and truthfulness to the study. Ethical considerations and issues of credibility are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Four

Presentation of the Data

The purpose of this study is to describe and explain selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of Florida's statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students. The following exploratory questions guide the analysis:

1. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

2. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of institutional policy and practice in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

3. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' suggestions for improving the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

Assembled from interview transcripts, field notes, and reflective journal excerpts, this chapter contains three case studies of twelve university and community college administrators. Relevant descriptive statistics about Florida and of each institution

studied precede the introduction of cases. The general format for each case is the same: a found data poem (created and inspired from the text of the interviewee transcripts), followed by each participant's perceptions of the statewide articulation agreement and its effects on underrepresented transfer students. To assure the anonymity of participants, their names, as well as the names of their institutions are changed.

The Context: Florida

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Florida's population will be approximately 19,251,691 by July 1, 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau). In 2007, twelve of Florida's sixty-seven counties were listed in the top 100 of the fastest growing counties in the United States. Florida is the fourth most populous state, following California (38,067,134), Texas (24,648,888), and New York (19,443,672). Twenty-one percent of Florida residents are18 or younger compared to the national average of 24%. Seventeen percent are 65 and older compared to the national 12.8%. Women represent half of Florida's population.

In 2008, Florida's population consisted of White non-Hispanics (60%), Hispanics (21%), Blacks (15%), Asians (2.3%), Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.1%), and American Indian and Alaska Natives (0.5%). Relative to national averages, Florida has a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic citizens and a lower one of Asians and Native Americans. Seventy-nine percent of Floridians are high school graduates and 22% have Bachelor's Degrees or higher, similar to the national average. The median

household income is $47,000, and 12% of Floridians live below the national poverty level.

Florida's economy is driven by its large agricultural, tourist, and space industries, which provide 23,000 jobs. High tech, health technology, entrepreneurial software businesses, new construction, agriculture, and university-sponsored research dollars also contribute to the overall economy. Florida has 11 state universities and 28 public community colleges.

Musboro County. Known for its arts and entertainment, education, and retail industries, Musboro County is home to nearly one million Florida residents. With approximately 40% of its residents between ages 18 and 24, 25% 18 and younger, and 9% older than 65, Musboro is a relatively youthful county. In 2008, Musboro County was comprised of the following races and ethnicities: White non-Hispanics (50%), Hispanics (24%), Blacks (20%), Asians (4.5%), Native-American Indian and Alaska Natives (0.5%) and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.2%). Musboro County has a higher percentage of Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, relative to the state average; the percentage is slightly lower with respect to Whites and White non-Hispanics. Eighty-one percent of its residents are high school graduates and 26% hold Bachelor's Degrees or higher, comparable to state and national averages. The median yearly household income is $50,000 with 11% of individuals in poverty. Forty-six percent of Musboro County residents are married and 79% of its residents remain in the same household for over a two-year time period. Only 5% of its residents live in mobile homes and 1% use Musboro County's International Airport for travel abroad.

Fast Growing Public University (FGPU). Located in Musboro County, the attractive main campus of the Fast Growing Public University (FGPU) contains lush green lawns, a small town center, and long stretches of well-maintained sidewalk connecting modern and contemporary style buildings. The library, adjacent to the administrative and student affairs buildings, houses an Internet café populated by a mix of students. Most of its undergraduates come from surrounding communities. A nearby research park provides the regional campuses' main office. Classified by Carnegie for its abundant research activity, the FGPU maintains an average in-state tuition of $4,000 with approximately 16% of students receiving Pell Grants. Its undergraduate population of nearly 51,000 has three-quarters of the students enrolled full-time. Annually, more than 5,000 undergraduate students transfer into FGPU. Most of FGPU's students are White (>65%), Hispanic (>15), and African American (>8%). There are few Asians (<6%) and no American Indian or Alaskan Natives in attendance. A large percentage of the undergraduate population (approx. 50%) takes five years to complete a Bachelor's Degree.

Wildeboro County. Wildeboro Country is home to nearly 400,000 Florida residents. Its leading industries include educational services and professions such as biotech, medical and retail. Approximately 37% of its residents are age 18 to 25, 23% are 18 and younger, and 11% are 65 and older. In 2008, the following races and ethnicities existed in Wildeboro County: White non-Hispanics (68%), Hispanics (15%), Blacks (11%), Asians (3.0%), American Indian and Alaska Natives (0.4%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (0.1%). In terms of Whites and White non-

Hispanics, Wildeboro's average is higher than that of the rest of the state; Blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented. Eighty-one percent of Wildeboro County residents are high school graduates; 26% hold Bachelor's Degrees or higher, comparable to state and national averages. The median yearly household income is $56,000, with 9% of individuals in poverty. Fifty percent of Wildeboro County residents are married; and, 84% of its residents remain in the same household over a two-year period. Only 3% its population live in mobile homes and 1% of its residents use Musboro County's International Airport for travel abroad.

Gradually Evolving Community College (GECC). Gradually Evolving Community College (GECC) has multiple campuses within Wildeboro County from which most of its undergraduates come. Its main campus has block-shaped brick buildings and small courtyards of grass. The faculty building, from which walkways extend to the library and cafeteria, appears hotel-like. A newly renovated section of the administrative building has a more contemporary and inviting atmosphere, contrasting with an unattractive student affairs building which houses the registrar's office. The majority of GECC students are pursuing Associate's Degrees and professional certificates. However, the Florida Department of Education recently approved GECC to offer a Bachelor of Science Degree, thereby transforming the GECC into a Gradually Evolving State College (GESC). GECC's annual in-state tuition is $2,500; and approximately 29% of its students receive Pell Grants. The undergraduate population of the GECC is nearly 15,000, with more than half of its students enrolled part-time. Annually, approximately 12% of GECC's students transfer into FGPU. Most of GECC's

students are White (58%), Hispanic (15%), and African American (15%). Few Asians

(<4%) and no American Indian or AlaskanNatives attend the university. Thirty-six

percent of GECC's students took more than two years to complete their AA degrees.

The Cases

Comprised of field notes, transcripts, and reflective journal entries, the data is

represented by three cases: policy experts, technocrats, and generalists (Figure 1). Based

on informants' responses to the exploratory questions, individuals were placed in one of

the three categories resulting in a total of four administrators in each case: two from the

university and two from the community college. Each case presents the informants'

perceptions of the statewide articulation policy, resulting institutional practices, and

future recommendations to improve the transfer process for underrepresented students.
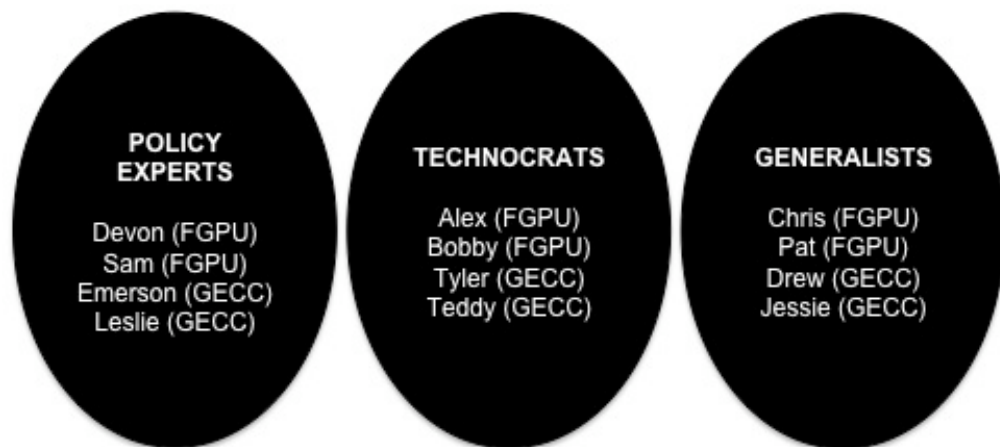
Figure 1. The Three Cases

Case one: the policy experts. As administrators ranging from middle- to high-level positions, policy experts possess the greatest understanding of the Florida articulation agreement (Table 4). Those with the most knowledge will be presented first, followed by the others.

Table 4

The Policy Expert's Case Matrix

Participant	Race	Gender	Age	Inst.	Admin. Level	Years At Inst.	Years in Position
Devon	White	Male	50s	U	Middle	20 +	1 – 3
Sam	White	Male	40s	U	High	8 – 10	4 – 7
Emerson	White	Female	50s	CC	Middle	4 – 7	1 – 3
Leslie	White	Male	50s	CC	High	11 – 15	4 – 7

Devon (Dr. Incremental), FGPU

Moving incrementally

Through academic mire

Squelching policy fires

Suturing wounds

Wrestling whirling dervishes

Kicking up from time to time

Who can predict the rise and fall

of the human condition?

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Early morning. Just outside the main entrance of a 1970's style administrative

building at FGPU, a campus shuttle bus driver waves to me, an African American male,

An African American security guard greets me warmly on my way in and tells me to

have a nice day on my way out. Despite the social niceties, I cannot see what lies beyond

the opaque door to the undergraduate affairs office. Once inside, however, Devon's office

assistant guides me past a labyrinth of graduate student cubicles, before emerging into a

bright and spacious office with a 15 X 10 foot window overlooking the library lawn. An

L-shaped desk stands adjacent to two bookshelves laden with policy books. Eggshell

colored walls are adorned with artful posters and personal photographs of his family.

Devon's desk is immaculate, and his workspace, meticulous. After a few minutes of

getting acquainted and some brief discussion about the subject of his Ph.D., I begin the

interview with Devon, an articulate and affable man in his early fifties [field notes and

reflective journal excerpt, May 2009].

When I initially contacted Devon to schedule this interview, he expressed concern

that he had little to offer in terms of insights into transfer policy. However, Devon's

experience as an accomplished administrator and member of a successful political

science faculty at FGPU provide a multifaceted perspective on the transfer process. He

describes the many aspects of his job:

I'm Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Services and that's

really two offices; Undergraduate Studies houses about seven or eight different

units including the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, Undergraduate

Research, and Interdisciplinary Studies and a few others. Academic Services is

one of those units. The Academic Services office itself deals with a lot of student

issues having to do with withdrawals, medical withdrawals, drops, grade

forgiveness, or late grade forgiveness. Actually, the Registrar's Office deals with

that, transient requests, transfer of courses [May 2009].

Devon's major job responsibilities as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies and

Director of Academic Services call for a comprehensive understanding of state level

requirements and the criteria to be contained in these courses—knowledge which he

possesses. He states:

I oversee the articulation process between the university and the State Course

Numbering System (SCNS). I deal with every course on campus and having to

do course numbering and I'm the administrative presence on the university's

Undergraduate Course Review Committee as well, and so give technical expertise

about policies and about the courses and our course database that we have. Then

when things are approved I send them up to the state and get them back from the

state, so technical stuff like that. I also participate in the Common Program

Prerequisites with the state and that actually is not part of Undergraduate Studies;

that comes from another Vice Provost, but I've gotten involved, because I'm also

involved in the Undergraduate catalog process, and all these things sort of mix

together in an interesting way and land here with some dimension. It has to do

with curriculum, it has to do with students who are the university students who

are here and either have situations that are atypical, in the sense that they need a

late something or a drop something, or they're not covered by the first stage of a

process such as transfer courses [May 2009].

Articulation also falls under his purview. Devon considers himself the "technical expert"

and "the administrative presence" on the undergraduate review committee. He modestly

notes, however, that he has little interaction with transfer students.

I don't do the transfer courses myself, there's another person in the office who

does and a lot of the courses that transfer in, (a) they're common course

numbering so they automatically transfer in, in Florida and that's the greatest

amount of courses; or b) they've already been transferred in before from another

non-SCNS institution and the degree audit process takes care of that. But there are

others [courses] that have to be evaluated. The colleges determine whether they

meet major requirements and our office will determine whether it meets general

education program (Gordon Rule) other requirements that we have at the

university level, university level requirements [May 2009].

Instead, Devon's views his primary role as communicating and implementing transfer-

related policy and through a number of offices including academic advising, transfer and

transition services, and the office of admissions. As Devon paints a picture of his job, he

states, "things sort of mix together in an interesting way and land here with some

dimension." One of these dimensions involves acting as the articulation officer FGPU to

the Florida state department's articulation committee. He explains, "When things are

approved I send them up to the state and get them back from the state. I also participate in the Common Program Prerequisites (CPP).

Devon was groomed for his current position. He remarks, "I've been here since the 1980's so like a tumbleweed, I've picked up a lot of tree dust of one sort or another, or knowledge. That sort of qualified me for the job, I guess." He discusses the challenges of implementing state policy at the institutional level. Apparently, his predecessor held the position for 17 years and then retired. When I asked if his predecessor had passed on his perceptions of the transfer and articulation process Devon reflects:

> Yes, but not so much of the articulation process. We talked about it and he also showed me some of the technical aspects of just what he did, in a very procedural way, mechanical way. Then he left some materials for me to look at [May 2009].

To learn more about the statewide transfer policy and to preserve continuity, Devon drove to Tallahassee and met with the Office of Articulation and State Course Numbering System (SCNS). He asserts, "I wanted to make sure I understood things as thoroughly as I could at that point in time and also put a face with a name so they knew who I was and I knew who they were." Devon perceived this strategy as not only productive but also essential, in building his relationship with the state.

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. In discussing the agreement, Devon acknowledges the benefits of the Florida system. He provides two examples of what makes Florida's articulation agreement so successful.

One of the things, and this comes up with transfer students, is and they say it or

faculty will say it but transfer students will come from another state system and

we notice it, particularly the person who works with all this transfer credit, notices

that Florida's unique in the way we do the articulation of the courses. I think it's

a very useful tool in a lot of respects. It's a useful tool both organizationally

because you're not revisiting the same issues time and again. For a system that's

important if you call it a system. If you want to call it a polyglot or something.

But if want to say well we have the system of education, I think that's not a

weakness but rather a strength. There are limitations and there are problems

because any time you have a taxonomy and you try to fill in that taxonomy, not

every shape fits in every square the way it ought to and again people are involved.

The whole taxonomy is enforced by faculty and discipline committees and I don't

know how familiar you are with all that but given that different discipline

committees take on different characters because of their chair. When the re-

reviews happen every five years somebody comes up with different ideas for the

taxonomy and so there are costs involved in terms of changing numbers [May

2009].

Additionally, Devon attributes the success of the Florida articulation agreement as

directly related to the way knowledge is openly shared between the state and its higher

education counterparts. This is especially the case when more experienced individuals

retire and new administrators enter the scene. Those individuals with prior knowledge

can help fill in the policy gaps, when policy as it is written, eludes:

No one could know everything and although we tried to make bureaucracies have

information lodged in them that are not tied to people specifically but rather

records and so forth. Between the lines of every policy, records can't fill those in,

only people can. One of the interesting things about the sort of synthetic nature or

the plastic nature of bureaucracy is it's not a theoretical construct, it's a dynamic

organism and so I think that's one reason why wherever the knowledge is and

however it can be filled is useful. I also think that that sometimes that the

situations that have been phased at a particular institution sometimes have not

been phased at other institutions or statewide. It isn't that there's an answer but

there's a way that something was done that can help people think about the issue

as they confirm or develop a state policy or a state statement. Often these are not

policies; they're just ways of operating and how do we get the information and so

forth. I think that the third one briefly is the collaborative nature of an enterprise

like that I think. That's a good thing too. We all understand the modern era of the

notion of collaboration and I think that's a helpful thing even when you're

looking for leadership you find it in all sorts of different ways [May 2009].

When probed to specifically discuss the agreement in relation to underrepresented

transfer students, Devon claims that he does not see differences:

Looking at underrepresented students as being part of any school that participates

in the SCNS, it regularizes that it, it takes it out of the personal and puts it into the

impersonal in a positive way. You took this course and it doesn't matter whether

you took it at one school or another traditionally minority school or the best

school in the system. Whether it's that school or another school it all counts the

66

same as a transfer course. I think it evens out and doesn't make it… Again, it's

impersonal in that sense. It depends on what one's political perspective is or what

one's personal perspective is, but it makes you not have to articulate the reasons

for why this course should be accepted. I think if underrepresented groups are

less able to do so for one reason or are viewed as in a certain way, in a

discriminatory way or whatever, this takes all that out of there. I think it has a

potentially positive effect. I think it does for everybody. I don't think that

differentiates but I think it could be helpful in that way [May 2009].

The only barrier he has witnessed happens when courses are transferred from out-of-state

or in state institutions not participating in the SCNS.

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. Devon

begins a discussion on institutional policy and practice by describing his incremental

approach. He compares his leadership approach to an effective weight loss plan, noting

that an individual who selects a nutritious diet and exercise over one's lifetime will see

better outcomes than one who chooses crash diets. Integrating this philosophy with

meeting the needs of all students, Devon remarks, "I want to make things more equitable

because I'm always trying to balance equality of treatment among diverse situations; it's

sort of making the incommensurable, commensurable." However, meeting the needs of

all students appears to be a growing challenge for Devon. He revisits his theory of

incrementalism, drawing on a scientific metaphor to delineate how FGPU has historically

responded to the needs of underrepresented students:

Those small things can help all sorts of students and I think that is where the university has made an effort for underrepresented groups. It hasn't been a splashy effort. It's been something that's built into the sort of DNA of the school to be aware of these issues and to think about them in everything you do and to evaluate how it's going to happen in any given policy. But not to defend yourself in a way that's artificial and makes groups the target of criticism for that or anything else. I think we've made strides over the years in terms of underrepresented groups and in their performance here at the university too so that somehow the people doing the planning and the teaching and the support mechanisms and so forth have as a collective sort of organization understood and addressed some of those issues and I think these things never stop because the dynamics change of who needs attention at a given time, what sort of problems. We have problems now that we hadn't expected three years ago with the economy. That affects students, it affects faculty, it affects everybody working at the university. You have to deal with those incidental changes. But again so back to my theme of incremental change. I think that those are or sometimes people don't realize that there was a reason why things change, why test scores improve, why retention rates improve for underrepresented groups and markers like that. They happen because we were doing things to do it but we didn't shout about it, we just did it and with people knowing what they were doing, but not shouting about it. That's just my way of operating too so I'm comfortable with that and maybe that's why I like the university [May 2009].

In the above example, Devon likens himself to a politician balancing the ever-changing needs of his constituents inside the sphere of the university. This careful balance becomes destabilized, however, when the state fails to establish clear guidelines for new policies, such as the recent revisions to the CPP, and then publically reprimands FGPU for not following proper protocol. The conflict can engender great confusion:

As far as I know we were given guidelines by the state as to how to do this, how this would take place and there'd be teleconferencing and meetings when necessary, but of course it all happened just as the budgets were being cobbled down significantly. The chance to do meetings was taken out of the equation and for which teleconferencing is not a good substitute. At least not unless you have SKYPE, a bunch of video stuff and you can see people's expressions and really have the type of participation that you need in a given thing. But, getting back to the objectification, we were told those things but there's nothing really in policy, or there's at least that I know of, there was nothing that said these things will be done, those things will be done, they have to be approved in this manner and so forth. It's sort of... I'm sure it isn't but it's sort of as though it's made up as it goes along. It's driven a lot by deadlines at the Articulation Coordination Committee that come up and say well we need an answer, we want to conclude this work by then and I think there could be improvement without criticizing anything about it because I think these come about for non-standard reasons I guess [May 2009].

In his view, the state is having trouble getting its act together. To clarify his point, Devon handed me a state memo that he had just received with a list of 3000 level courses that

had become designated as 2000 level courses. He had been given no explanation as to why these changes occurred:

> We have a couple of 3000 level courses that would become 2000 level courses.
> The way we teach them they're 3000 level courses. There was a large project
> about 10 years ago when they did leveling throughout the whole system so that
> was done en masse with a lot of courses, but this is just something I got
> Wednesday or Tuesday I'm working on. It causes a certain amount of—turmoil's
> a much too strong a word—sort of those whirling dervishes, whatever little things
> kick up from time to time [May 2009].

The memo does not explain the arbitrary leveling down of courses to be put into effect immediately. As a result, Devon would have very little time to inform academic departments, negotiate these modifications with faculty, and rectify any differences with the community colleges. For underrepresented transfers, the biggest hurdles are fast approaching:

> We're going through a lot of changes now with the state colleges. For instance
> with new legislation having to do with Bright Futures, with excess credit hours
> and with CLAST, that's important. But the Bright Futures and the excess credit
> hours potentially affect transfer students and potentially affect underrepresented
> groups in some ways. How do you deal with those things? [May 2009].

Sudden gratuitous changes in state policy, such as the examples above, are what Devon refers to as "whirling dervishes" and "things that kick up from time to time." Although he seems to minimize the stress caused by these maneuvers, it appears he does feel a certain helplessness as he has no choice but to implement them.

The future. If Devon presided over the state of Florida, he would capitalize on the programs that different institutions offer to create niche markets:

I think the Common Program Prerequisites should be as lean as possible because the missions of the various state universities or their perceived missions—the way institutions' individual degrees develop are really somewhat different. I think that's a strength, that variety. The Common Program Prerequisites (CPP) gives you a common basis for understanding what can be used in those degrees at those institutions, while at the same time those institutions can be individualized to the needs of that area of the state or that particular role of the institution. Now we don't have formalized a three-tier system or anything like that. I come from California, which did. I grew up with the University of California, the state universities where they were called state colleges at the time but became state universities and the junior colleges out there. It functioned rather well. Whether we should have that here or not is a whole different issue. But the issue is there are roles that that each institution plays and I think that's a strength rather than a weakness. A CPP that's lean and mean or something like that that really tells students what they need to know but doesn't get too extensive to interfere with the university's ability to cater their program in a certain way helps students at the community colleges and helps transfer students I think by informing them of those basic needs. Beyond that those articulation agreements that may be formal such as we have with several schools or informal, done at higher or lower levels of administration, really keep that information flowing both ways and I think

that's a good thing. We have a number of regional campuses and work closely

with the community colleges and those campuses [May 2009].

Florida's rapidly growing Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) and competition for

students does not seem to faze Devon in terms of its disrupting strong ties among

institutions:

> Often the strengths of those ties are historical, either longer or shorter, between
>
> institutions and what I've found is they often also outlive individuals who are in
>
> administrative positions and so forth because the institutions grow common
>
> arteries and veins that form each other. I think that once established, if the
>
> foundation's good enough, that these things can either stay at a plateau or improve
>
> over time and meet changing student needs and/or changing student goals for
>
> programs and so forth. I think that the common program prerequisites give a
>
> foundation for that [May 2009].

He views FGPU's historical ties to the community college as binding, despite the

popularity of the CCB trend:

> I think there are 14 [community colleges] that are state colleges; only one of our
>
> partners has changed to a state college. To me, that suggests the effectiveness of
>
> working with your partner and understanding what needs they and their students
>
> have and so they don't say, well, we need to be our own four-year-degree
>
> institution. Now maybe that won't hold, maybe it's an artifact of this year or last
>
> year, but I think it does speak to that [May 2009].

In asking Devon to predict what the state will look like when he retires, he believes new

leadership can usher in unexpected change:

In 17 years from now the state's going to be much different than it is now and really the pressures are going to be different… but whole sweeping change has its time and to some people incrementalism looks like sweeping change too so there's all sorts of perceptions out there. New administrations at a college or a university also give you the basis for a sweeping change. You would expect a new president coming in or a new provost coming in is going to make some significant changes that can either be superficial or real but they will make some that will be enunciated as big changes [May 2009].

Again, he revisits his leadership philosophy of incrementalism, but integrates the possibility of sweeping change as a natural result. Devon concludes on an existential note, conceding that despite the excellence of a policy, inevitable breakdowns occur which invariably impact students. He maintains, "That doesn't speak of a failure of policy. It only speaks of the circumstances of the human condition, if I can say that. We are always going to have situations like that."

Sam (Dr. Chief Problem Solver), FGPU

Encourage and advocate

Try not to equivocate

Make policy rhetoric clear

And confusion disappear

Hard work for minorities

Must be a state priority

Still plenty to be done

Eventual equality won

[Found data poem, November 2009]

I return a month later to the FGPU administrative building to interview Sam. I encounter yet another opaque door leading to the student affairs office. This time I must press a buzzer and speak to an intercom to announce my presence. I am immediately buzzed into the office, but only after giving my name and purpose of my visit. An older female secretary in her late 50's sits behind her eye-level cubical and instructs me to be seated. She wears a wireless headset and discretely signals to Sam's office assistant that I have arrived. A male assistant seemingly materializes from nowhere (also wearing a wireless headset) to inform me that Sam will be arriving momentarily. Sam arrives fashionably late. We shake hands and move briskly through the corridors to his office while he explains that he has recently returned from supervising a study abroad program in Spain. Inside a roomy, naturally lit office with a 30-foot window to the outside, we sit together at a round oak table in close proximity to his work desk. Sam is an eloquent, tall, and impeccably well-dressed White man in his late 40's. He apologizes that he has another meeting, but is eager to discuss the nuances of the transfer process [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, June 2009].

Sam has been heavily entrenched in the transfer process since his early career when he worked directly with transfer students before focusing exclusively on policy administration. His own street-level experience with implementing policy at the "ground level" allows him to leverage change at FGPU's administrative level:

I've gone through different stages here from being the director of transfer services where it was one-on-one and large group of transfers to now where it's more policy aspects. My role is not only with individual students but relationships with the community colleges. I work from an institutional perspective, when I look at our big picture of articulation issues. I approve articulation agreements. I have discussions. I work with our community college partners. I work with our regional campus partners to talk about bigger picture issues related to community college students. I serve on the enrollment planning group and bring up issues related to transfer students. 'How do the transfer students fit into this picture?' [June 2009].

Sam also travels to national meetings and conferences, which serve as forums to disseminate his knowledge of the transfer issues to the wider academic community. He remarks, "I serve on two national advisory boards because of my expertise related to transfer students." His greatest influence on transfer students, however, is at the local level.

Right now we're getting ready to do some communications to community colleges so I'm helping write that [policy]. When we look at our catalog, I review anything related to the programs. Are we doing the right thing for transfer students? Are these going to be issues for transfer students? I chair our university's retention committee and so we're going to get to look at the special issues related to transfer students [June 2009].

Policy creation and implementation is his major focus:

> So it's more of how do our policies affect transfer students. Do we need to give
> them some special consideration? I also do things that, for example, I supervise
> veterans and in our case most of our veterans are transfer students and so there's
> some overlap there with that. I work very closely with Undergraduate
> Admissions. I supervise transfer services and our regional campus student
> services which are for transfer students. And so I play out those roles in many
> ways [June 2009].

Sam's proven reputation as a leading authority on transfer issues gives him decision-
making power at FGPU. He asserts, "At my level I'm also kind of the chief problem
solver, if you will. If something comes up and there's an issue, I'm going to look at the
issue and make some determinations and recommendations."

> *Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students.* Sam's
formidable history of shaping policy and of working with transfer students affords him
greater insight on its strengths and weaknesses compared to his colleagues. He has
worked on this policy at the state level and therefore knows it intimately. This
experience contributes to Sam's understanding of the specific aims of the policy over
time:

> The agreement's changed and particularly over the last 12 years. The original
> focus, and I used to work for the Legislature and I used to work for the Division
> of Community Colleges, so I had a lot of work with this one. But the general
> bottom line basis was a student ought to be able to go to the community college,

complete two years, complete 60 hours, complete their general education, their

prerequisites, go right into a university in the upper division and be out. A real

simple basic kind of thing [June 2009].

His criticism of the agreement however, extends beyond its simplicity:

I don't like 2+2 because native students aren't graduating in four. Community

college and transfer students aren't graduating in four. They're taking three or

four just to get out of the community college because they're going part-time.

They do the same thing at the university. I track retention of transfer students for

10 years out because we still have them that are still enrolled and progressing

because they're part-time students. I love the idea and the concept of it. I think

there's always work to be done. I think that it's a great model. It's certainly a

national model that is certainly one of the best in the state. I think what helps that

is the common course numbering system. I don't think you can look at the

statewide articulation agreement without also considering the common course

numbering because it wouldn't work as easy [June 2009].

Sam likes the general concept of the agreement but has difficulty using "2+2," which he

views as obsolete terminology and framework. He observes that college students today

take closer to six years to finish. He provides an example:

If you do the AA degree and let's say you're planning to be Engineering and you

take your general education and usually your prerequisites, but when you get here

on campus—which happens often—you now want to be in Business. Well you

don't have just two years left because you didn't take the Business prerequisites.

So you're starting back at all the prerequisites, no general education, but prerequisites so… [June 2009].

Despite this criticism, Sam views the Florida AA degree to be an advantage:

If you transfer as a community college student without the AA degree, you don't get the general education guarantees, you don't get the other guarantees, it's a lot harder, you don't get grade forgiveness. There's a lot of things that you don't get and it could be detrimental to you whereas if you just stay. We actually encourage students that if they come here before they've gotten the AA completed, let's say that maybe they had one class to go or something, we'll tell them to take it here or take it there and still graduate with the AA degree. So we actually have students that literally may be taking classes here and will go back and get their AA degree. Or transfer one of our classes back to get the AA degree. We really encourage them to do that. It's absolutely to their benefit. They don't have to do our general education. They get their grade forgiveness. They get so many things by doing that that it's worth it. 'If you're going to take a class, take a class, but go where you can get the actual degree.' Students don't always see that but there's nothing to it [June, 2009].

Regarding the articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented students, Sam sees the articulation agreement as a bridge to the baccalaureate for all students, rather than a hindrance.

I think it is an access route. Well, particularly for our institution, look at the number of people that are coming in. The last couple of years and then five years before that we've had more transfer students come in than natives. We have more

transfer students graduate than natives. We consider ourselves an access

institution and it's one of our President's goals. Maybe the focus is a little

different but you just look at the numbers in the state and the numbers of students

that are going on through that route of the community college first and then the

university. I think that's happening. I think that you've got some differences

when you… when you think about FIU, Miami and you think about FAMU.

Right now they're minority-majority institutions theirs might be a little bit

different. But even that, if you think about it now many of our community

colleges have flipped and are minority-majority institutions. Another nearby

community college, for example, has a large Hispanic population. I think that

going the community college route for many of the students, it's the easier way to

go. Because from a transition perspective, it's not easy to transition into an

environment like this from a high school environment. The expectations are

different particularly, and for all students who aren't prepared in Math, for

example, which is one of the challenge areas. Universities can't do remedial. It's

got to be the community colleges that do it. There are a lot of students that need

that piece to get up to speed. I would rather see them start there and get a strong

foundation than come here and struggle [June 2009].

Sam sees the statute as providing an access route to higher education, especially for

students who would not otherwise achieve a baccalaureate degree:

If we didn't have this model, there would be a lot of students not being able to go

to the university. The good thing about the model is if you can't get into the

university and, quite frankly, many of the universities are basing it upon SAT

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scores, which in some cases can be biased because of cultural and those kinds of

things, and if it's based upon that then underrepresented students aren't getting in

because their scores aren't as good. Yet they're equally capable of completing

their degrees. I think what it does is, it allows those students to progress on and

progress through very easily. It gives them a chance, particularly if they're first

generation students and they haven't gone over and don't have family

backgrounds that have gone away, the community college is a much better way to

enter [June 2009].

In Sam's view, the "community colleges can provide greater attention" to

underrepresented groups.   He lists the smaller class sizes as an easier transition vehicle

from high school as opposed to starting at the university and feeling overwhelmed. Sam

asserts, "They're walking into classrooms of 400-500 people in it. They're walking into

an experience on a university campus that neither they nor their families know anything

about" [June 2009].

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented students. When asked to

express his thoughts on implementing policies, he describes his leadership style as

proactive. He claims, "We try to be, and I use the word 'try' because it's never perfect to

be intentional in thinking about what policies and procedures we do and their impact on

transfer students." Intentional policy has three parts: "to get them out of the community

college, to get them into the FGPU and out of the university." Intentional practice is

manifested through targeted procedures:

We're in the process of hiring some of our staff to work on the community

college campuses. The idea is we want them to be successful. We want them

here. We know they're coming, so let's be proactive, let's make sure we're doing

the things that we need to do. Those are the kinds of things that we've developed

around the premise of student success [June 2009].

However, Sam acknowledges the obstacles to this approach:

Sometimes faculty at FGPU want to discriminate. 'Oh a transfer student doesn't

do as well in my classes, they're not graduating.' Sometimes it's because they're

not aware of the data. Sometimes they're making their comments based upon one

or two people. But there's that perception in elitist institutions around the

country. Everybody wants their natives and the homegrown kinds of students and

doesn't want the transfer students [June 2009].

When encouraged to elaborate on potential encumbrances in relation to underrepresented

students, Sam states:

I don't know that it would hinder it. It certainly depends on those students and

where they go. One of the benefits in Florida is because we only have 10…

technically, 11 universities and there's only about 19% of the high school

graduating class that gets to go to a university.

Yet Sam still perceives all students as having academic challenges and does not see

underrepresented students as unique. All transfer students have transitional issues:

A lot of the student success programming around the country is based upon the

first and the second year. Well, the assumption is transfer students already have

the first and second year so they don't need anything. They don't need the extra

programming; they don't need the things that are needed for that. But if you look at all the national research and the data, their first year isn't that different from the first year freshmen. They go through transition issues. They have to get used to a new environment. They have to get over the shock of transferring. They have to figure out what their community is. They have to figure out what faculty require. They have to figure out how they're going to study because the level is different. Even though they've had experience at a college level the difference between lower division and upper division is out there. The faculty in an upper division might require eight books and four papers and two tests. Well maybe you didn't get that at the lower division. That happens. For a year, part of that transition too is just the size. Even at a community college, I'm in a class of 49. I come here. I'm in a class of 90 or 100 to 450. Well, that's a different learning style. Or what we notice a lot is online video classes. They don't have online classes at the community college, or very few. They don't have a video class where you watch everything on video. They come here and they do. Well they don't know how to study for that. They don't know how to have the communication with the faculty because they're used to just talking to their faculty in the class or just after class. But here, faculty are in research and service. They're not as readily available. So it's all the transition. Around the country there's a perception that transfer students ought to be ready for something at a certain point when you need to give them at least a semester to really transfer in. If you look at academic performance they may have been good at the community college. They dipped their first semester at the university and then they go back up. Well it's the transition.

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Their environment is different. The expectations are different, the community's different, and their friends are different. They're still working, in most cases, so they're now trying to juggle that. They're trying to juggle work with more homework and different kinds of classes. In many cases when they get to the university they're just not getting into the classes that are really in their major. Even if you do prerequisites, think about it, prerequisites for Business, you take Math classes, Stats class, some Econ and some Accounting. Well what if you're a Marketing major? You've not had a Marketing class? You take your first Marketing class you're like, oh God, I don't like this. Well you don't know that until you're a junior. You're going to struggle. I think that's part of that transition [June 2009].

According to Sam, in navigating the transfer process, the considerable hurdle for underrepresented students is more personal than academic—especially for first generation in college populations and their families:

The challenge for the underrepresented student is more of the transition issues, not what I would call the academic issues, it's transition issues. Family ties, family involvement… We've been doing parent orientation for transfer students for many years. What we see in most of the parents are the underrepresented parents, first generation parents, they want to know what this is going to be like, they want to know the university experience; and, because of some of the cultural backgrounds, they want to go through it with the student. Going to college is a family thing. It's not just the individual student thing; it's the whole family. So for first generation, that student graduating from the university is absolutely huge

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for the family. So for them there's some additional family pressures, (1) because they may be working to help support the family and (2) their success is not just their individual success, it's the collective success of the family. So now I can't do anything because I can't do it wrong because I can't let down my family [June 2009].

In his role of "chief problem solver," Sam refers to orientation as an example of how he improved institutional procedures to help underrepresented students acclimate and adapt.

Well, we do a couple of things. At the transfer piece we actually have a parent or a program which we were kind of one of the first in the country about 10 years ago to really do parent programming for transfers because everybody's response was…the parents aren't going to come and the parents don't need it. And that (1) it's wrong and (2) now with the millennial generation where the parents are so involved in their lives. We'll do a transfer orientation of 500 students and we'll have 400 to 500 parents. We have big ones. We really try to meet those kinds of needs. Parents are involved. They really are. Which is interesting because then that's why I say it's a first year experience whether you're a first year transfer or first year freshman you still have the first year piece.   So you've got to talk to mom and dad about what it means about letting go. We actually do "letting go" at parent transfer orientation. We do that kind of a piece. We do bilingual orientation is where we do programs in Spanish for parents. I actually on Monday have to give a speech in Spanish to the parents. We have a success handbook that we give out to parents. Whether you're a transfer or a freshman, if your parents want a handbook in Spanish, we will give them a handbook in Spanish. We have

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our website in Spanish. So we try to provide those services available to those

students. And particularly it's not the students; it's really for parents. Giving

greater assurance of this is what we've got available to you… trying to do that.

We have a lot of people that speak Spanish and so we'll make that known to

them. If we're at an orientation and we have parents that predominantly speak

Spanish or prefer to speak in Spanish because it's easier to understand…we'll

have people with them [June 2009].

Under his direction, family-style orientations are conducted in Spanish; the orientation

manual and admissions website are also available in Spanish. In addition, Spanish-

speaking academic advisors are on hand to assist, which becomes another advantage of

helping underrepresented students navigate the system.

The future. In looking to improve the articulation agreement in the future, Sam

responds:

My initial reaction would be is that you build in the prerequisites within the

statewide agreement so that an AA has general education and prerequisites,

because it would make for a smoother transition. The problem with that, although

in concept it's a great idea, the problem is that when a student changes their

major, all of that doesn't work [June 2009].

Building the CCP for the AA degree into the statewide agreement would make for a

smoother transition and prevent "lag time." Sam explains that lag-time can occur due to

the differing program prerequisites, which vary greatly from one SUS institution to

another. The result: students either "stop-out" for a semester to reapply or require an

extra semester in order to catch-up. Thus, giving local student priority access may remedy this problem. The only glitch, Sam admits, is that students may change their major [June 2009].

This discussion on the future gravitated to one concerning the recent excess credit hours legislation. Sam asserts:

Do you believe that the point of postsecondary education is to educate somebody or do you believe it's to train them for a job? Because philosophically those are two very different things. You are trying to educate the whole person which means you want them to think analytically; you want them to think critically; you want them to have a broad experience; you want to expose them to many things. If you want to train them you're training them just to do this. So you want this technical piece of it. So that's always been my struggle with the Legislature who thinks that our students are going to come in, they're only going to do "A", they're going to know from the age of 14 that they want to do "A" and they're never going to change their mind. Well that's not realistic. It doesn't work. I see it with the students that come in with an AA degree at the same time they graduate high school. Well, it doesn't work. They change their mind. At 14 and 15 they're being asked to pick a major, a career; by 18 they want something different. That's a challenge. I understand a financial need, if you will, for people to be as efficient as possible but there's an educational process that happens along the way.

He then relates his personal experience of changing careers and his own success:

> I can say it from my perspective and it's one of these on which I'd love to do a survey for? the Legislature. I didn't change my major in college. I stuck with a major from day one and I graduated with that major. I worked in that field for a year and decided that's not what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. So then I had to go back to school and I totally changed direction. Now, sitting in this seat, I wouldn't go back and do it any different but the Legislature would consider me unsuccessful because I am not in a career for which I earned my first degree. That's how they determine success. Whereas I would tell you I'm pretty darn successful because I could make that decision. I can use some of the stuff from my first degree but I'm more thoughtful. What I learned in that degree and being thoughtful, analytical and all that helps me today. My question is, is how many legislators are in a job that is tied directly to their bachelor's degree? I don't think you're going to find that many. Although lawyers, for example, you don't get an undergrad in Law. So I look at it from that perspective. That's never going to happen. They're trying to deal with an issue (where) they don't have space; what do we do with it? I don't think that's the right way to do it. Students are going to change their mind. There are some other things to try to do and develop some of those kinds of things and help to structure things for student… But I guess philosophically you have to decide; when do students no longer have the choices. Or, I guess the way the Legislature's kind of looking at it is, oh, you've got a choice, you're just going to pay for it. The Legislature and the state of Florida

aren't going to pay for it, your choices. I guess you can look certainly at private

school. You pay for your choices there at a different level [June 2009].

In asking Sam who will suffer most as a result of this new legislation, he remarks:

Well, the direct suffering is going to be the student. They're either going to have

to pay or they're going to drop out of school. Now if you'll think of the bigger

picture, the point of education is to educate. An educated citizenry is going to

contribute back to the community, is going to build a better global community,

the whole piece. So if we're denying people that access because we're making it

too costly, okay, are we really hurting ourselves in the long run if the students

don't complete? Or what if, in some respects because the state is still paying for

graduate education, so okay, the student gets the degree in something, they finish

it out just because they have to, then they spend more money to get a Master's

Degree. The state is still paying for that Master's Degree [June 2009].

In noting that the excess credit hours could have a detrimental effect on students, Sam

sees the current confusion on the specific rules of the policy as potentially advantageous

to institutions:

Well that's my favorite thing about policy on legislation; it depends on how you

interpret it. I'm waiting to see how people are going to interpret the legislation.

Because some parts of it talk about hours they take at the university, not

necessarily hours they take before they get here. That's what we worked out the

last time. They weren't held accountable until after they transferred [June 2009].

He predicts the destiny of this legislation:

Eventually one of the things Florida is really good about is it'll all work out in the end. We will make it work. There will be some students hurt along the way and they'll either be taking out more loans, they'll drop out, that kind of a piece. That's yet to be determined. Can the additional cost be factored into financial aid? Because now their cost of attendance has gone up. Can you figure that into financial aid? Bright Futures will be gone by the time they get to that point. But are they now eligible for loans and Pell and other things because their cost is higher? Well, maybe, if they work all that out it may not be a big deal. A lot of our policy in higher education, Florida's Legislature and Department of Ed, highly micro-managed universities and community colleges more so than in other states. As soon as the first senator or congressperson's House of Represen… of Legislature, whatever. House of Representatives… as soon as their first son or daughter has a problem with this, then it's going to come up. That's just the reality. That's how a lot of laws get passed. That's how a lot of the statewide articulation agreement got passed is that too many people were having trouble going on to the university. They just made a law. We'll just put it into law and that'll fix that. We'll just make the universities do stuff. So we'll see. I've kind of ridden through this storm before and it was there. We did all this stuff and then it disappeared. It's incredibly hard to implement and unfortunately when they make a lot of policies and laws they don't think about the implementation piece. But the computer things that are going to have to happen to keep track of what's okay, what's not okay, to evaluate all this and then figure out what you're going

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to charge on. Think about it; let's say you get to the point where you're one hour over your 120%. So now the system's going to have to calculate, you pay fees on 11 hours but on one hour you pay a different set of fees. It's going to be phenomenal for the computer systems to set it up [June 2009].

Returning to Sam's recommendations to improve the articulation agreement, he concludes:

I think what I might change is that one of the challenges is that you have is… you have the AA degree. It guarantees your admission to a state university, but not the one of your choice. I think that's somewhat challenging for students. But also it's the idea that it changes so that they get in the term after they graduate and just build the system so that there isn't lag time. Sometimes what happens is a student graduates in August but can't get in for that fall. So then they're out for a semester [June 2009].

One of the reasons community college students fail to be admitted in the fall is due to course taking patterns and paperwork delays:

Conferring of degrees and having the credentials. What happens a lot of times is the student… The only way you're going to get all the grade forgiveness is if you have the degree. Well without the grade forgiveness you have less than a 2.0. We can't transfer with less than a 2.0. So they're waiting to see if you're officially going to get that 2.0. But I think there's some ways that we ought to try to work that out to do that piece of it. There's got to be some ways to kind of make it easier. Again, I'm also thinking to me it's evolution. There's always got to be… what's the next thing? How do we make it better for students? I do think

that one of the things I wish and I'm not sure how you can change it but we have a lot of students that just don't get the AA degree. They can transfer without it and it ends up making it more difficult for them. If they had just applied and gotten the degree, their life would change. So what happens is they go back after the fact to do it [June 2009].

To remedy this situation, he would allow community colleges to have majors:

Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) doesn't allow any of the two-year degrees to have a major. So they call it a pre-major or a plan or something. Well, if they had majors, at least students are thinking about that. It doesn't mean they won't change their mind. They change them here, they change them everywhere [June 2009].

Sam believes that this change would hopefully allow more students with AA degrees to be admitted to the Florida university of their choice.

Emerson (Dr. Transparency), GECC

Diversity awareness

Could bring

Policy fairness

Yet if universities

Don't abide

Minority inequities

Will reside

[Found data poem, November 2009]

I had difficulty scheduling an interview with Emerson because I was unaware that Gradually Evolving Community College (GECC) was closed on Fridays in the summer. When we finally connected, her response to meeting me was very welcoming. Her windowless office is located adjacent to that of the registrar on the first floor of the administrative building. Emerson, a stylishly dressed Caucasian woman in her late 40s, apologized for the disheveled looked of her office due to building renovations. We sat at a large oval table and had a brief conversation about growing up in the north, attending college in California, and her experiences in writing a dissertation. Emerson took scrupulous notes during our interview. She wanted to be sure she thoroughly understood and completely answered my questions [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, June 2009].

Along with her many roles as Assistant Vice-Provost of Student Services at GECC, Emerson is also the articulation officer for the college with over 15 years of experience.

My position as Associate Vice President for Student Services, I function primarily in a support role to the Vice President for Student Services. So areas of responsibility in addition to projects that he would work on include… I've spearheaded the redesign of Student Services in the division and so we've moved to more of the, what's typically called, the one-stop operation; did the redesign for our Dove Center, opened the Sparrow campus and Student Services there. We just did the redesign for our Grackle campus this spring and we are still waiting with baited breath to do the redesign here at Wren because it's going to take an infusion of funds and right now things are just so tight. So at any rate, that's one

of the larger projects I've had and then I still work with those deans of students as well as with the Vice-President for consistency of operations and service, addressing and troubleshooting issues and keeping communication open. So that's one project. Another area of responsibility is Student Success Services in our Adult Education. We're a comprehensive community college. We have not only college credit and vocational programs—we had a large community continuing education program—but we also have adult education with a fully state-certified adult high school and then we have ADE and GED programming as well as ESOL student services for adult education. Some of our student services remain centralized, a centralized operation for college-wide multi-campus and then we have decentralized some of our services. So, for example, with our redesigned model, the dean of students at each of those smaller sites is responsible for day-to-day operations; admissions, transcripts, registration, advising, disability support services, assessment and testing, etc. But we do have a district office and a centralized operation for certain functions of day-to-day oversight that the dean of students would have. I have responsibility. The Director of Assessment and Testing reports to me; the Director of Disability Support Services, Career Development Services, I still work with them. Our Systems Integration Coordinator reports to me, at this point in time although we're looking at possibly shifting that. But she is really the primary point person for knowing our enterprise system and what projects are we working on, how we prioritize those projects, how we assign resources to with our Computing Technical Services

division. The final area and probably the one that's relevant to this interview is

that I also serve as the Articulation Officer.

Upon her acceptance of the position at GECC, she devoted a great deal of time

systemizing the articulation process and making the agreements transparent for the

public. She states, "Articulation is about providing greater access and streamlining

somebody navigating through a program of study and maximizing what they're able to

transfer; and it was almost like it was hidden." Apparently, Emerson started quite a

monumental undertaking:

There were things that were written with no sunset date. I went through about

two filing cabinets of old materials, just kind of weeding through, trying to find

agreements, trying to establish a basic list, is this current, is it not current? Even

just last year, and I kid you not, last year I got a box that I still have files on my

desk of agreements that I need to do. I've gone through them and looked to say,

do we still have that program? Do we have this? Now it's just a closing the loop

to officially sunset those or rewrite them [June 2009].

As GECC's articulation expert, her responsibilities are manifold. She must work with

several departments to make sure that the agreements are clearly written and understood.

When I ask her to further describe her job, she modestly responds with greater

specificity:

What I'm doing is more of a support position to write agreements, to apprise my

colleagues, the leadership team that consists of the Deans of students and

Directors of those offices, to communicate updates to them [June 2009].

Her interaction with students is virtually non-existent, as her focus is on policy

development and implementation. She maintains, "I'll have contact with students but not

on a daily basis, by any means" [June 2009].

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. As the

conversation transitions to the statewide articulation agreement, her perspective remains

positive but contains concern for the sustainability of the policy. She asserts, "It's a

beautiful agreement and, sadly, I think, it's becoming dismantled or there's a threat of it

unraveling." When asked to further explain this statement, she begins by first outlining

the advantages:

> Let's start off with just the AA students. The basic agreement for AA degree
>
> graduates is to transfer and to be assured admission into one of the state university
>
> system institutions, not necessarily in the program of their choice but into… or the
>
> institution of their choice, but into a state university system. The state course
>
> numbering system, the common program prerequisites that are established, the
>
> general education requirements met, those are huge. Those have a tremendous
>
> impact on helping students to move through the system [June 2009].

Then she describes the unraveling:

> When I talk about the statewide agreement being threatened or being dismantled
>
> is that what we're hearing across the state? It's that some of the state universities
>
> have added their own; they kind of follow the common program prerequisites but
>
> then they have their own requirements that they want in their College of
>
> Education or that they want in their College of Engineering. Most institutions

seem to be following the common program prerequisites, but some of the

institutions, particularly the big name institutions, word on the street is that they

pretty much establish whatever additional criteria they want, and impose that.

Now they've gotten slapped on the wrist by FACTS.org or by DOE but that's—

the perception and that's what it amounts to—it's a slap on the wrist; there's no

real leverage for them to make it work the way that most people understand it's

supposed to work. Then the general education requirements met, or the, GERM,

with the 36 credits of Gen Ed, that's huge too. So if somebody completes the Gen

Ed at any institution, theoretically, they should be able to transfer that as a block

and not be required to take any additional Gen Ed at another state institution. The

state course numbering system doesn't apparently have the funds they need to

stay on top of some of the course updates and whatnot. The Common Program

Prerequisites (CPP). Now, interesting there, I mean good grief, theoretically, the

way that works and is supposed to work, that's huge so that you know regardless

of whether you're going to one of five institutions that offer this program, these

are the program… these are the prerequisites you need to meet in order to be

eligible for that program of study [June 2009].

Unraveling of the statute will manifest as an incremental breakdown. The flagship

universities are mostly to blame. Her frustrations and concerns are extended to

underrepresented transfer students. Again, her response is mixed, beginning more

positively and eventually showing frustration/discouragement as she continues:

My initial response to that is because it's a clearer system of what is required and

what it is expected, it's the confusion that can disadvantage students. I think it's

fundamentally a benefit to have that. Students do have other options whether

they're underrepresented or not. I think what's important is to continue to give

students other options for articulation with other private schools… which may or

may not follow state course numbering. They may have more flexibility about

what they'll accept or what they'll require as prerequisites into their major. At

some of the private schools you'll lose credits because you had to meet their

particular prerequisites. But others, depending on what the degree program is,

and now there's just such a, you know, plethora of different degrees. It's BA,

BS…Bachelor of Education, BAS, BABS. BABS. I mean it's fun [June 2009].

When asked to explain what she means by the statement, "It's the confusion that can

disadvantage students," she replies:

Okay, now we're preparing you to go to this SUS institution because that's where

you wanted to go. Oh, now you want to shift gears and now you want to go to

that SUS institution. Oh, and they have their own person. I'm just pulling names

out, but now you want to go to this one, it's still a state university. Oh, there are

these three other courses that they want to have now [June 2009].

Additionally, when students decide to change career paths or when academic advisors are

unaware of newly revised university degree programs, the confusion can become

exacerbated:

There's not that ease to transfer to another option because advisors have to dig

into the catalog to determine what courses a student needs so they can not only

transfer, but transfer and have the minimum number of credits [remaining] to

complete their degree program at the university [June 2009].

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Emerson continues, "Because it's one thing to transfer and get in, it's another thing to know what you need to finish." Emerson believes that the confusion is pervasive and concludes, "That's going to disadvantage anybody."

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. When the conversation segues to institutional policies and practices, Emerson expresses additional concerns for underrepresented students. First, she lists the supports:

> The practices that we have, I would say, include our hiring practices and professional development of staff so that we have diversity among our staff, number one. We do have student organizations for some of our underrepresented populations. We could probably increase our outreach and communication with those student groups, with those student clubs, organizations to provide help and assistance with transfer. But under the framework of the institution, we have these student organizations that reach out to some of the underrepresented populations and first generation. We have… let me step back toward… to minority students because the college does have a Diversity Council. We have had for several years ongoing professional development, some of which has been required, on issues pertaining to diversity so that we're trying to raise the consciousness and the literacy of staff and various faculty and staff around issues of diversity and minorities. What are those concerns? We had a Title III funded faculty institute for a time; we'd have workshops through there as well. Then we

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have a number of programs that had been offered through the Counseling and

Advising Office, you know, preparing for careers for minority students [June

2009].

Hiring practices and professional staff development, student organizations for

underrepresented populations, a diversity council, workshops on diversity for faculty, and

counseling and advising offices top the list of supports. Then she outlines some barriers.

I think one of the factors in this that's really critical is some of them are practices

by the institution but those practices are influenced by capacity and resources or

budget. That was surprising to me because I worked in two community colleges

in Florida. It was surprising to me when I first came to Florida that full-time

students were not expected to go to Academic Advising before they registered. I

was shocked. Given the size of our institutions and given the increasing resource

constraints, we don't have… Even if we believed that good practice would say

you're mandated to come in for academic advising X, Y, Z. We do that for first

time with college students but beyond that they're not required to come for

advising until they're ready to graduate and even then they don't have to. They

really need to submit their application to graduate with a degree audit and all of

that. But even if we believed that that's what we needed to do, we do not have the

resources to do that. We don't have the staff to do it. That's problematic. We

don't have the staff to do it the way that we've done it before. You have to work

more closely, say, with your academic departments, how do we get into the

classes to tell students about this? Well one of the things and some faculty are

very receptive to that, others, because time is of the essence, they don't have time

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to allow that; they're not open to that. So you have a sort of a mix of those things if you don't have the President from the top and the press from the top, it's not going to happen. One of the things that started evolving I think effectiveness, is that we do have career program advisors that are housed out in some of the academic departments. IT and Digital Media have a full-time career program advisor. Automotive has a full-time career program advisor and then Business and Legal Studies does. They're housed in the academic departments. They report to Student Services. They can do academic advising. They can do more proactive intervention. They tend to have more ready access to the classrooms because they know the faculty who work there. And they can target students for graduation. There are the three classes you need to graduate. Here's the paperwork you need to fill out by this date. We have these positions, established the job description to make it consistent across those different areas. What are some of the tasks they're working on to meet the Perkins performance measures? We seem to be having some very positive signs, initially. Closer work with the academic departments is probably a good thing [June 2009].

While budget constraints have impeded improvements to academic advising, raising the awareness of low-income first generation in college students requires challenging the stereotypes faculty and staff may harbor about diversity populations. She states:

With first generation I know we've done a session through the faculty institute on low SES and students who come from poverty and the cultural differences, and we assume a certain set of values, a certain, you know, set of information that people have coming in [June 2009].

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Despite attempts to "raise awareness," she concedes that a lack of cultural literacy is "still rampant:"

> No, they don't know how to navigate the system. You know our system is confusing to those of us who are on the inside. So if it's confusing to us, how difficult is it going to be for somebody coming in who doesn't have that background [June 2009].

Emerson was asked to further clarify what she meant by "raise the awareness." Again, her response is complex and comprehensive, integrating concrete examples with educational theories:

> One of the areas that I talk about literacy of people… What do we mean by first generation… What are some of the unique concerns and common concerns they have with everybody else? When we talk about student engagement and the importance of student engagement, what does the literature say? So it's really professional development. Here's what's happening. I mean it's amazing that in the institution of higher education, people step through the doors with varying levels of education, whether it's a high school diploma, a GED, Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, or Doctorate and step through and somehow intentional or not where opportunities were not presented or not available, people somehow stop being connected to what is the new research in Tallahassee. What are we learning there? What is valuable there? When I talk about raising the literacy, it's trying to share, to shake down some of our major themes in the literature and ho we apply them? How do we integrate those? Let's be aware of them. How do we integrate them? How do we apply them? When we talk about good practice, I

mean this is one issue you know, good practice is an undergraduate education and good practices in Student Affairs, that's some of the verbiage we try to use in Student Affairs. What's good practice? What is good practice? [June 2009].

Emerson stresses the importance of dovetailing theory with practice. However, she sees a rapidly growing diverse student body whose needs are still unmet at the institutional level. She revisits her theory of cultural literacy as a way to increase awareness and build better policies and practices:

How many people know about the books written on good practice, how many people know about Chickering and Gamson's article? Most don't. And maybe they don't have to although I wish more people did. But I think we should be somewhat literate with that's happening out there. We should be aware of what's going on out there [June 2009].

She is not naïve. Emerson knows that, "We might not be able to do everything. Everything new isn't necessarily good. Everything new isn't necessarily affordable." But she is resolute in knowing what kinds of exemplary programs are being piloted on other campuses around the nation. Emerson asks, "What's happening? What can we learn from that? What can we integrate? How can we help students with that? How can we better serve students and each other doing that?" [June 2009].

The future. When asked how she'd proceed if she could preside over the state of Florida for a day and usher in change, Emerson replies, "Well, fundamentally, I would like to understand the intent of the agreement. What do we need to do to come back to that agreement to all be on the same page with that agreement?"

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When prompted to say more about what she meant by the "intent of the agreement," she continues:

> What I understand that to be. So that we have a state course numbering system. We have a common program prerequisites, you know the general education requirements met, that we can establish that. Part of the question is probably what of the universities that are non-compliant, what are the issues you're having? What do you need? Do we need to make some adjustments on the other ends so that you get what you need? We have an understandable transparent agreement that we know upfront. I would say let's come back to why aren't we all on the same page with this? [June 2009].

A conversation on the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) March 2008 report that criticized a number of universities for not following the statewide articulation agreement and the revisions to the course program prerequisites manual provoked Emerson to say more:

> Because with the statewide common program prerequisite now being updated, that everything's going to be fine and it's all going to be… everybody's going to follow it now? Is that what they're saying? Is that what the response is saying? If it is, then beautiful; if it's not, well, then there's still something else to do. A second issue I would address—just because it's on the burner for me now—and that is how are transfer of credits from quarter systems to semester systems. How are we handling that across the state? Where you have taken a quarter credit course and if you have, you know, according to statute—the way I understand statute, 36 credits of Gen Ed is required. Now, through our distribution model of

Gen Ed, our 36 credits include 9 credits of Communication, six credits of

Humanities, six credits of Social Science, three credits of History, six credits of

Science, six credits of Math. If a student comes in from a quarter system and

brings 2.67 credits of History in, as long as they have 36 credits or more total Gen

Ed courses and at least 60 credits for the AA, I'm thinking they've met their Gen

Ed. There are some people who are saying, oh, no! That student needs to take an

Independent Study for .33 credits of History [June 2009].

Still in her presiding role, she concludes:

I would really be curious to know what the data are showing us about

underrepresented students; and, is the statewide articulation agreement not

working for them. I'd be interested in hearing feedback from students, some

qualitative data, but interview data. What's your experience trying to navigate

that system? You know, did you navigate the system because you were on top of

it and you could do it yourself, or did you have a mentor, people who actively

sought you out to help bring you through, understand and pull you through that

system? [June 2009].

In her final recommendation, she asks for more qualitative research chronicling the

experiences of underrepresented transfer students.

Leslie (Dr. Student Affairs), GECC

Compared to other states

Florida articulation is really great

The tougher admissions standards

For transfers to attend the regional university

Will force local students to stay

Community college baccalaureate leads the way

Unable to say what can be improved

To make transfer policy for minorities smooth

These "burrs in the saddle" don't lead students

Up the creek without a paddle

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Initially resistant to meet with me since I had already conversed with his

colleague, Leslie–a clean-cut, well-dressed man in his late 40s—was elated to talk once

we met in person. A long narrow window to an outside corridor provided a shaft of

natural light for his relatively small but comfortable office on the first floor of the

administration building. His work desk was large and U-shaped. Leslie's demeanor was

friendly as we chatted about the pleasures of summer and the trials and tribulations of

completing a doctorate. The interview continued at the task table near his desk [field

notes and reflective journal excerpt, July 2009].

Twenty years ago when Leslie was working on his student affairs doctorate, he

was not expecting his career to lead him to the community college. He is now the Vice

President for Student Affairs at GECC. He summarizes his responsibilities:

I handle everything with Admissions, Counseling/Advising, Financial Aid,

Testing and Assessment, Career Development, Transfer Services. Things like

that we would be handling. Trying to get students access and then helping them

be successful through student development programs once they're here. Because

we're about teaching and learning of the college not just in the classroom but also

as an individual. Going back to the student development theories that are out

there in terms of the programs that we're trying to help develop the person

holistically [July 2009].

Leslie's lengthy career in higher education administration and expertise in student affairs

inform his holistic leadership philosophy.

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. Leslie

views the statewide articulation agreement as successful. He carefully includes a

statement about the evolution of the Florida community college system in his response.

We're now the Florida College System: we've grown up. We offer four-year

degrees—in fact we were just approved for one, too. There may be other

Bachelor degrees as we go forward; we just don't know which they would be at

this time [July 2009].

In his rejoinder to the statute itself, Leslie applauds its strengths, stating, "The 2+2 is a

great agreement that helps students in Florida. If you graduate from one of the 28

colleges in the Florida College System, you're guaranteed admission to the university

system somewhere." The drawbacks, he remarks, are minimal:

You may not be guaranteed to attend the university you want to go to. Everyone

wants to go to Florida [University] and Florida State. They may be full but you're

guaranteed a spot somewhere. But one of the 12 or 11 will take you. That's

worked out, I think, wonderfully [July 2009].

Leslie also expressed concern for students unable to get into the university of their choice due to increasingly competitive admission standards.

> The budget situation with the state is creating funding challenges with us, our
> Florida College System and also the universities. What the universities are doing,
> they can't take as many students in. What they're doing is being more selective in
> their admissions. Where the university may have taken 60% of their applicants
> into their freshman class, they're now down around 48…45%, somewhere in that
> ballpark is what they've told us. It's getting tougher for a freshman to get into the
> university. The answer has been a transfer partnership with the university. With
> our partnership, what they've allowed us to do is if you start with us, take your
> first two years with us, get you're AA degree, you'll automatically get into the
> university, so you don't have to go through their admission standards—their
> GPA, SAT scores, they just keep going up every fall term. And, for our students,
> this is another pathway for them to still get their degree at the university but take
> their first two years here. We'll also be able to provide them with the university
> services while they're with us the first two years so that, in this way, we'll try and
> make it as seamless as possible [July 2009].

Prompted to speak about the state articulation in relation to the transfer process for underrepresented students, he responds:

> I don't think it hinders the process for any student. I haven't seen any data
> showing that underrepresented populations are having a disadvantage with the
> system. If anything, it's a great vehicle for all students to get through. There
> have been concerns from the private universities (some of the privates) that they

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have had a harder time getting their students to articulate to our system or the

university system because the 2+2 was developed for the publics—anybody with

the public community college system going to the public universities. We're all

under the same statewide common course numbering system, the same

accreditation standards from the Southern Association. Some of the privates are

not and some of them are accredited. So that's where there are some issues and

concerns from them on that. But not by a specific demographic or, I mean, I

haven't heard anything on that [July 2009].

Despite a lack of data proving otherwise, Leslie perceives the articulation agreement as

effective.

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. Leslie

sees the transfer process at GECC as barrier-free. He continues, "You complete a degree,

you will get accepted to a university in Florida. There's no other application… but if

you've completed an AA degree or select an AS degree in Florida, you are guaranteed

acceptance to the university system." He views the policy as rare in that it allows

community colleges to fulfill its open access mission. He remarks, "This is one of the

few states that has that as a statewide public policy. It is wonderful because if we can

help students to be successful here, then we can tell them the sky's the limit in terms of

what you want to do." While he has little one-to-one interaction with students, he is able

to comment on GECC's transfer population and the particular student development

problems the college accommodates:

For transfer students, we have a large number of transfer students that come in from other colleges. They'll come in from privates, they'll come in from public two-year colleges and they'll also come in from the universities. With university students, sometimes what happens is they'll go out for their first semester in the fall, 'Yea, I'm a freshman. I'm free. The family's away.' And they don't do so well. After the first year or first semester they'll come back and mom and dad will bring them over here and it's like, you know, what do I need to get that 1.5 GPA up and maybe they weren't meant for the university. It is a big social change, because I know my freshman year in college, that first year was the hardest, because you're on your own and you've got to discipline yourself. Sometimes that's where the student development programs really help in terms of helping the connection with the student with faculty and staff here so that they can feel better acclimated to the culture [July 2009].

His view in terms of underrepresented transfer students:

One out of four of our new students coming in are first generation in college with no parental experience in college. That means the social systems at home aren't there to help them understand what it really takes to be successful. So that's why it's so critical for us to try and help them [July 2009].

Leslie's response, when asked to further describe the first generation population at GECC:

It's across the board, there's no single demographic that lets you know it's only Caucasian students who are first generation. It's that pocket in each category you would generally look at, I don't have it on top of my head but our research

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department once in awhile we pull that out and take a look at it and see if anything's changed. But it's students that they self-describe…or self-declare to us that they have their both parents; or if it's just one parent they're with, have no experience in college and no degree or college course work. We've got the means to identify them and then find scholarships for them. The state provides First Gen money to our foundations and we try and find matching [funds] so we can get access to those dollars and give them to students to help them so they'll be more successful. That's real critical for us. We did a retention study (more of a statistic) and we found that there's a very, very high correlation between the amount of financial aid you get and your re-enrollment rates in college. We know that's a big impact in students' ability to stay. First Gen, that's one of the ones that's great to have that extra resource just for that group [July 2009].

A follow-up prompt asks Leslie if he has witnessed a minority boom at GECC:

Oh yeah, on a percentage basis that's our highest growth group. It's African-American, Latino population, Asians doing well. Caucasian would be the slowest growing right now. They're still growing but it's the slowest growing. I mean we used to be about 80 to 85% Caucasian here and that's dipped into the mid to low 60s now. Just a percentage increase in the minority populations is phenomenal. We're seeing demographic trends now where there's a shift in the Latino population moving in. After Hurricane Andrew, the growth has just been phenomenal in Musboro County and we're starting to see that now in our county. So I think it's just a normal population shift [July 2009].

Commenting about potential institutional hindrances to the transfer process for

underrepresented students, Leslie adds:

> I see our policy's set to be pretty wide open so that they can get access. Access
>
> has never been an issue. The bigger issue… the policies are there that allow
>
> students to be successful if they want to be. What may not be there is does the
>
> student have all the tools and resources needed to be successful to even get there?
>
> The door may be open but they may not be able to get to the door. That's what
>
> we're finding out with college prep remediation: students come in; they're not
>
> quite prepared for college level coursework when they enroll and they have to
>
> take a college prep course in Math, Reading, or Writing. Less than half of those
>
> students successfully complete their prep requirements within two years. If they
>
> are not able to be successful for us, I mean our president always states, where are
>
> they going to be successful? We are supposed to be the last resort for a lot of
>
> folks, an access point for success and if those students can't get past the prep, they
>
> can't get a college credit degree. They are going where? That's what we're
>
> trying to figure out [July 2009].

Probing further, I ask Leslie to define what he meant by stating that the agreement was a

"wide open policy." He provides a heartwarming "a rags to riches" response:

> You complete a degree; you will get accepted to a university in Florida. There's
>
> no another application… Oh, there's an application. But, you know, I got to be
>
> reviewed and maybe I'll be selected to get in. If you've completed an AA degree
>
> or a select AS degree in Florida, you are guaranteed acceptance to the university
>
> system. We had a student who went through the GED program. She had a child;

she was single, destitute. She was working at a grocery store. For a short time she was living behind a dumpster, she was homeless. She drove by our marquee and just said, you know what, GECC, 'eh, I'm not going'… Didn't know if she was college material or could do it. Finally one day she got the courage up to come to our Admissions office, walked in and she saw all the people bustling around and stuff and kind of got scared; and was like, 'Nah, I can't do this.' One of our Admissions persons grabbed her… not grabbed her… but, 'Hey, do you need some help?' 'Well, I'm thinking of going to college but I don't know if I'm going to do it.' 'Why don't you come down, sit down with me, let me talk with you,' and try to make that connection with the student to help inspire them that, yeah, you can do this. 'Yes, we have financial aid.' You can start at any level or whatever your educational background is, with our college. You know we teach grades two through 12 and now we're going to be doing bachelor's degrees. Two through 12, 14, 16. Anything is possible. We've got the GED program where she went through first. Got that. And then she moved over to the college credit, got hooked up in our Honors Program; she's really bright. Did great there. She was a national Jack Kent Cook scholar, which is $30,000 a year. Well, we've got four of those now. She transferred over to the university seamlessly, easy as that. She excelled. But she didn't when she first got here. But if you have the support systems that are in place and are willing to put the effort into be successful and want to do it, the tools are here to help you [July 2009].

Drawing on student affairs theory to underscore the importance of providing institutional supports to help students succeed, Leslie adds:

Go back to Tinto's theory for retention of why students are successful in trying to keep the student engaged with more activities with faculty, staff, and with other students. We have safety nets. If we're finding a student's not being successful, we'll send a counselor/advisor out to talk with them. Try and help the faculty communicate with us; now we need to really develop that a little bit better. But give us an early alert warning that you know we need to do a… 'Hey, how you doing?' A little check-up call. We try and do check-up calls with our own students through the call center every term. 'Why aren't you re-enrolled this term?' We'll send out communications. But basically, if it's support systems or financially, we've got social development. We have counselors on staff, some of which are actually licensed counselors so we can feel we can handle a lot of different situations. That's one of the big areas for us to try and help them be successful because it's not the classroom. We've got a great tutoring center with their Academic Success Center. We just finished up a Title III grant for helping these developmental students in college prep. The things that we could do differently to make them more successful or help them be more successful. The interventions work; they're just expensive. Our strategies had significant increases in success rates and lower withdrawal rates in college prep courses, but it's expensive and it involved a lot of personalized one-on-one. It doesn't work when you're dealing with thousands and thousands of students going through this program. We need to rethink that [July 2009].

Additionally, Leslie notes that GECC is conducting a study in Fall 2009 to find out where unsuccessful students are going after high school or dropping out of the community

college. He hopes to find a way to draw these students back into the community college system:

> They'd be going out in the workforce without a degree and they may see that now as a permanent roadblock, I can never get a college degree. That's the worst thing I could ever think of a student having in their mind. There's always another way and there's always more tutoring or things like that could help them to be successful [July 2009].

Leslie asserts that money is the greatest hindrance to expanding resources to underrepresented groups:

> I don't think it's the policy so much as the resources to help out the critical points where students are having difficulty getting over a certain hurdle. That's what if you've heard about Achieving the Dream nationally, they are only focused on that to try and help the success rates of minority students. We weren't participating in that just because our percentage of minority students wasn't high enough at the time. It's an area I would love to participate in, because I would love to try and get the share of knowledge and they do their conferences and stuff. There's a lot of funding they put behind that with the partnering colleges. That's the biggest barrier to students getting transferred on. It's not so much the policies. I think the policy really is there to support them. That's what we're finding out with college prep remediation: students, they come in, they're not quite prepared for college level coursework when they enroll and they have to take a college prep course in Math, Reading, or Writing. Less than half of those students successfully complete their prep requirements within two years [July 2009].

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While Leslie laments missed opportunities to participate in the Achieving Dream because GECC's minority percentages were too small, he hopes to qualify for similar grants in the future. Such funds may provide additional seed money for exploratory projects.

The future. Sharing his thoughts on changes to the statewide policy, Leslie recommends allowing community college transfer students to have priority admissions to their local university to prevent them from becoming, "all loaned-up" from private institutions:

> The only thing I could see to accentuate it would be you're guaranteed a spot at one of the universities but it may not be your choice. Some of our students can't financially afford to move from Jacksonville (if they can't get in the University of North Florida) to the University of West Florida, past Pensacola or the University of South Florida down by Tampa. If there could be a priority for regional graduates to the regional university. The only thing I could see helping one step further, is because especially disadvantaged populations, they may have life challenges be it financial or family that preclude them from moving out-of-town [July 2009].

Leslie also wants the state to assert more of its policing power.

> I think if you're talking about specifically with the 2+2 Articulation policy, it would be looking at finding a way…and the Chancellor over the system—I don't know enough about the Board of Governors system—they're a little different than us. We have a Chancellor over the Florida College System that reports to the Commissioner of Education. There's a Chancellor over the university system that

reports to the Commissioner of Education, but then there's also a Board of Governors. That's that whole political issue about the governance system; it's still a little…interesting. I'm not sure where the arm is but the reality is the Legislature has the ultimate authority to make changes at the college system or the university by changing the law. That's where if you're going to get something done. I mean you have to be able to convince the Legislature that it needs to be done for the right reason and get them to do it. Because the Chancellors by themselves cannot do this. They don't have the authority. Our Chancellor over our system does not have any authority to change how we do stuff. They may negotiate or lobby the Legislators to change the law; and once the law's changed then we have to comply. That's where the politics really do play—in Tallahassee, up there. You've got to be able to find the Legislators to change the law and to actually put some teeth behind the issue of the Common Course Prerequisites. I just don't think it's a high enough priority on their radar compared to what they're dealing with, that one, and then for students to find a way to give them priority access to their local university. The Legislators deal with some very tough issues and very challenging issues. Having worked with the Council of Student Affairs last year, chairing that group, a part of the job was to lobby and work with the legislators; and, you know, budget right now is budget and policy. Last year it was the Florida College System. That was a huge one in terms of how that's going to work out. Some of these little things have been more burrs in the saddle versus a real significant change for folks. But someone just needs to tackle and get it done [July 2009].

Leslies cites the CCP and the current problem of the universities circumventing the law as an example of where the legislature needs to take control. He demands teeth. Otherwise, he believes that the Florida statewide articulation agreement remains one of the best in the country.

Case two: the technocrats. Technocrats range from low-to-high-level administrators and possess an expansive operational knowledge of the articulation agreement predominantly at the institutional level (Table 5). Like the policy experts, technocrats with the most knowledge will be presented first.

Table 5

The Technocrat's Case Matrix

Participant	Race	Gender	Age	Inst.	Admin. Level	Yrs. at Inst.	Yrs. in Position
Alex	African American	Male	50s	U	Middle	11 - 15	4 - 7
Bobby	White	Female	50s	U	Low	16 - 19	11 - 15
Tyler	White	Male	50s	CC	High	11 - 15	4 - 7
Teddy	White	Male	50s	CC	Middle	11 - 15	1 - 3

Alex (Mr. Gatekeeper), FGPU

Micromanaging details

Of multicultural mass

Measuring the progress

Of academic advising staff

Let's not tinker too much

What's not broken, a delicate touch

Yet repair institutional clogs

Lifting minorities from the bog

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Inside the dimly lit flat offices housed on the ground level of a glassy, opulent research building on the outskirts of campus, an impeccably dressed African American man in his late 50's greets me with a strong handshake and soothing voice. He leads me to his slightly cluttered but inviting office. A second worktable table near his desk provides us with an opportunity to sit closer and talk [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, May 2009].

Initially, Alex, whose title is Assistant Vice President of Regional Campuses Student Services, felt that he might not be the appropriate person to interview since his job is to oversee regional campus transfer. To clear up any uncertainty, he requested a brief telephone conversation in advance. Alex, who embarked on his administrative career in the 1970's, brings a wealth of diversified experience to his position, qualifying him for his current role:

I'm an old student affairs person, student services, been in this business almost 35 years and I worked at several different institutions. I can see why the Vice President thought this area needed some assistance and asked me to come over to

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add some experience and stability to this area. So that's how I got involved with this. I didn't ask for this. I was just asked to come over and support the work that's being done [May 2009].

answers, "What we do in our little realm, our small pond, is to provide opportunity within the confines of laws and regulations and statute agreements that we have engaged in and we have agreed to." He continues:

Rarely will a community college student or parent or anyone come to visit me because of where I am and what I'm doing. They more or less visit my staff. These are four directors (actually three directors covering the four areas, four regional campuses). But they have direct contact, direct dealings with students and/or parents of community college students, making sure that student services are provided. They are the direct implementers, if you will; they have the direct contact. I don't. I just ensure that they are doing what they need to do and on behalf of students. The question comes, what do you do? Why are even I'm wasting my time with you? You didn't say that but…[laughter]. But, well, somebody has to be accountable for this process by the president, by the provost and by the vice provost and they have said to me, you're the guy, you're the person, you're the individual that we will hold accountable for what happens across our regional campuses dealing with transfer students. Policies and procedures, then, are set up so that we don't make the president, provost and the vice provost concerned because we have failed to do what it is we ought to do because there is a pipeline. You've heard of the educational pipeline. We want to make sure that the pipeline is maintained, that it's not clogged with bureaucracy,

with technicalities, with issues and problems that students didn't create, that our

institutions created. And even if students did create them, to be able to get their

transcript and so forth, we ought to have in place an agreement and understanding

of how we can work through that for the benefit of students. We have a

responsibility to make sure that regardless of what happens to the student,

whether he or she fails to do something or not, the process should come to a

complete standstill because of some technicality. We need to find ways and

means around the process to facilitate the smoothest transfer of community

college students to this university. That's essentially what my role is as an

administrator, to make sure that that happens [May 2009].

Alex avoids a "technicality" by keeping open the lines of communication between FGPU

and its community college partners. Gesturing as he talks, he describes himself as "a

gatekeeper, mediator, and broker for the process." This is how Alex approaches his work

with transfer students; but, ultimately, he views himself as a teacher:

We're really all teachers, educators and we need to just take that role seriously

regardless of our title, regardless as to where we are in this whole educational

process. We're fundamentally teachers. We're instructors, we're guides, we're

mentors. So whatever is wrong ought to be made right on behalf of the student

[May 2009].

For Alex, this is the quintessential relationship with a student. The student's well-being

and welfare must come first.

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students.

Imparting his insights on the statewide articulation agreement, Alex clarifies the question,

and then outlines the general purpose of the agreement before stressing its significance.

> Is that the old 2+2? I don't believe there has been any change or modification or
>
> alteration to that, has there? Because that's been in existence for a number of
>
> years. As to whether we need to change it or not? I don't know if there have
>
> been any changes, so you know I can't…Well it's a sound system in the state of
>
> Florida. Sound in that it provides access, opportunity for community college
>
> students to earn the AA at their respective community college and then move on
>
> to the universities [May 2009].

Next, he underscores the importance of educating Floridians:

> Now I think it's an excellent idea for this state to do what it can to retain and keep
>
> the brilliant talent that we have in this state. I'm not suggesting that we don't
>
> need to bring in out-of-state students. That's always been the case. Out-of-state
>
> students have always loved to come to Florida. We know that. There's not ever
>
> been a shortage of out-of-state students. The weather's great, the institutions are
>
> pretty good and all of those kinds of things. They come down here to visit. But
>
> what we don't want to have happen is that our native students (Florida students)
>
> feel that they don't have opportunity within the state to remain here because of
>
> some antiquated system we have that does not allow 2+2 students who began at
>
> the community college for whatever reason and then wants to move on in this
>
> process to the university but can't. The 2+2 provided an additional impetus, if

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you will, for that to happen. I think we need to maintain that. We need to

enhance it [May 2009].

Finally, Alex remarks that the articulation agreement is a critical route to higher

education for all of Florida's citizens:

I saw firsthand how important it was not only for students of color but for

veterans, for students who were just trying to raise their level of attainment, raise

their level of educational attainment to the point where they can get some skills,

some certificates and some college degrees so they can fend for their families;

they can make a contribution to the community, to this state. I saw that operated

not only at one the community colleges where I worked, but at other places [May

2009].

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students.

Redirecting the conversation away from the statewide articulation agreement and towards

institutional policy and practice, Alex praises the agreement for providing a steady supply

of dissimilar transfer students.

From what I have been able to observe and notice over the last few years, I find

that most of our community colleges are fairly diverse. And though now the

university is getting approximately 20-25% of those people, years ago we were

not. We were blessed, so to speak, to have community colleges in the past

providing for the university a greater segment of diversity, of diverse students

than we actually had. We have maintained that relationship and that has provided

for the university to grow and to expand relative to diversity now. I think

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currently speaking we have quite a few, quite a solid number of diverse students

at FGPU [May 2009].

Alex does point out some drawbacks:

One of them, I don't know if it's the biggest because we've been in this process

almost five years now. We have tried to remove most of those if not the great

majority of those but every now and then we hear of a lack of communication that

existed between a specific community college and our institution because our

calendars were not aligned properly. It's the end of the semester and we have

four, five, 600, maybe 1000 students leaving a specific or a couple…or most of

the community college at the end of the semester or end of break and we are

closed. The students are concerned that the semester starts in two weeks. I don't

have my transcript. At the same time I want to get registered for classes. How do

I make that happen? So we've done a better job now because we have experience

aligning calendars. When our institution is out, really, community colleges ought

to be out, or vice versa. Or we're not out and somebody will be around during

those breaks and make sure that those transcripts, electronically, or otherwise get

transferred and that the holds, the academic holds or the registration holds—that

students experience from time to time—ought to be removed temporarily so that

these students can enroll and transfer. We've been able to do that. Most of our

concerns, our issues are not directly related to our specific operation of student

services. I know that's a broad general kind of term that community colleges use,

but we are pretty specific when it comes to the university. Not everything that

happens outside of the classroom at FGPU is considered student services. But at

the community colleges it's considered student services. We don't manage bookstores or have anything to do with books. But if you go to community college, they'll call that part of student services, because students need books to study, you know. Our terminology, our lingo, its not quite the same. But that was part of early on, our lack of communication and understanding; but we're good. We've gotten through that. We've moved forward. We have, among our institutions, a clearer focus of that [May 2009].

A second challenge is to prevent students from dropping out:

Our focus ought to be to maintain and retain these students that they will progress through the pipeline, through the system to the point where they will graduate. Our focus ought to be retention and graduation. That's a clog, a couple of clogs for us. I would daresay at the community colleges it exists there. I don't think there's an issue with enrolling, admitting students of color, for lack of a better term, and I'm not just talking African American. I'm talking about the broad spectrum of students of color—Latino, Hispanic, all the way to students who really have all kinds of orientations. It's multidimensional. What institutions of higher education, particularly four-year universities and college need to understand is, this matter of getting them through, empowering them to persist, to be retained, to progress through this process and then ultimately to graduate. That's really where the clog or the issue lies from my perspective [May 2009].

When asked to further define the words "multi-dimensional," he harks back to his personal experience:

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I am so impressed with first generation, underrepresented, disadvantaged, multi-

cultural students, whatever label you want to put there, and I don't mean to be

discerning, discriminatory; but I know we just categorize students and people, for

ease of communication, with no disrespect to anybody, but we really don't need

labels. It's any student. As a person of color myself, having come through the

ranks of being poor, being disadvantaged, a first generation high school graduate,

I can go that far back, can say anything about the first generation college student

having graduated and earned a graduate degree and so forth, I've experienced

that. I know what folks are saying. I have a degree of acceptance and

understanding if not tolerance for that. I don't want us to just simply put people

in boxes and categorize them. Having said all that, what I'm driving at is, I have

developed a healthy and strong respect for students in all categories [May 2009].

While Alex perceives categories as an easy way to label people, he believes they are

limiting. As a first generation college educated African American male, Alex's own

success is proof that minorities can succeed in attainting a higher-level degree.

He also cites President Obama as an eminent role model of what a good education can

provide.

The future. If Alex were given the authority to change the state level agreement,

he would judiciously make incremental changes:

What I would do? I would just talk it up. I would market it, advertise it, and

make sure that anybody interested in higher education in this state is aware of that

process. That means I would have to get the media on my side if I were king for

that day and try to do that. But if there are no issues, I don't like just trying to embellish something that's working fine. That's a waste of taxpayer's money, a waste of my energy and my time, and it's not going to come to anything. You see what I'm saying? But if we got some issues there or we find out that there is a lack of awareness, a lack of information about it and instead of 150,000 students taking advantage of it, it really needs to be 250,000 and we've discovered that there's some issues with processing that, there are some concerns with the structure. There's a lack of funding. Don't mention funding in this state, that's a different issue. Then we'll have to work toward alleviating those issues, provided we can do that. But if it's working well, why mess with it? [May 2009].

In the future, Alex anticipates that the critical role of the community college will continue to function as the main portal to higher education for underrepresented students in Florida, regardless of the Community College Baccalaureate's popularity:

I believe, there are always going to be in this state, community colleges. Which means that there will be always an open door institution or institutions that will look at the fundamental need to raise the level of aspiration and move and enhance the level of educational attainment for local students connected to a community within regions of this state. Whatever we call them, we can you know the… institutions don't change overnight. You can call them whatever but if they still have a fundamental… Maybe you can call state colleges or years ago we called them junior colleges, now it's community colleges, now some of these institutions want to drop the word community and become state… Whatever! But if they still share the fundamental idea and concept of educating Florida's citizens

with an open door, providing skills where there are very little or no skills, raising

students up to the point where they can do college level work, persist, graduate

and become useful and productive citizens, I don't have a problem with whatever

we call it. You can call them "Middle Manger Schools", I don't care. You know

what I mean? The point I'm making is, it's the concept. It's the ideal of taking

students from level A and moving them to level Z, or from one to 10 and

preparing them to serve the community, become useful, productive citizens. If we

can do that, then I think there's hope for our state and indeed this country because

it's a fundamental right that students have because they're taxpayers. They're

citizens. We believe that education is a right. We need to have things in place—

systems, processes, institutions—that will accept students. I happen to see this as

a role of the community college [May 2009].

When I prompt Alex to share his insights on the new excess legislation and the recent

changes in CLAST, and their potential impacts on transfer students and then, on the

underrepresented transfer student low-income and/or racial ethnic minorities, he remarks:

Now you're asking me to get political. Those are some good questions. I need to

take a closer look at the change, the statute change. I understand the legislature

has made some alterations to that. We are still trying to weigh and consider how

that's going to affect particularly the students of color and all transfer students. I

don't know how to be frank with you. But it is a concern. I just feel that it will

have some kind of negative or adverse impact upon students. What we need to

do, though, as college administrators wherever we are, four-year, two-year

institutions, we need to start now educating parents and students about this

process and these changes. Because it just used to be the attitude that I can take

my time, I can do what I want, take as many courses as I wish. I can explore my

career, I can find myself and all that. And that attitude of exploration…taking

one's time…creates problems for students moving through the educational system

at an acceptable level that our legislators wished them to do. Say nothing about

the other taxpayers and parents themselves. There has been a move in the last

four or five years that I sense, that is trying to get students to focus on their

education, to achieve their end, and then move on. The longer students stay in

college and in the university, the more expensive it becomes. Time is money. If

a student changes his or her major or gets caught up in this CLAST problem or

has issues with taking excess hours and paying for them, all of those kinds of

issues contribute to a lack of adequate progress and it also contributes to the

expense of higher education not only by the state or for the state but also for the

students and the parents. It's a good idea to caution parents and students to be

mindful of the rule changes. It's a better idea, however, I think to begin now

educating them so that they won't fall prey or victim to these changes and they

won't end up receiving adverse reactions in that area [May 2009].

Asking Alex to revisit his teaching philosophy of student success, I encourage him to

summarize his definition in three words in relation to transfer:

It revolves around awareness, information, and communication. Those three. And

if those three are committed to or engaged in by the officials of the institutions,

then I believe transfer students, specifically students of color or in general,

anybody who wants to earn an education will have the best chance to do so,

because the institution takes very seriously those three essential elements. If the student really wants to earn the education and wants to put forth the mental, physical and emotional effort that it takes, and if the institution is doing its part, it is truly their partnership built upon success and access [May 2009].

He continues:

If we've got some issues there or we find out that there is a lack of awareness, a lack of information about it and instead of 150,000 students taking advantage of it [the statewide articulation agreement], it really needs to be 250,000 and we've discovered that there's some issues with processing that, there are some concerns with the structure [May 2009].

In other words, if Florida is in fact short on the number of high school graduates or if enrollment of community college students is decreasing, this would be an impetus for Alex to alter state policy. As the interview concludes, Alex adds:

I believe—whatever we call ourselves—that we ought not forsake that

fundamental ideology of educating everybody who has potential. Those with the desire,

and the motivation to get a college degree, ought to be able to do so. To me that's pretty

fundamental and I hold to it.

Then he shares his prophetic vision of underrepresented students in the system:

For the future it's going to be progression through the system, retention of these students and graduation. Because students of color have always understood that the community college was a haven for them, an opportunity for them to move quickly into an educational program at the least amount of expense or cost and still receive a quality education. They knew that. And they still know that. That

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opportunity always existed and will continue to exist. What institutions of higher

education, particularly four-year universities and colleges need to understand is,

this matter of getting them through, empowering them to persist, to be retained, to

progress through this process and then ultimately to graduate. That's really where

the clog or the issue lies from my standpoint [May 2009].

Bobby (Ms. Mediator), FGPU

The disadvantages are drastic

In a higher education system not plastic

The inequities are clearly horrific

Especially for the diversity specific

Punitive excess credits hours will be

For those with career uncertainty

Better academic advising a must

Starting at the community college a plus

[Found data poem, November 2009]

The student transfer services office is located on the second story of a modern red

brick building, diagonally across from FGPU's administrative building. When I enter the

office suite, two African American student assistants, one male and one female, along

with three female employees are busy working on a variety of tasks. In the waiting room,

I overheard pieces of a conversation about tracking and retention formulas. Bobby's

large windowless office is crowded with bookshelves, advising awards, and photographs

of Florida wildlife. We sit at a round table adjacent to her work desk in the middle of her

office. Bobby is a smartly dressed woman in her mid-fifties. Noting in our email

correspondence that it was a "timely study", she is now enthusiastic to participate in my

research [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, June 2009].

Bobby's experience at FGPU is informed by her longevity at the institution and

her political science background. Her scholarly interests in academic advising also give

her a many-sided perspective on the pivotal role her office plays in moving community

college transfers through the system:

As director, I oversee a small office that has contact with all of the 7200 to 7500

transfers who come into the university each year, but also all of the attendant

parents and guidance counselors and community college advisors and counselors

and administrators at our four consortium partner schools, all of those other

students who inquire that may not have been coming to the university. We work

with students before they come to the university, and our primary concern there is

academic preparation, to assure that they at least think about a major and take pre-

requisites. We're starting a whole new emphasis on that this year. The transition

is really that moment from their admission through orientation and any and all of

the issues involved in being prepared to come to and start classes as an enrolled

student. Progression really for us means from that first semester on, and our

primary role then is as advocate. If a student runs into a problem, an issue, they

have some place to come. It's a place where they can start to resolve their issues.

It's generally in that preparation and transition stage where we have the most

impact and affect. We're a service office, predominantly a service office [June 2009].

Bobby's contact with students becomes minimal once they successfully transition into an academic major. She asserts, "We don't do very much personal advising, academic advising, once they've enrolled and become FGPU students."

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented students. Describing her perceptions of the statewide articulation agreement, she offers an elaborate two-fold answer, she is able to highlight the parts of the agreement she favors before mentioning the less efficacious elements.

In creating a 2+2 system, the legislature, might I say surprisingly intentional and bright about this, but it was some time ago, they created a system that really does work incredibly well across the board. It establishes the university programs in such a way that students are expected to do their Gen Ed and their prerequisites in their first two years. For transfer students who take their first two years in the community college system, they're on a very nearly level playing field when they come to the university because everybody moves to major content at the junior level. That works incredibly well. The AA is the perfect medium for encouraging students through General Education to explore a little bit, figure out some strengths and some passions and then be ready to move forward at the junior level [June 2009].

Bobby considers the AA degree to be the "perfect medium" for moving students through Florida's higher education system. Her optimistic tone changes, however, when she

begins to address the recent addition of the AS degree. She expresses some serious concerns for transfer students. Bobby explains, "I think that the legislature made a dreadful mistake in moving to the AS programs, trying to articulate AS programs into bachelor's degree programs." In her estimation, the major difficulty lies in the academic structure of the AS degree:

> A student who has an AS degree has half their general education done. They can articulate into a bachelor's degree program but they still have 15-18 hours of general education courses to take. They're behind in one sense and they're not a 2+2 with AS programs, the articulated AS programs. I think that's problematic. There are only nine of them really. We work it out but it's not necessarily in the best advantage of the student to do that [June 2009].

Bobby views the AS degree as uncertain because a student must take additional general education courses, which will slow down the BS degree completion by an entire semester.

As the discussion turns to underrepresented students, Bobby cites several problems which contribute to the transfer process. While she is personally a proponent of public education, she remarks that the Florida system of education ultimately fails by penalizing the underprepared student.

> There are disadvantages for them. Those disadvantages are largely institutionalized. Now do we have some pathways for them? We do. The CROP and TRIO programs. Absolutely fabulous. At our community colleges we used to do a program every semester for our CROP and TRIO kids and the whole idea was to bring them in and show them that you can do this. This is a real

possibility. You're at your community college; there's nothing to keep you from the university. Here's some steps you need to take, here are some things you need to be aware of. We just do a program. It's great. Introduce them. But how do we begin to impact for those students… Oh, Bright Futures is fabulous. It's a great boon to the middle class. All of us who've got bright kids who are academics, who have gone to college, this is an incredible boon to all of us. But what about all of those children who start out in kindergarten and first grade, never having had a book in their home, never having had a parent read to them? And I don't know what those numbers look like but when I looked around our community and I just look away from this very, very privileged community and look at some of the elementary schools and then the middle schools and then the high schools where, at best, some small percentage of the students are succeeding because they've got support and resources and those resources and the support come from the home and not from dwindling community tax bases and not from overworked teachers and overwhelmed guidance counselors and the inertia, the simple institutional inertia that discourages any initiative by these students to do that [June 2009].

Additionally, Bobby perceives merit-based scholarships versus need-based aid as a serious institutional dilemma for underrepresented students. She views the new excess credit hours legislation as "punitive," resulting in "horrific disadvantages" for students uncertain about their careers. In her opinion, the excess credit hours law exacerbates the early tracking and early career choices dilemma, which she calls "ridiculous:"

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I mean, how can I know in middle school? I'm a first generation kid. No one in

my family has gone to college. I don't even know what sociology is, let alone

nano science, that I should be taking mathematics to go to engineering or

mathematics and life sciences to go to med school when I don't have any idea

[June 2009].

She concludes, "Until we can create better advising for students and parents at that stage

and better means to explore possibilities and their own strengths," some students will

continue to benefit while others will not. From Bobby's perspective, excess credit hours

work for students who know what career they want to pursue and have the monetary

resources, in contrast to students who have not made a definitive career choice. These

students are typically underrepresented groups.

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. For the

most part, Bobby sees the policy and practices as they pertain to the transfer student as

equitable. With the exception of some minor organizational aspects related to transfer

orientation, she does not see institutional impediments to transfer.

I'm really very excited about being part of an institution that places high value on

support structures for students, an institution that has created a powerful advising

community that offers to both current and prospective students, information,

resources, connections, referrals and people who are interested in their well being

and their success. As we get larger and larger and we serve more and more

students, I am concerned about that, our ability to continue to do that. But we

have a V.P., who, when she came to the university, listened and looked about and

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really it's through her that we have a university-wide academic advising council. Directors of all of the offices meet once a month. We create our own arena for resolving and publicizing and raising to higher levels the issues of advising at the university. We have a provost who's committed differential tuition money for the next three years so that we have better advising. We have a culture of intervention for students that is reflected in our retention rates. We have made the first commitment to freshmen and the freshmen programs are incredible. But for almost 10 years now, there has been attention to and resources for transfer students to have the advantages of programming and committed people who really get them started well. That's what we do, we get them started. I don't think there's a more exciting place to be than in higher education. Working within the public system is as good as it gets, even for all of the frustrations from K-12, that we have to deal with. It still is an opportunity to have an enormous impact, not just on individual lives, but we still do that [June 2009].

Additionally, Bobby views her office as a sanctuary where all students can consistently receive individualized support. Maintaining student interest is a continuous challenge, nonetheless:

We really turned our energies to creating pathways for them to come into the campus community as sort of active engaged participants in this larger life besides classroom. It was very exciting. We have a group of peer mentors here in transfer services and they started a club, a social club, with Facebook and they do a workshop series. It's really exciting because they bring all of this energy and kind of a better understanding of who students are than the old fogies [June 2009].

She describes the difficulties in engaging students as "trying to move their inertia." While her office has achieved some "modest success" with imagining creative activities to attract transfer students, they are still "pushing a lot of new ideas." Despite this challenge, she prides herself in her offices' excellent communication and feedback system regarding student needs:

We do that care in our office. We talk to people one-on-one and we have the opportunity to now create systemically, pockets of support and resources for them. If we have the university doing this with four schools, we have this intense commitment to, again, through our VP, create assessment that allows us to look at ourselves and what we do and say. Well, we thought this was going to do this, and it's working well [June 2009].

Critical to taking risks and piloting new ideas are the supports she receives from the administration.

Well, we thought this was going to do this; it's not working. Rather than be punitive at that point, we have support from the top that says, okay, why didn't it work? Was it the wrong idea? Was it the wrong outcome? Were we measuring it right? We need to fix it, change it, drop it. But always this kind of thrust forward to be more intentional, to be more thoughtful about what we're doing, to be more wide-ranging and to continue to create these avenues, these paths, these… So that students, even when they get stuck, there's somebody there who… oh okay, okay we're not going forward yet, we have to go back a little [June 2009].

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Bobby perceives this tweaking process as a natural part of finding institutional policy and practice that work best for the students and the university.

The future. When asked what she would do to expedite the transfer process, Bobby states that she would make the community college advising systems more comprehensive. But her first agenda item would be to repair the K-12 pipeline:

> I'd like to go back to the high school because this is also a state initiative that has altered in some fundamental ways what can happen at the colleges and universities and that's the accelerated mechanisms, the dual enrollment. Now AP and IB I've heard—just absolutely wonderful for those students who are prepared; they're better prepared. Students now can start taking dual enrollment courses as freshmen. I have a freshman student who's taken English I and now wants to take ENC 1101: College Composition. Instead of having four years of preparation to do ENC 1101 at the college level where I should be writing college level, I'm now a freshman or sophomore skipping these three years of English to get college credit for English I and English II. Do I think that that student is better prepared to think and write critically? Hardly. What we've done is we've truncated their ability to learn at appropriate developmental stages and we've thrust the college credit back into high school. Great for parents, again. The parents who know about this are generally not the first generation parents. They're parents who know and take advantage of the school district paying for the first two years of college coursework and then Bright Futures paying for the rest. It seems to me that what we do is we track and raise them. That they are not even parallel;

they're different universes. For students to be taking college credit in high school assumes that they've taken enough high school credit, that they've explored and know that it's a foundation for a degree and not just a free two years of college coursework. All of those things compound. If we want to continue to do that, we have to have much more intensive work with high school students that allows them a much broader sense of what they're doing and why they're doing it, and elevates the bar a little bit so that not just everybody can do it, but that the truly gifted students have this option. Of course, it's wonderful, it's terrific. But is it an option that becomes an inequality or an inequity? Clearly. [June 2009].

In addition, once students entered the community college system, they would know up front the cost-benefits of their choice, and what it means to succeed in college before transferring to the university.

I would—and, boy, this is my advising role coming out—I would be sure that students know more about why they could go to college, what they could get from going to college, what it means to go to college and what they have to do to be prepared to go to college. That can start at the community college. There's no question that it can start there but it just means that by then demanding 60 credit hours only there, and 60 credit hours only at the university, we've created a system that doesn't allow… that's an inequitable system because the well-prepared students can do that, no doubt [June 2009].

In other words, students who are prepared for colleges do not need career advising while students who are the least prepared and most at risk, do. Ultimately, fixing the K-12 system would be an optimal place for Bobby to begin.

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Tyler (Dr. Culture of Collaboration), GECC

Someone's got to have teeth

A reprimanding and stern belief

For all universities who fail

To follow state statute we will hail

For more than a slap on the wrist

And vie for change that exists

To help minorities move

Through the system without reproof

A culture of collaboration is our way

From this focus we will not stray

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Tyler's spacious and brightly lit office was located on the second story of

GECC's administrative building and around the corner from the president's office.

Dressed very professionally, Tyler, a slender White female in her mid-50's escorted me

to her oval conference table which seats twelve, to conduct our interview [field notes and

reflective journal excerpt, July 2009].

Since 2005, Tyler has been the Vice President of Educational Programs and Chief

Learning Officer at GECC. Previously, she held the role of Vice President for

Institutional Effectiveness, including institutional research and planning. Tyler mentions

that she was deeply involved with the Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools

(SACS) accreditation process, which prepared her for handling requirements for transfer

courses. When asked how she interfaces with transfer students, she replies, "We [academic affairs] teach the courses that enable students to transfer. Other than that in terms of operations, not very much." However, she does sit on an executive team that involves, "the implementation of transfer from the initial advising through graduation check" which mostly takes places through GECC's Student Success Services. She mentions that academic advising does not fall under her purview, but that academic programming does. She asserts, "In academic program planning we have a curriculum committee. All the department chairs report to one dean and all the academic deans report to me." She characterizes the focus of these meetings:

> We have established a policy here, I guess it's unwritten but a policy or a practice, I guess I would call it, a practice of philosophy, that's the appropriate word, a philosophy of trying to build degrees, education and career ladders so that as students—community colleges are open admission—come in, their most urgent short-term need is to get the skills to get a job. Then we try to provide course sequences that will yield certificates that help the students get employed. Then course sequences that add to that that help them build towards an AS degree or an AA degree that will transfer. We've adopted that in my leadership team, as a philosophy that we think is very important given the nature of our students. The whole point of that is that people who would not necessarily be traditionally considered college material, have an opportunity to learn for themselves that they have that potential and then realize that potential, and ultimately transfer to another institution. That's the extent to which I think on the academic side [July 2009].

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When asked about the greatest challenge this committee has faced to date, she responds, "Actually, I've never attended a curriculum committee meeting. I have to do that." Apparently a director of curriculum leads the meetings and reports back to Tyler. She is quick to emphasize, "I think the most challenging discussions have happened without me being present but they get reviewed in my leadership team meetings." Tyler introduces a second example of teamwork where she is more involved: the GECC's development of the first state approved four-year degree program. After relating the details of how this program became sanctioned, she dovetails this story with that of underrepresented students:

> What does that have to do with minority students? Little… probably, except that I'm trying to foster a culture of collaboration and not "mine," "yours." Focus on the students; focus on what's best for the students within the framework of quality [July 2009].

When asked what she means by "a culture of collaboration," she answers that it is also a type of philosophy. Tyler incorporates a second example of how GECC has worked hard to create a single campus atmosphere for a multi-campus community college:

> We came up with a one-college principle that we may have four sites or more but we are one college, one curriculum committee. One vice president for student services, one vice president for educational programs. The experience for students at each site, the rules, all of that would be the same. Students could go from one site to another. Well, part of that was how we wanted to relate to each other, fostering collaboration and cooperation instead of competition [July 2009].

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. Tyler

sees the articulation agreement as a "wonderful document on paper" but is well aware of

its weaknesses.

> The curriculum frameworks, common course numbering system, all those
>
> components that make the articulation agreement work, are wonderful. I think
>
> Florida's ahead of every other state in the country, as far as I know, with respect
>
> to that, with respect to making it easier. The challenges from our perspective and
>
> I'm sure you would get a different story from the university, but from our
>
> perspective—and I'm not talking about FGPU here—but I know other universities
>
> where there are cases where what is in the curriculum framework as being
>
> required and if you do these things you will be accepted into the program, are not
>
> honored by the universities. Students will take Accounting I and II, or whatever,
>
> and then they go over to the university and they find out, well, we want you to
>
> take Accounting II here. 'We don't count the Accounting II that comes from the
>
> community college' [July 2009].

When I pressed Tyler to explain why the Accounting II class taken at the community

college does not count as credit at the university, she answers, "There's the perception

that it's not as rigorous and they don't have to. On paper they're supposed to honor it,

but they're at the end of the line and nobody's checking on it."

When asked to comment on the phrase "nobody's checking on it," she replies:

> Well, we had a discussion about that in the Council of Instructional Affairs, which
>
> is my counterparts all around the state, and someone from the state came down
>
> and we brought those issues forward. This is about a year and a half ago. There

has been an articulation coordinating committee for years that is in the process of

reviewing a bunch of this, I think. The only answer I know, is we are legislatively

required to follow all that. I don't think the universities are because they're the

end of the line. They need to be required to with checks and balances put into

place. I also think that it can be remedied somewhat… The common course

numbering system course descriptions right now describe what's taught. They

also need to describe what the learning outcomes are, not just what's covered but

what are the learning outcomes. That would put a little more rigor, I think, into

the process. I can understand if the universities feel like students who… I don't

know how they get their data, it's probably anecdotal, 'These students aren't

prepared; they don't meet our standards.' They don't have enough slots for all the

students who are wanting to transfer in. I'm not really pointing fingers here; it's

just frustrating. It's one of the reasons behind, I think, the drive for community

colleges to offer more bachelor degrees. Because the truth is we don't have

enough upper division slots in this state to meet the demand [July 2009].

The next logical step for the GECC, therefore, is to start creating its Community College

Baccalaureate degree (CCB) program. Again, Tyler identifies a culture of participation.

We've made no secret about that at the university. We want to do it in

collaboration with the university, not in opposition to them. Our initial focus for

the foreseeable future will be to expand bachelor's degrees in areas where we

have always prepared students for the workforce and where the education

requirements have changed [July 2009].

Moreover, Tyler hopes that the development of CCB's will boost the number of

Floridians with college degrees. She adds, "If we want to attract higher paying jobs, we

have to have a workforce that can do it." Tyler also views the growth of bachelor's

degrees as critical to securing GECC's future should its relationship with FGPU become

compromised:

> I think the way we are going about it is good for the partnership with FGPU, is
>
> good for the students and the community; and, also in the long term, it will
>
> probably be good for the college. Because you can't have the rug pulled out from
>
> under you all of a sudden and you have to come up with plan B [July 2009].

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. I asked

Tyler to talk more about underrepresented students at GECC. While reaching for a file

from her cabinet she replies, "Our underrepresented population has been growing. We, in

all areas, exceed the proportion that's in the community—Blacks and Hispanics being the

biggest…main ones." She continues with a statistics spreadsheet in front of her:

> We also have actively been working to try to close the 'achievement gap,' I think,
>
> is the term the press uses so that core completion rates for minorities compared to
>
> non-minorities are comparable with graduation rates. We're not there yet, but we
>
> are closing the gap [July 2009].

When urged to name the greatest challenge facing the underrepresented student, Tyler

finds it difficult to give a simple reply, maintaining, "I don't know if it's different at this

community college." First she claims that underrepresented groups have a hard time

achieving a level of comfort on the community college campus because "Many of them

don't come from a family that has any background in education." Second, she raises the issue of finances as a significant barrier and blames the state for not providing more needs-based aid as opposed to merit-based aid:

> If I had to say the number one challenge for most of them (for most students minority or non-minority), it's financial. Even though community colleges are very inexpensive. If you have to worry about supporting family or helping out your family or paying your rent and your groceries and all those things, if you don't get 100% financial aid, that's a challenge. Most of our students work and go to school. They don't have the luxury of being full-time students. If minority students are disproportionately having to work, not optional, having to work, then that puts them at a disadvantage. I think that's the biggest challenge we have with our financial aid systems [July 2009].

Her most definitive yet elusive answer is "time." She postulates that the time needed to work at jobs interferes with the ability of these students to participate fully in the life of the school.

> Because so many students, and I don't know enough about the data to know if minority students disproportionately have to work, come from financially challenged backgrounds, but according to county data, census data, that seems to be the truth. So, if I assume that, then that's their biggest challenge. It takes time to participate in student activities. They don't have it [July 2009].

Tyler's bottom line: if underrepresented students do not have sufficient time to engage in extra-curricular activities that connect them to campus, they will have difficulty succeeding.

The future. If Tyler could preside for a day over the state of Florida's higher education system, she would make three immediate changes:

My first agenda item would be to ask for a review of the curriculum frameworks. I would want a way to ensure that when students are advised, based on those curriculum frameworks, then the upper division institutions honor those courses now, and I'd do that for several reasons. Advisors at community colleges cannot possibly stay on top of all the curriculum committee changes that happen at all the universities in the state of Florida. We cannot possibly stay on top of that. The curriculum frameworks are a way that you can do that. There's published manuals; electronically now you can do that. So that those are honored so our counselors could confidently say you take this, this will count at this institution, etc. I think with FACTS.org and other things, there's electronic ways that that can be checked. But somebody needs to have teeth. Something. [July 2009].

Next, she would require more transparency:

I want somebody to develop and explain the process. Now, universities would probably give a hue and cry about equality; and so, my second step would say then you define the learning outcomes, the learning competencies you expect students to have when they enter your upper division programs…or the first required course and build those in. Universities, community colleges, you define the learning outcomes for the common course numbering system. I would do those two things. I would tell the university, you can't just point fingers and say the quality is not what it needs to be. You need to define what the students need

to know when they come in and then the community colleges need to meet that standard. I would do those two things. But that wouldn't be enough [July 2009].

Finally, Tyler would make certain that community college based university advisors do not try to dissuade students from transferring to the university.

When they counsel the students here to major in degrees that are offered here rather than encouraging them to transfer to the main campus and major in degrees there. Whether that is the case I do not know. But I've heard this Dean talk about it and the fear that they're trying to keep community college students off their main campus. I have enough respect for her to know to keep my eyes and ears open and watch the data, and see [July 2009].

To implement her three recommendations: to ask for SUS compliance, make policies transparent, and assure fair academic advising,, Tyler concedes, "Somebody needs to have teeth." Tyler would surely hold people and institutions accountable if she were to preside over Florida.

Teddy (Mr. Compliancy), GECC

Universities must aim

To stop playing games

And abide by the rules

Not make community colleges fools.

An alternative is clear for

The bachelor's degree to be

An apt community college priority

Which for minorities may become

Their greatest hope of achieving one

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Teddy's office is also within GECC's administrative building except that his

office is located on the first floor, planted deep inside the registrar's headquarters. The

only way to enter his office is through a password-protected door. After waiting several

minutes for someone to come in or out, I finally got the attention of a busy registrar teller

who let me in. Teddy is a medium build male in his later 40s whose tiny office is just

large enough to hold an L-shaped desk and a round table. Four of his administrative staff

were present when I arrived. After a cordial initial telephone conversation, I received an

equally warm greeting from Teddy when I entered his office. During our interview, his

cell rang repeatedly but he politely ignored it [field notes and reflective journal excerpt,

July 2009].

Teddy began his career as the Articulation Officer at GECC 15 years ago. Prior

to holding this position, he played an instrumental role in developing the first public to

private articulation agreement in the state of Florida. He believes that this became the

basis of the current AS statewide articulation agreement. His expertise allows him to

travel and lecture at national meetings, as well as to periodically assist the state "in

monitoring articulation agreements and processes, inter-institutional articulation

agreements between the county and GECC, which is also used as a model within the

state." While his current role as the Director of Enrollment Services does not entail direct

interaction with the transfer process, he maintains, "I still monitor any agreements that

come through for the transfer of credit, the articulation of credit coming into the institution" [July 2009].

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. I ask Teddy to give his general insights on the statewide articulation agreement. He responds, "Overall, the agreement was put in place to guarantee the transfer of credit from community colleges to the universities. It's a model that if properly followed, guarantees it." His initial compliments on the statute then transform into judgments:

> One of the loopholes that you have is if the student's credit did not fall underneath their AA degree, the host institution does not have to accept it. That was one of the problems that we had. Basically it was to guarantee the history of this because the purpose of the agreement itself was to guarantee the students' rights to transfer to universities. It guarantees that they'll be treated the same way as the native students [July 2009].

Teddy's primary concern is that the public is unaware of the fact that, while the AA degree places the student at the junior level, credit-wise, it does not automatically mean that all transfer courses will count towards the major. A second concern is that different universities may have different grading standards. These grades vary per institution:

> Some host institutions may require a higher grade, say maybe a "B" in a certain class. Well, the student received a grade of a "C" in that class. Now that grade, yes, it's accepted, but it's not applicable because now they have to repeat the course because of the standard of that institution. If the student then took the class outside after getting the AA degree, then the host institution doesn't

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necessarily have to accept that course. They can make the student repeat the

course [July 2009].

According to Teddy, universities have been "playing games" with course credit since the

early 1990's. He believes students suffer the consequences of the universities' lack of

timely change notifications to the common program requirements of community colleges.

Teddy upholds, "If it's not brought to our attention, there's nothing we can do." As a

result, Teddy states, "Most community college students think they're going to be coming

in as juniors and actually have more than two years to go."

His third concern relates to a university's propensity to reject GECC's credit. He

illustrates this with an example of a physics student taking Dynamics I and Dynamics II

at a community college. These courses are prerequisites for engineering majors. To

Teddy the community college course content is identical; yet, the universities do not

concur.

It was explained to me by the engineering faculty members at the institution that

they teach it differently. But still, once again, how do the laws of physics from

Central Florida differ from Gainesville, which is different down in South Florida?

They don't. That was one way the Engineering communities basically, for lack of

better words, protected it. It's almost impossible for a community college student

to go ahead and take a Dynamics class at our level to have it transferred. I believe

at the university level this class may be taught at the 3000 level versus at the 2000

level, but I believe most institutions other than engineering institutions do teach

those courses at the sophomore level. That was one way that, for lack of better

words, institutions can play games with the common course numbering and affect

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the transfer of credit from a community college going into the university system. That's a way that they can do that. Now I'm not saying that they do [July 2009].

Hidden prerequisites could result in some transfer students repeating an entire semester.

I believe the University of Florida's engineering program starts off at English II, not at English I. For degree requirements it's English II; so, the hidden prerequisite is English I. They're accepting the 60, your junior status for financial aid purposes, but in reality, you are still basically a sophomore status, which now takes three years to complete. That's some of the problems students have [July 2009].

His final criticism of CCP is that the idea of common prerequisites is an illusion.

If you're going to go to the University of Florida, you need A, B and C. If you're going to go to University of Central Florida, you need A, D and E. If you're going to go to South Florida, you need C, B, X. Well, now you're automatically telling the student that you need to know right now what institution you want to go to meet that common prerequisite; otherwise when you get there, you may have taken one of the other ones, but it's not applicable towards the degree because they specifically require this one. Where's the commonality of that? [July 2009].

When I asked Teddy to discuss the articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented transfer students, he states, "It is not geared towards any one group of students; it's geared towards all transferring students. It does nothing to protect minorities or underrepresented populations at all."

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Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. Teddy

elaborates on any institutional policy or practice at his institution or with the university

partner that either facilitates or hinders the transfer process. He claims, "Our institution

does not specifically have any policies I'm aware of for any underrepresented population

to go ahead and try to move them on specifically like a cohort group." However, he did

note that GECC has a special program to recruit minority students:

> For example, we have a program called Men on the Move where they specifically
>
> target African American males to come in and work with our equity coordinator,
>
> to go ahead and meet, give them early registration. They have a mentor, things
>
> along those lines, in hopes of them transferring… Now that's coming in to getting
>
> your degree. But what she does as far as advising them for moving on, "We have
>
> a normal counseling process through that. It's very difficult given the large body
>
> and given the state budget cuts that we have received, as you are probably aware,
>
> which is a very sore subject here. You can't do it. It's impossible [July 2009].

Teddy seems to imply that GECC is "bare bones" due to severe budget cuts and

therefore, lacks the sufficient funding to create special advising programs. He blames

uneven allocation of funds:

> The University of Florida's athletic budget is larger than our operating budget for
>
> an entire community college. What's wrong with that? We try to transfer…
>
> We're advocates of moving the students on. But the question is, what's the desire
>
> of the university system to accept those transfer students? [July 2009].

Teddy reiterates, "I don't think that any institution, whether it's public or private, would

have a policy to intentionally hinder underrepresented transfer students from a

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community college." But he immediately adds, "The universities could do a better job of informing the students of the financial aid that's out there." In Teddy's view, the average minority student is overlooked:

> We have a lot of first generation in college students. This is their first exposure. In all honesty, if you are a 3.8, 3.9 student, 4.0 student, everybody's going to be beating down your door. Yes, and you're a minority student. What about the student that's a 2.5 or a 2.6? They're not eligible for this scholarship, where do they go? How do they get into the bachelor's level programs? I think that's why you're seeing a push by the community colleges to go ahead and offer degrees at our level and change from community colleges to the college [July 2009].

Additionally, Teddy expresses great concern about the new excess credit hour legislation and its potential impact on disadvantaged groups:

> I think indirectly it could have an adverse effect on first generation in college students, which are mostly underrepresented populations. In an unintentional way it could be viewed, as I don't want to use the word discriminatory but a hindrance to the student getting their degree from that aspect [July 2009].

When asked to define what he means by "hindrance," he said that the GECC is trying to assist students in making early career choices by telling them "you need to know what you want to do now. After your first semester here and by the end of your second semester you really have to know what you'd like to major in. There's no time to explore anymore." In other words, students need to know their intended major upon arriving at the community college. If not, excess credits hours will accumulate for students that want to explore. The second problem is that students need to know what university they

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intend to transfer to and take exactly those CCP courses required for their major. But there is no guarantee that they will be accepted to that institution and may have to spend an extra semester catching up at another one. Teddy calls this the "downfall of the transfer agreements."

The future. If Teddy presided over Florida's system of higher education, he would put "an end to the gamesmanship." To accomplish this goal he would construct a series of steps. The first step would entail making the SUS comply with common course numbering rules. Second, all universities would be required to adhere to published admissions policies and not change the rules mid-stream. For example, he would tell the universities:

> You're going to tell the students that they need a minimum of a 3.5 to get into your program etc. If they do achieve a 3.5 you will accept that student and you will find a way for that student [July 2009].

For underrepresented students, his strategy is research oriented with the end goal of expanding educational possibilities for the average student:

> The very first thing we'd have to find out is, okay, we'd have to understand that their needs are different. That's the silver bullet. If I had that answer I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you. I'd be making millions of dollars right now about Best Ways. Unfortunately, I believe it comes down to opportunity and as long as you provided them the opportunity, I'm thinking maybe the state of Florida can do a little bit more to provide the educational opportunities for them. That's what it comes down to; it's an opportunity. We need to do a better job providing

opportunities for them. The way it's set up right now it's almost as if, if you're

not an academic elite, regardless of whether you're a underrepresentative or not,

you don't have a shot getting into the university system. You have to go private.

But then if you go private you need the financial aid. There's almost only so

much money can do [July 2009].

Finally, Teddy wants the university to provide a career path plan for the 2.5 GPA

students, remarking, "Do you have room for them? To give them the opportunity as

well? What about their backgrounds? You have to do something along those lines?'

Case three: the generalists. Generalists are administrators ranging from low-to-

high-levels, who possess a limited understanding of the transfer process despite their

knowledge, skills, or interests in their area of expertise (Table 6).

Table 6

The Generalist's Case Matrix

Participant	Race	Gender	Age	Inst.	Admin. Level	Years at Inst.	Years in Position
Chris	White	Female	50s	U	High	4 – 7	1 - 3
Pat	African American	Female	40s	U	Middle	11 – 15	1 - 3
Drew	African American	Female	50s	CC	Low	11 – 15	11 - 15
Jessie	African American	Female	40s	CC	Low	16 – 19	4 - 7

Chris (Dr. Engagement), FGPU

Transfer students typically are

More ready to learn by far

Ready at the helm

Mature and not overwhelmed

Programmed for success

They are ready to impress

The key to completed degree

Is engagement, we all agree

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Chris's beautiful and inviting corner suite almost floats above the second story of FGPU's administrative building. After being led by her administrative assistant down a long hallway, past generic cubicles, I am deposited at her office door, which is slightly ajar. Her office decor is elegant, with floor-to-ceiling windows and full-sized velvet sofas, all which overlook the manicured library lawn. Chris, a slender, White female in her early 50's, emerges from her large U-shaped desk, stands and greets me cheerfully. I take a seat on the sofa and she sits on the love seat; the digital recorder is placed on the coffee table between us [field notes and journal excerpt, June 10, 2009].

In the role as the Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Chris's responsibilities are manifold. Some of the offices she oversees include undergraduate studies, general education, transfer services, undergraduate research, interdisciplinary,

experiential learning, and academic services. For Chris, her core philosophy is "the more involved a student is on campus, the better:"

> All of these things are set up to ensure that the students are engaged, that they are part of the community, that they get faculty contact as soon as they come on campus, that they are well mentored and advised by peers, faculty and staff. And the policies and procedures to allow that to happen are in place; and they go through many of the committees that also are part of undergraduate studies to make sure that these things stay current [June 2009].

Chris extends this philosophy to transfer students, stating that as soon as transfer students step foot on campus, her goal is to encourage them to be involved in a service learning project as a way to make the large university feel like a small college.

> *Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students.* In discussing the statewide articulation agreement, Chris shares her reflections, saying, "It changes a lot." Feeling somewhat uncomfortable in describing the agreement, she continues, "I think I'm not the best person probably to answer that. Administrator X is because he deals with these things a lot more often than I do." However, Chris is able to generally define the articulation process.

> We tend to have to respond to things that come down the pipeline, with things like the common program prerequisites. Obviously, there's a lot of discussion going back and forward, being able to have articulated agreements with our community colleges, for example. I think that's been very elegantly put together by

Administrator Y and the President and the Provost so that we have sort of, as best

as possible, seamless transfer of our students [June 2009].

Also, since her doctorate is in the sciences, she is actively involved in aligning the

university's STEM disciplines with those of the community colleges:

We are looking at the fact that these students don't come from community

colleges to the university. They go back and forth and if you think of the number

of students, for instance at FGPU, and then think of the number for transients for

the summer or whatever. Having the common course numbering system has

really helped that tremendously. Again it helps our students work faster towards a

degree because they are able to go home and do things elsewhere and then

transfer that credit back into the university. So those are the kinds of articulation

agreements or the kinds of community building that we have within the state I

find very positive [June 2009].

In discussing the statewide articulation agreement in relation to underrepresented

students, Chris resolutely answers that it is a "good pipeline" which is "pretty wide-

open."

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. Chris

points to a statistics report and simultaneously converses about institutional policies and

practices. She shares her personal belief as to why transfer students are so successful at

FGPU.

Our transfer students are very successful. For me one of the reasons they're

successful is that they've already sort of been weeded out in the community

college. If they've got their AS or their AA degree, they maybe don't want to go

on. So the ones that you get are already motivated to get a bachelor's or to get a

tertiary degree. So they're already sort of programmed in some ways to be more

successful [June 2009].

When asked to say more about transfer students being "programmed to be more

successful," Chris explains, "They're more mature. They're more motivated to be

successful. 'I've got my AA, I can get my bachelor's. I've got my bachelor's, I can go

on and do a master's." She further elaborates:

These transfer students come in, highly motivated because they've taken that step

of going on to do the next thing. They want to get it done. They have time

management skills. Hopefully our FTICs have learned the time management

skills by the time they get to their junior year but we've lost students. So we've

lost students here. We've probably lost more at the community colleges who

have decided not to go further. So the subset of people that we have transferring

are a different population. And therefore, in that respect, they've got the

resources, they've got the mentality; they've got the drive to be successful [June

2009].

In terms of the new legislation on excess credit hours, Chris expresses both concerns and

optimism. She asserts, "I think transfer students are going to be at a disadvantage as some

transfer students are coming in with senior numbers of hours, but they haven't done the

requirements for the degree." She elaborates:

Obviously there are some things that they'd be taking like euphemistically called,

this "Basket Weaving." Well, those are not, you know, we don't accept those.

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They're not appropriate and they're not courses that we have within a program

here. That's going to make a significant impact because the student can't finish if

they bring in 90 or 100, 120 hours. Then, anything that they have to do to

complete their degree is excessive hours [June 2009].

Asked to comment on the negative impact of this policy, Chris says that the major barrier

is financial (the student will be unable to pay for excess hours). Moreover, the freedom

for students to explore a career will be drastically limited, "because there's no room to be

able to do it." However, she acknowledges the advantages of the legislation, stating,

"Students may take fewer hours, graduate faster, move on; there's nothing wrong with

that." When pressed to say how this new legislation will affect the underrepresented, she

asserts:

I think it'd make a difference for everyone. I see diversity as more than just the

things that you've talked about because you can come from a very, very wealthy

family and not have parental support. You can come from a very poor family and

they'll work five jobs to get you to college. Diversity is not that easily defined

from my perspective. I think encouraging students and letting students know

what's possible is what we should be doing as a state, not trying to classify people

and say we need more African Americans. We do need to be aware of whether

our environment is supportive of all people. I have to add a little in brackets

here—[I am somewhat diversity blind]—because I just see people. It's a good

thing and a bad thing. But it doesn't matter to me who the student is or what their

background is, I want to get them to get an education. We need to make sure that

we have processes in place to be able to do that [June 2009].

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Chris is able to see each individual for who s/he is irregardless of race and social and financial status.

The future. If Chris presided over the Florida system of higher education for a day and could change the articulation agreement, she laments:

A day would not be long enough to be able to understand exactly what is out there because one of the problems that we have as a state is we actually don't know very much about what the others do nor the possibilities that are out there [June 2009].

Her initial step in making change would be investigatory:

The first thing I would do is I'd listen. I'd listen to what was going on and find out what was going on and then I'd probably spend about six months and then ask to go back to be queen for a day again. And using the information I garnered, identify some things that could happen statewide [June 2009].

Next, she would require institutions to work together:

I would love to see us collaborate more. The first thing I did when I came to the state of Florida as a faculty developer was I initiated the Florida Faculty Development Consortium and I brought faculty developers from every institution in the state—whether they were community colleges private, public, small, large—together to say how can we work together? I would love to see us do that. I would love to see us not all competing for the same resources but being able to say, 'I'm at this university and I want to be known for this. I'm FGPU! I want to

be known for this and then be able to support those kinds of things. But we need to establish those first [June 2009].

Continuing this thought further, she describes a type of collaborative project she would fund almost immediately:

Study Abroad. I think that's such a great thing. There's some great things going on. And you know I'm hearing from other institutions, they're saying 'oh, we're going to do this but we could only get six students.' Well let's get two students from here and two students from there, two students from this university and that university, you know we have 20 students. Let's take them abroad, for God sake. But let's not stop programs from happening because we don't have sufficient students on our one campus. I'm very collaborative. I think we could be bigger and better because of the whole if we just collaborated [June 2009].

The changes Chris would implement: She would be a responsive listener, an advocate for alliance partnerships, and a creator of programs that encourage students to travel abroad.

Pat (Ms. The True Pipeline), FGPU

Red rover, red rover

Community college, skip over

Go directly to higher ed.

From bachelor's to pre-med

Key for minorities

Must be a state priority

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Funding essential

Results quintessential

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Pat's office is located on the second story of the student services building. When

I arrived, I was firmly told by the office manager to be seated in the hallway. Shortly

thereafter, I was called into Pat's office. Standing to greet me from behind her desk, Pat,

a medium build African American female in her early 40's, leads me to a round table to

conduct our interview. Her windowless, but brightly lit office is lined with metal

bookcases. While my initial telephone contact with Pat to set up an interview was

strained, I found her demeanor friendlier by the conclusion of the interview. Initially, she

told me that the one caveat to meeting me was that her responses would mostly be "non-

applicable" since her primary focus is on freshmen [field notes and reflective journal

excerpt, May 2009].

Pat's higher education career spans 18 years with some of those years at the

community college. Recently, she advanced to the level of Associate Vice President of

Student Development and Enrollment at FGPU. Bringing a background of experience

that Pat calls "very intentional and diverse," her areas of expertise include working with

first year and second year students, academic advising and preparation, grant writing, at-

risk populations, and transfer students. Some of the offices that she currently oversees:

student academic services, multicultural support services, academic support services,

university testing, student disabilities, and freshman orientation programs. Pat states, "I

have offices that work to transition the students in, within the Division of Student

Development and Enrollment Services." While her past roles allowed for direct interaction with students, her current role is policy focused. Nevertheless she still finds ways to actively interact with students, to "impact" their lives, and to see them "grow and develop." Her educational philosophy is holistic and draws on principles of student development. In Pat's eyes, students are not only retained and graduate, but the entire university experience also influences their lives.

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. Pat's particular focus on freshmen limited a discussion on the articulation agreement. However, a general dialogue on state policies and their potential influences on underrepresented students yielded a fruitful conversation. She noted that five or six pieces of legislation, such as the elimination of the CLAST, changes in Bright Futures, residency, and excess credit hours are "major policies" having "a direct impact on FGPU students." Pat is troubled by the fact that she is unable to articulate a clear message on the effects of these new policies on students because "Tallahassee has not given us a clear message."

She remarks, "I guess some of the concerns that I have with state policy is that oftentimes, it's policy that's put into place with a short turnaround time for the universities to actively and effectively put that policy into place." More importantly, she states, "they need to do a better job engaging the institutions, because ultimately we are the ones that have to make sure that the policies are enforced." Unfortunately, having tight turnaround deadlines can have negative side effects on students. As Pat explains, "You want to do that in a manner where it's more effective and efficient so that your

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students will not be penalized on the back end." Years ago, her institution had trouble

implementing state policy in an efficient manner.

> I couldn't have said this 10 years ago but now we have people who are in place
>
> that are very student oriented. When policies come forward from the state, it's
>
> not one department that employs that policy, it's a committee coming together.
>
> It's different entities coming together saying, 'okay, how does this impact you?'
>
> [May 2009].

Pat sees the equal importance of student voice in relationship to state policy:

> FGPU's Student Government Association has become a real partner in many of
>
> the initiatives that we take on, especially as it relates to policies because, we need
>
> to have student voices. We do a lot of focus groups. We assess students. We
>
> want to know, 'How do you think we can effectively do this? How do you think
>
> students will react to this? What are some of the concerns that you would have as
>
> a student as you hear this?' [May 2009].

While Pat does not see these policies as hindering underrepresented students, her concern

is for transfer students at the community college:

> How confused will they be as they move here? Will they think this is a policy of
>
> the university? 'I didn't hear this at my community college. Why are you doing
>
> this to me?' But that would be the concern of any transfer student [May 2009].

More specific to underrepresented students, Pat wonders what mechanisms might be in

place "to address some of their specific needs, coming into an institution of this size, if

they don't get connected. If they do not get involved in this institution, they will have

some challenges." Pat concludes, "Policy is important, and in my role, my role is to

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make sure that I stay abreast of what's going on and voice my concerns, but ultimately it's policy and we have to do it."

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. Again, she worries that community college transfers may not be engaged enough in campus activities before transitioning to the university, which will dilute their college experience.

For low-income first generation students a lot of the opportunities that are available at the institution, oftentimes they're not aware of those opportunities. They don't get connected to those opportunities. Things like undergraduate research, things like study abroad. They may transition in and do well in the academic arena, but there are so many other opportunities to help enhance them as a person. That's what my concern is for low-income, first generation students, are they connected with the resources that are going to enhance them and allow them to have a good post secondary education experience? [May 2009].

When asked how the university helps to bridge that engagement gap, Pat answers that she is creating a program based on another community college model, that helps low-income, first generation in college, racial and ethnicity minorities transfer.

When those students transition over to us they will know this is the office that I connect with if I have questions or concerns as a first generation, low-income student. Financial aid, who would they talk to in financial aid? What kind of funding is available for those students in financial aid? It goes beyond just a Pell Grant; what other opportunities are available? [May 2009].

Helping the families of underserved groups is another pressing issue for FGPU. Pat notes:

> I also think even though they're transfer students, I'd still think especially for students of color, oftentimes what we tend to forget is that it's not only the student that we have to work with; it's the families. I don't think we do an effective job with that" [May 2009].

In addition to the long hours that some low-income, first generation in college, racial and ethnicity minorities work, Pat sees cultural differences as an additional barrier. "Their background might be such that they don't want to ask for help. They don't know how to ask for help." She notes that this is especially the case for financial aid, "That financial need is there but they don't know how to get connected even within their colleges, where there is sometime funding available, a scholarship's available." Even the students with the potential to earn a masters degree lack the knowledge of "graduate teaching assistantships once they finish their four-year program. Many times they are so busy trying to take care of that junior and senior year that they don't look beyond that."

Pat fervently believes that underrepresented students should be aiming for graduate school. She insists, "Our transfer low-income, first generation students, they should be looking beyond a BA or a BS degree because it's just not going to be enough in today's society." However, her immediate concern is increasing Black student enrollment, "because our retention rate for Black students is below our total population." In particular, Pat notes that Black and Hispanic males are struggling most.

> What I'm hearing from the young men in that program is that oftentimes men of color just don't feel connected. Many of them are working long hours. A lot of

times students will say I don't see people who look like me. We are about 28%

diverse in terms of the ethnic groups. I've heard students say to me, you're not

offering me external programs and services that I connect with that will help me

grow and develop [May 2009].

Pat sees family responsibilities, job demands, and pressure from peers not attending

college as the major barriers for Black men.

The future. If Pat presided over the state of Florida for one day, she would have

underrepresented students go directly to the university from high school. This direct

pathway to the university is what Pat calls the "true pipeline to a post-secondary

education:"

I know that there are students, who need to start at the community college level,

but I do still feel that there are students who have the capability of starting at the

university level and having those wonderful experiences that we can provide for

them but they can't get access to [May 2009].

To garner support for this change, she would need funding. Next, would be gathering the

right group of "individuals working together to make that happen." Both the university

and secondary education would have to work together on curriculum:

Because a lot of times, students of color—and right now I'm talking about

students of color—they're not in the pipeline, they're not in the AP classes,

they're not in the honors classes. They're in the standard classes, thus they don't

understand that when you get to the 12th grade and you're applying for college,

your credentials are looked at much differently than those of someone who's been

in AP, dual enrollment. So it's an education for the students and for the parents.

But ultimately many of those students are not able to move into post-secondary

education because they don't have the equipment, the tools that they need. I

would like to see some change in that regard [May 2009].

Pat concludes with a footnote about her plan and the necessity of money, "It's one thing

to provide the access, but if they can't pay for it, then that's just another strike against

them."

Drew (Ms. Evolve), GECC

Our community is no longer all white

Minorities enrollment boom just right

Make college environment more sociable

Admissions, registrar, financial aid—hospitable

To boards of trustees, let's hire by choice

Diverse individuals to give them a voice

[Found data poem, November 2009]

Drew's office seemed to be lodged inside the inner walls of the faculty building.

It took me a few extra minutes to find her office amidst the maze of hallways and rooms.

I waited outside; she was on the phone but cheerfully waved me in shortly thereafter.

Upon entering, I noticed this was the first office where there was no room for an extra

worktable to sit and talk. Instead, a chair was placed at the long end of Drew's eight-foot

desk, where I sat with the interview protocol on my lap. To get closer to me, Drew, a

colorfully dressed, medium build, African American female in her late 50s, rolled her chair away from her desk to sit across from me, our knees nearly touching. Her small and dimly lit office was warm and cozy. A three-paneled sliver of a window looked out past the second story corridor to the grassy courtyard below. Drew, like a few other administrators at her institution, was concerned that she had nothing to add to the topic of my dissertation. Before pressing the button on the recorder, I assured Drew that her thoughts were valued and welcomed [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, June 2009].

Originally starting at GECC as a student and then transferring to FGPU to get both her bachelor's and master's degrees in the nineteen eighties, Drew returned as director of the Academic Success Center at GECC. She has served in this position for nearly 15 years and presides over three centers on the four of the college's campuses. In describing her role, she exclaims, "I'm like the manager of a store. I've got several departments on each of the campuses. My main job is budget; money comes first." Maintaining an accurate budget, hiring credentialed staff and students while overseeing tutoring services for all three centers keeps her busy. She remarks, "We have three levels of tutoring: student tutors who are peers who are currently enrolled at GECC or FGPU; paraprofessionals who have an AA degree or higher; and an instructional support specialist, that person has a bachelor's degree or higher." Drew reflects on the hard-won process of building a solid corps of peer tutors in the early years of her tenure:

We started with nothing but peer tutors. I fought and fought for years saying to administration that each fall, the students are coming in less and less prepared. I call it the 'decline of education' I saw over the years. I go to each department

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chair and said 'Listen, we need either faculty to come down… I need help.' By

the time these kids are ready to be a tutor, they've got maybe two semesters left

[June 2009].

The turnover rate of her peer-tutors and the lack of academically capable students to fill

in their vacancies, have been and continue to be her greatest challenge:

So my turnover rate is just great. Every semester I'm hiring, because kids are

leaving. But to find good replacements was getting harder and harder. It really,

really was a struggle because people coming into the community college are a

diverse population, their backgrounds. They're not just students. They're

working [June 2009].

Drew perceives this constant conundrum of hiring student peer tutors as, "another thing

added to that plate that's already full."

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students.

Despite Drew's limited understanding of the statute, she was willing to speak about the

statewide articulation agreement. She asserts, "I know if they finish their AA degree at a

community college, they're guaranteed entrance to the SUS." Apparently some GECC

colleagues refer to the "2+2" by a different name and Drew tried to remember it. Drew

continues, "I was familiar with that term, 2+2. Two here, transfer to a university. I think

it's now called something else. Oh, what is it called? It used to be called 2+2, now they

got another little name for it."

When asked to share her thoughts on the plausibility of the "2+2," she responds,

"I think it's a great way for students to transition to the university. I did it. If it weren't

in place for me, I wouldn't have done it." Drew, a straight A student, confesses that she is a poor standardized test taker and was able to cleverly circumvent the system to earn both of her degrees. What she sees today, however, are academically unprepared high school students trying to evade remedial math and English by applying to community colleges that require a lower College Placement Test passing score. She candidly remarks, "They do their research and homework and they play, play, play around."

Returning to the statewide articulation agreement, Drew views it as a critical mechanism to help "a person in the door." She cautions, however, that "jumping through the hoops," is another issue. Often students, who are afraid of failing, seek Drew out for advice. She reassures them by saying, "If you can get through the coursework and proceed on and continue passing your classes—be it face-to-face or online—in whatever mode you want to do this, and if the instruction is at the level it's supposed to be, you're doing okay."

What concerns Drew most is not the transfer process, but the decline of the K-12 pipeline and its deleterious effects on a college-bound student. From her corner of the world she does not see, "a clear transition from the public school" nor a "seamless K-20 system." She resolutely states, "It doesn't exist." When asked to further comment on why this is the case, she laughably remarks, "I think the folks in Tallahassee are a little off. We have people making rules and regulations who have not been in the classroom for eons. They don't have a clue."

Institutional policy and practice and underrepresented transfer students. The Academic Success Center is noted as "an open door to anyone who wants to come through it. We are here to receive," Drew states. Her hiring practices are strategic:

I try to make my staff represent what the college looks like. I remember one year I hired a kid who walked in with purple hair, or some color hair, tattoos, piercings everywhere. But my God he was excellent in Math. He was an excellent Math tutor. Everybody thought I had lost my mind. It doesn't matter. I said, 'I do not, will not ever discriminate.' I don't care what he looks like. He passed our little test with a 3.5 GPA in Math. With a little work, he can talk and explain. He's going to work here, period [June 2009].

Her chances paid off handsomely. He told Drew, "You're the first person who ever gave me a chance to use my brain for money and not manual labor. I like working, using my brain to earn an income." Student diversity, according to Drew is the most important criteria besides grades when she hires a peer tutor. "You've got to have that, because they feel comfortable. But they come in and they get the tutoring that they need. When you see them on campus, they go, 'Thank you. I passed with an 'A', I got a 'B' or something good.'

Faculty and their supportive relationships with students, according to Drew, play an instrumental role in the transfer process, especially for underrepresented groups. She notes that this can be done in and out of class:

I know in English, we'll have a paper conference day where 'you've got to come to my office, sign-up for one hour, come in and sit one-on-one with me. Let's go over this paper and talk about it.' That develops a relationship outside of class,

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away from the group. I think it really fosters… Students have got to be

connected. 'You just can't come here and take a class and run to your car.

Unless you've really, really got it going on for yourself.' There are some who can

do that. But the majority of them need to get connected with someone to walk

them through [June 2009].

She recounts another story of an African American female in one of her remedial classes

who is now pursuing her bachelor's degree:

It was an 8 a.m. lab and I was saying how they had to be on time. It started at 8

o'clock, 50-minute lab, work on the computer. At the end of class this young lady

said to me, she goes, 'Ms. Jennings I take the bus and it gets here. If I come early

I'm here an hour early, if I come at the regular time I'm going to be 15 minutes

late.' I said, 'Where do you live?' She was a young black girl, 'I said where do

you live?' She goes, 'On 9ᵗʰ Street.' I said, 'Ninth and what?' She goes, 'Ninth

and Avocado.' I said, 'Come here.' She walked over. I said, 'I live at 8ᵗʰ and

Avocado. I've never seen you before.' She says, 'You live in the house on the

corner with the fence around it?' I'm like, 'Yeah. Where do you live?' She goes,

'Diagonally behind you in the next block.' I said, 'You're kidding?' I never saw

her in my life, and she lived a block behind me. I said, 'Oh my God, my life is so

sheltered. I come to work, go home and close my door and don't come out' She

laughed. I said, 'If you want to ride to school with me you may.' And she said,

'Are you serious?' I said, 'Yeah, you may ride with me.' So I brought her to

school every day. She was coming for an AS. She has an AA now. She drives a

school bus. She said, 'I really want to be a teacher.' I said, 'Do it. Don't want to

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be. Do it. Keep going.' I said, 'Look how long it took me to finish school. It's

not about how long it takes, it's about finishing.' She's had two kids in between

all this and she's an excellent mother. She keeps going to school. She keeps

taking online classes… She keeps going. I said 'transfer to… You've got to'… I

said… [June 2009].

Drew underscores the importance of connecting to faculty for student success, especially

for minority groups.

Black faculty and staff work with black students and try to corral them in and

make sure they've got a contact person to come to, to ask about things and

whatever they might need and work with them. I'd do it for anybody. I don't care

[June 2009].

Regarding potential barriers to policy and practice for underrepresented students, an

unfriendly college atmosphere appears to be the greatest obstacle. The problem starts in

admissions and is carried through to the offices of the registrar and financial aid:

I don't go there unless I really, really have to. When I walk in the door, there's an

unwelcoming feeling. I can't explain, but it does. Before I send a student there, I

take the student myself because sending a student by him or herself—the process

is so frustrating. When you walk in the front doors where the bus stop is and it

says Admissions, I have said to powers above me that this should be the most

welcoming environment [June 2009].

Drew illustrates her own degrading experience: Without wearing her faculty nametag, she

walks through admissions, "No one looks up. No one says, 'Can I help you?' You stand

and you look and they're on the computers but you know they're working…" In the

Academic Success Center, she works for an opposite effect:

> I tell my staff in the center, 'When a door opens, when you see a body walking
>
> in, look up and greet. 'Hi. What can I do for you? You need to sign in? What
>
> do you want? What section do you want? Math?' To me, customer service is the
>
> most important thing. Every human being needs to be greeted. 'They have
>
> walked into your territory; speak up on your side. You're in the place of work, so
>
> you need to say something to that person coming in.' That doesn't happen in that
>
> little building over there [June 2009].

Drew sees the college's "insane" numbering system as an additional barrier. She

recounts a failed administrative attempt to remedy this situation. One year, faculty and

staff were asked to stand around campus and "point the way" for students to help them

find their classes. When she bitterly complained to the administration about this policy,

she recommended that they spend the money for some new signs to alleviate students'

confusion, stress, and anxiety. In return, she was told, "Well ma'am that's going to cost."

> Drew observes that minority students today, in contrast to those in her generation,

have difficulties "speaking up" because they feel "intimated." She tries to solve this

problem in the Academic Success Center. "I tell them all the time, because I came up in

both arenas, segregation and integration, I know." Drew also tries to educate her

colleagues in how to work with a diverse population of students.

> Don't just say you can't understand a student. But you've got to… 'Okay. I
>
> didn't get all your words so let's do this again for me. Okay? Say it a little bit
>
> slower for me.' They'll go, 'Oh, okay.' They slow down and I listen. 'Okay, I got

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you. You're looking for this?' But all of those things people… The patience. No one wants to be bothered with that. Oh, it's a pain. When they hear people speaking a different language, they're very turned off. Everybody's thinking you should speak English [June 2009].

The local community is becoming more diverse, as Drew explains, "Haitian, Creole, everything." Gradually Evolving Community College from Drew's point of view is lacking in its ability to provide information and to make contact with students in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere:

I've heard older students—White, Hispanic, Black, every walk of life—say 'when I came here to the Admissions Office, I almost left because, God, they treat you with such a condescending attitude, they won't even look up at you. They don't give you any eye contact' and I'm saying, 'tell them over there. Tell them' [June 2009].

Drew would like to see the administration respond more directly to students' needs by minimizing the use of statistical surveys:

Go sit outside the door when they come out of the door and listen to them. Curse, angry, can't find this. Been standing in line for two hours. Go outside the door and listen to them. Catch them right there and see what's going on because that's not true. I don't know who's doing your survey but what I hear when I'm just passing by is not good. When I go in there it's not good and I work here. So that doesn't help. We've got to work on treating people, human beings, with a little more respect and all of that coming in the door [June 2009].

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The future. If Drew could preside over the state of Florida, she would earmark funds differently and develop more diversified boards of trustees. She remarks:

> Reallocate funds. Redirect funds to have programs. We just finished the Title III grant we had for five years. We had peer mentors who actually went to the classrooms with the professor and talked the students. Have more counselors than advisors [June 2009].

This reallocation of funds would "make sure that programs and things existed to give those students the extra little bit of help they need, the counseling, the time. To do this, you've got to have more bodies to do that, to talk to those students and stuff. Have some major training of people already here of how to treat people. Diverse people." Adding diversity to the various community boards would give a voice to minorities. Drew concludes, "I tell everybody there is nothing all White anymore. Wildeboro County is not an all-Caucasian county. No Board should be totally that; it needs to represent the community. And it's not."

Jessie (Ms. Head Start), GECC

Minorities a microcosm of the community

How can we ignore this obvious opportunity?

Give the underprepared kids a head start

Each institution playing a committed part

Increase diversity of faculty and staff too

Promote them on merits, they will thank you

[Found data poem, November 2009]

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Jessie, a medium-built African American female in her early 40's, is slightly reticent at the start of our interview, but grows friendlier as the conversation progresses. Her large office contains a top row of windows on the exterior wall, providing the room with an airy feeling. Jessie's office was located on the second floor of the administrative building, down the hall from the office of the President. We sat in cushioned chairs covered in a modern design across from each other at an oval table. Jessie is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in higher education administration and hopes to finish this year [field notes and reflective journal excerpt, July 2009].

For the past five years, Jessie has served as the Assistant to the President for Diversity and Equity, with a total of 16 years at GECC. She states, "My job is to ensure that we have an environment that's conducive for all students to be successful here." Jessie's primary objective is to make sure that GECC has "equitable policies and procedures in place that ensure access and retention." Jessie also conducts the annual diversity workshop, which is mandatory for all employees to "try to make sure that everybody is aware of diversity and what that means and why it's important at the institution." The intent of the workshop is to get all employees "on the same sheet of music" because some individuals object to "all this diversity crap. Let's have the same vocabulary; let's understand what the goals of the institution are." Additionally, Jessie oversees a pilot program with FGPU where a small group of men have a two-year scholarship at GECC and FGPU, where she "makes sure that those students have what they need to be successful so that they can transfer to the university." Finally, Jessie is involved in two other projects: (1) workforce development and (2) developing the curriculum for a first year experience class.

Statewide articulation agreement and underrepresented transfer students. Jessie

has less knowledge of the state statute than of institutional policy and practice. However,

her grasp of the agreement became apparent when she states, "I think without the

agreement many students might be locked out of opportunities." She further notes that

the agreement protects community college students from the increased competition from

out of state students applying to the university, asserting, "I think it's a great thing that

they have at least an opportunity to matriculate some place." She does not comment

further on the statewide articulation.

Institutional Policy and Practice and Underrepresented Transfer Students. Jessie

is currently evaluating the transfer process at GECC. She remarks, "I make sure that we

have appropriate policies and procedures that would lead people to be successful." When

asked to define "appropriate," Jessie replies, "We want to make sure that it's an easy

process for everybody. So when we have those institutional barriers, it's like 'Hey let's

think about this kind of thing.' Just trying to make sure that everybody has an

opportunity because the bottom line is we want them to be successful." Regarding

underrepresented transfer students, she notes that most policies are written for "one-size-

fits-all."

> I think people are a little bit hesitant to develop strategies to help a particular
>
> group of students because the intent is for all students. I think when they write
>
> the policies and procedures, they're so generic that it fits for any circumstance.
>
> Even the things that I have to report on or my staff reports on to the state for
>
> equity and inclusion, those policies are still pretty generic [July 2009].

Jessie shares her 16-year perspective on the growth of underrepresented students on the

campus of GECC, by reflecting:

> I think they have increased significantly, however you define underrepresented.
>
> Whether it's by minority group, by age and gender, individuals with disabilities–I
>
> think they've all increased significantly since I've been here. I remember making
>
> comments very early on when you would see a group of students and I would say,
>
> I would see a lot of African American students hanging out in the concourse in
>
> front of the library. I would see them up until maybe Christmas. Those same
>
> students would not be here in the fall. So now I'm seeing that the retention is here
>
> because you see them around a lot longer. The hope would be that because
>
> they're seeing more people that look like them, whether it's in the classroom or
>
> with the instructor or other people who are encouraging them to stick around, as
>
> well as creating a climate that says, you know, everybody is welcome here, which
>
> hasn't always been the case. At least that feeling hasn't always been the case. I
>
> think the most significant change is that there are more students and they're
>
> sticking around a lot longer than they used to, because you would not see them the
>
> second semester [July 2009].

Jessie admits that she is stymied by how some students succeed considering all the

personal burdens they carry.

> I don't understand how a lot of these students make it. Because I have one in the
>
> program right now who—his family, they're immigrants from Guatemala and his
>
> father left the family. So now they're all trying to struggle and pull together so
>
> that they don't lose their home. He's like, 'I cannot take classes because I have to

work and contribute.' Then I have others who have said, 'You know as soon as I

graduated from high school, which was recently, you know, my mom says,

'Okay, it's time for you to pay rent.' I don't have a job. I need money now' [July

2009].

Jessie's greatest hope is that GECC can open students' eyes to the potential for financial

stability as a result of having a college degree. In her estimation, underrepresented high

school graduates are unprepared for college.

I think we take things for granted because either our parents might have told you

that you need to go to class or somebody emphasized the fact that you needed to

do that and what you needed to do to be successful. Some of these students just

have no idea…nor do they have the support at home to be successful [July 2009].

The future. Jessie would like to implement a state mandated Head Start program

for underrepresented students either at the community college or the university. She

explains her reasons: "To help them really understand the expectations and become

acclimated to the new environment and to set them up for success by putting them on the

same footing as those students who may have resources."

On an institutional level, Jessie would like to see more diverse faculty and staff.

If you're a career professional and/or career service employee, you see people in

that professional category who look like you, regardless of what that is, even

disabled individuals. You have an opportunity to compete for a position and

know that you have an opportunity to get it based on your merit. Know if you're

professional and you want to be an administrator you see people in that

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administrative group, not one or two, but you see people and that, 'Okay, I have

an opportunity as well' [July 2009].

Jessie predicts the future growth of the college, noting that the facilities will determine

the growth. She states, "If you have the facilities, then students will to continue to come,

particularly since the growth in the community is increasing significantly." Jessie also

notes that the reputation of the community college has changed, and asserts:

We're no longer the third or fourth choice for students who are just graduating,

whether they're underrepresented or not. I think because students no longer see

this as 13th grade, you're getting better students and you're also getting a different

group of students. And again, the County is changing [July 2009].

When asked if the community college will change along with the demographics of the

county, she answers, "I don't see how it cannot. I don't see how it cannot change. We're

a microcosm with the community. So what you see there you're going to see here.

Chapter Summary

A total of 12 campus administrators, varying in age, race, gender, administrative

level, number of years at the institution, and number of years in current position, were

interviewed for this study. Multiple readings of the collected data, including interview

transcripts, field notes, and the researcher reflective journal resulted in the categorization

of campus administrators into one of several cases: the policy experts, the technocrats,

and the generalists. Each case contains four administrators: two from the university and

two from the community (Tables 1 - 3).

Case one: The policy experts, includes university and community college administrators who possess more than just an operational knowledge of the statewide articulation agreement. These individuals are able to extend their institutionally based knowledge to the larger field of higher education, drawing on examples from political science, student affairs literature, and national studies on transfer students. Case two: The technocrats, includes administrators possessing an expansive operational knowledge of the articulation agreement at the institutional level, placing less focus on higher educational literature and more on the micro level details of the policy. And finally, case three: The generalists include administrators possessing a limited understanding of the transfer process despite their knowledge, skills, or interests in their area of expertise. Yet, many have longevity or seniority at the their respective institutions yielding rich and multifaceted perspectives of the transfer process.

The next chapter, guided by the study's exploratory questions, presents a cross-case analysis of the themes and subthemes identified in each case. Models of the research findings along with a policy typology and research metaphor are also offered. Emerging ethical issues, recommendations to improve transfer policy and practice for underrepresented students as well as future means to further research are addressed in the final section of the chapter.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to describe and explain selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of Florida's statewide articulation agreement and the resulting institutional policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students. This cross-case analysis is guided by the study's exploratory questions, which address elements of administrators' perceptions of the articulation policy, its implementation, and their recommendations for improving the transfer process for underrepresented community college students. As presented in the previous chapter, three different types (cases) of informants emerged from amongst the administrators, these being policy experts, technocrats, and generalists. In the first section of this analysis each case is explored and compared to the other cases. Next, a discussion of the overall themes and subthemes identified from the cases is presented. A final section is devoted to implications of theory and practice as well as future directions for research on transfer policy implementation and underrepresented students.

Cross-Case Analysis

This section synthesizes the data presented in chapter four. Policy implementer types (experts, technocrats, and generalists) will be first be compared within their respective institutions with regard to their proximity, fluency and perceptions of the state

policy and institutional practices in relation to underrepresented students. This will be followed by a cross comparison of the institutions, once again according to type of implementer (e.g., community college experts compared to university experts) with respect to those same qualities of proximity, fluency and perceptions of underrepresented students. The following three categories and their definitions are used to guide the analysis:

Policy proximity. Adapted from Wolfgang (1999) policy proximity is determined by a combination of an administrator's degree of interpretive, advisory, and decision-making processes. The stronger the roles are in relation to the state statute and implementing institutional policy and practice, the closer an administrator's policy proximity is said to be. Those administrators closer to the middle have more direct or "street-level" implementing roles, while those individuals further from the policy possess more observational roles. To determine an individual's proximity and his or her understanding of the agreement, each administrator's interview was analyzed and described as either close to or distant from the policy.

Perceptions. Perceptions of underrepresented students contain two subcategories: differentiated and undifferentiated. Differentiated means that administrators perceive differences on any level: among students, with how the students are treated by the institution, or in policy. In contrast, undifferentiated refers to administrators who see no difference at any level.

Policy fluency. Policy fluency contains three sub-categories: fluency, semi-fluency, and limited fluency. Administrators defined as highly fluent integrate various theoretical sources with practical knowledge using idioms, metaphors and analogies to describe their perceptions. Their expressed thoughts go beyond policy implementation itself. Administrators with modest fluency use fewer metaphors or analogies and their knowledge is drawn more from a basic understanding of the policy. Individuals who have difficulty defining transfer policies and who usually speak in generalities have limited or no fluency given that their job expertise is focused in another area.

The Policy Experts

Policy proximity. The proximity of the expert group is shown below (Figure 2). Placement of the administrators on the continuum was evaluated by participants' responses to interview questions according to the definition of policy proximity. Sam is a high-level administrator and Devon is a middle-level administrator at Fast Growing Public University, whereas Emerson is a middle-level administrator and Leslie is a high-level administrator at Gradually Evolving Community College. With the exception of Leslie, all policy experts were close in proximity to the transfer and articulation agreement. The university administrators' proximity will be presented first, followed by that of the community college administrators.
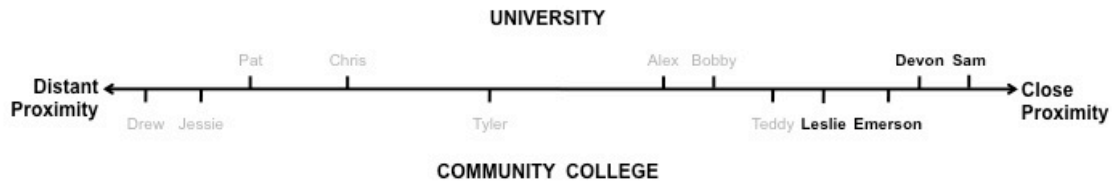
UNIVERSITY

Distant ←——————————————————————————→ Close
Proximity   Proximity

Pat   Chris   Alex Bobby   Devon Sam

Drew Jessie   Tyler   Teddy Leslie Emerson

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Figure 2. Policy expert proximity to the transfer policy. This continuum highlights the experts' closeness or distance to state articulation agreement.

FGPU administrators' proximity (Devon and Sam). Devon, who is the university's articulation officer, is a middle level academic affairs administrator. Any official articulation correspondence from the state department of education is channeled through him, classifying Devon's policy proximity as close. Part of his role is to interpret policy and "oversee the articulation process between the university and the State Course Numbering System (SCNS)." He also advises fellow administrators and university faculty on compliance issues in regard to course content and the necessary core requirements for current and new classes. His familiarity with "every course on campus and having to do course numbering (…)." In this role, Devon views himself as the "administrative presence" and "technical expert." Additionally, he is a problem solver. When issues transpire originating from the state and impact the university, his job is to notify departments and promptly remedy them. As a case in point, Devon relates a recent incident he had to solve, where the state sent him an official memo informing him that certain 3000-level courses had been lowered down to 2000-level courses. Another aspect of his job is to contact the state department to verify curricular or policy changes and then inform the impacted academic departments. Adding to his technical expertise, Devon's

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years of experience at the university and his desire to meet with state officials "to put a name to a face", have deepened his awareness of the articulation agreements.

Sam is a high-level student affairs administrator who is also characterized as an interpreter and advisor on transfer and articulation policy. Unlike Devon, his administrative expertise is exercised both on and off campus providing him with both a micro and macro view of the agreement. He states that when he works with regional campuses he operates "from an institutional perspective" as he examines the universities "big picture of articulation issues." This position puts Sam into an influential decision-maker role. Part of his role is to detect and solve issues pertaining to transfer students. As such, he labels himself the "chief problem solver." Sam explains, "If something comes up and there's an issue, I'm going to look at the issue and make some determinations and recommendations." Even in this role, however, Sam does not waiver from his long history and commitment as an advocate for transfer students. He remarks, "How do our policies affect transfer students? Do we need to give them some special consideration? Are we doing the right thing for transfer students? Are these going to be issues for transfer students?" Insightful "big picture questions" such as these earn Sam an even higher place on the continuum than Devon.

GECC administrators' proximity (Emerson and Leslie). Emerson holds a position analogous to Devon except that she is a student affairs administrator as opposed to an administrator in academic affairs. She perceives herself as an interpreter of state policy, a communicator of changes, a curricular advisor, and the technical expert of articulation agreements. As Emerson modestly comments, "What I'm doing is more of a

support position to write agreements, to apprise my colleagues, the leadership team, that consists of the Deans of students and Directors of those offices, is to communicate updates [from the state] to them." The significance of her role is detected when she describes the drafting of inter-institutional articulation agreements. She asserts, "I'm the person that needs to be pulled in." Emerson is equally a problem solver like Sam, continually searching for innovative ways to make articulation and transfer policies more transparent. She remarks "as we are preparing for our Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) visit and somebody on one of the audit teams was asking (internal audit teams) me about articulation, I said here are the procedures that I follow, here's the boiler plate that I follow." Emerson could be described as a combination of Devon and Sam roles. Like Devon she is the institutional representative to the state possessing the micro view of the articulation agreement and like Sam, she also possesses a macro view as she works to developed inter-institutional agreements with universities and the local high schools.

Leslie appears to be more distant from the policy as his job description is less hands-on and more indirect. However, as the Vice President for student affairs, Leslie is very familiar with the state policy given that he oversees the transfer practices at GECC. While his mastery is neither as polished nor as practiced as Emerson's, he has had some state-level experience with crafting policy, which makes his proximity closer, but not as pronounced.

Overall, transfer policy is a part of all four experts' job responsibility. With the exception of Leslie, the other three experts interpret, communicate, advise on matters related to the statewide agreement. Although most of the administrators have limited

interaction with students, Sam regularly interfaces with transfer students and considers

their needs and advocating on their behalf where necessary when shaping institutional

policy.

Perceptions. Although the policy experts as a group perceived no encumbrances

for underrepresented transfer students in relation to the statewide articulation agreement,

individual and institutional challenges for first generation in college, low-income, and

racial and ethnic minority groups students were discerned by three of the interviewees

(Figure 3).   University administrators' perceptions of difference will be presented first,

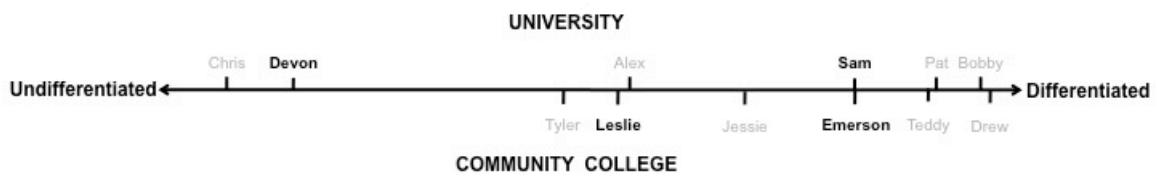followed by administrators at the community college.

Figure 3. Policy expert perceptions of underrepresented transfer students.
Perceptions of underrepresented transfer students ranged from differentiated
(seeing no differences) to differentiated (seeing differences).

FGPU perceptions (Devon and Sam). While Devon and Sam share a close

proximity to the statewide articulation agreement, their views of underrepresented

students slightly differ. Devon perceives the agreement as a useful tool for neutralizing

differences and leveling the playing field for underrepresented students. He further notes

that an administrator's political or personal perspective is held in abeyance when

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evaluating transfer credit. The administrator's opinions become nullified by the policy. Devon states, "it makes you not have to articulate the reasons for why this course should be accepted." In other words, if the course credit transfers in from a neighboring Florida public institution, then it automatically transfers by state law with no questions asked. In this way, Devon sees the articulation agreement as protecting all students by guaranteeing that their course credit will transfer, while simultaneously removing any potential discrimination. Devon adds that this may not be the case for private institutions that are not participating in the State Course Numbering System (SCNS). For Devon, the transfer policy by default regularizes differences such as race and ethnicity, which consequently benefits underrepresented students.

On the other hand, Sam views the statewide articulation agreement as explicitly facilitating the transfer process especially for minority populations. The policy provides an alternative route to the baccalaureate for students who would not otherwise meet the university's admissions requirements. As an example, Sam mentions cultural biases contained in admissions tests like the SAT as potentially hindering underrepresented students from directly entering the university. To alleviate this barrier, Sam sees the transfer pathway as a viable alternative for underrepresented transfer students to "progress on and progress through [the university] very easily." He continues, "It gives them a chance particularly if they're first generation students and they haven't gone over [transferred] and don't have family backgrounds that have gone away [left home], the community college is a much better way to enter." The main hurdle for the transfer student is the actual transfer process itself, not the policy. He asserts, "The challenge for the underrepresented students is more of the transition issues, not what I would call the

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academic issues, it's transition issues. Family ties, family involvement." Once

acclimated, Sam largely sees the transfer students performing as academically as well as

natives.

Where Devon's response speaks directly to the policy, Sam connects the policy to

transfer students. In both cases, Devon and Sam perceive the policy as helping

underrepresented transfer students. However, Devon views this advantage as an

unintentional benefit of the policy where as Sam sees it as deliberate.

GECC perceptions (Emerson and Leslie). Emerson does not see the statewide

articulation policy differentiating towards any particular group; it favors all students.

However, Emerson believes that the perpetual confusion of what courses do and do not

transfer to the university continues to perplex faculty, staff, and students. Emerson also

perceives some challenges for underrepresented students at the institutional level.

Underrepresented students lack the skills to successfully navigate their way through the

higher education system. This is one of her greatest concerns. Oftentimes Emerson

needs to point out these differences to colleagues:

> No, they don't know how to navigate the system. You know our system is
>
> confusing to those of us who are on the inside. So if it's confusing to us, how
>
> difficult is it going to be for somebody coming in who doesn't have that
>
> background [July 2009].

Leslie also does not perceive any hindrances in the state level articulation agreement in

relation to underrepresented populations of students. He perceives the policy to be "wide

open" and "a great vehicle for all students to get through the system." He notes that he

has not seen any statistical or other data indicating that minority groups (or any group) are having trouble moving seamlessly from the community college to the 4-year institution. However, like Devon, he does mention some potential barriers for private institutions that do not participate in the State Course Number System. At the institutional level, Leslie does acknowledge that underrepresented students do encounter personal challenges especially first generation in college with no parental experience in college. He observes that the "social systems at home are not there to help them understand what it really takes to be successful. So that's why it's so critical for us to try and help them [July 2009].

Taken together, all of the four policy experts see the statewide articulation agreement as a mechanism that aids transfer. No differences were discerned for any group with regard to the state policy.

Policy fluency. Fluency is an administrator's ability to integrate theory into practice and quote national and state studies pertaining to transfer. Sam and Devon appear to be more fluent than Emerson and Leslie (Figure 4). The university administrators' fluency will be presented first, followed by that of the community college administrators.
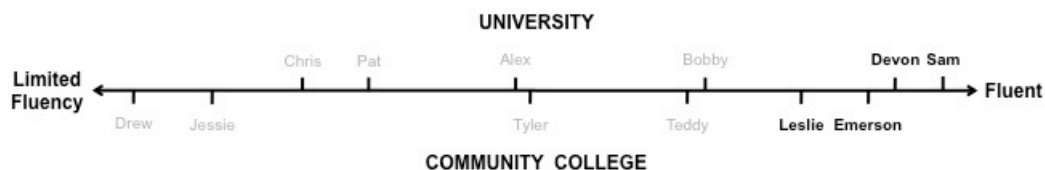
Figure 4. Policy expert fluency of the transfer process. This continuum depicts university and community college policy experts' ability to discuss fluently the state articulation policy and the resulting institutional practices in relation to underrepresented students.

FGPU administrators' policy fluency (Devon and Sam). Devon is considered a fluent policy expert. His political science background and long history at Fast Growing Public University not only provides him with a theoretical lens through which to view the statewide articulation agreement, but also affords him the ability to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the policy itself. Using metaphors, analogies, and idioms, he applies his theoretical lens to his understanding of state policy, institutional practice, and underrepresented transfer students. Devon is considered a fluent policy expert.

Devon is able to easily articulate the nuances of policy as he explains how knowledge is shared among fellow administrators and statesmen. He refers to this behavior as the "collaborative nature of the enterprise" and part of "the dynamic and synthetic nature of the bureaucracy." In other words, despite the rules and regulations that make the articulation policy systematically function, it is the relationships between people at the state level and at other institutions that creates the flow of information. According to Devon, this makes a rigid system fluid, as is depicted in his language:

No one could know everything and although we tried to make bureaucracies have

information lodged in them that are not tied to people specifically but rather

records (…). Between the lines of every policy, records can't fill those in, only

people can. I think that's one reason why wherever the knowledge is and

however it can be filled is useful [May 2009].

He continues, "It isn't that there's an answer but there's a way that something was done

that can help people think about the issue as they confirm or develop a state policy or a

state statement." Devon's fluency is also apparent by the way he describes the State

Course Numbering System (SCNS). He refers to the course numbering system as

"taxonomy" and a "useful organizational tool." As a tool, Devon alleges, it works well

because institutions can avoid constantly assessing the transferability of courses. As long

as incoming course credit originates from an institution participating in the SCNS and/or

applies to the student's degree program, then fewer problems arise. Difficulties seem to

surface when students insist that a non-applicable course taken at another institution be

applied to their program of study at FGPU. His fluency re-appears when he likens this

issue to the idiom of "a square peg in a round hole," that is, when an upper-division class

at one institution cannot be substituted for another. Devon claims that course mismatches

can be further exacerbated when the state appointed program discipline committee,

chaired by various faculty, revisits and revises which classes constitute as undergraduate

courses and at what level they are taught. He asserts, "When the re-reviews happen every

five years somebody comes up with different ideas for the taxonomy and there are costs

involved in terms of changing numbers." The ramification of changing course numbers,

both in cost to the institution and confusion to the student, is what Devon's believes to be

a limitation of the statewide articulation policy.

A third example of Devon's fluency can be seen when he discusses institutional policy and practice regarding underrepresented transfer students. First, he explains his governing philosophy as incremental and integrates a diet metaphor of slow and steady change over time as opposed to sweeping change. He then relates this philosophy by drawing on a scientific metaphor as to how FGPU has steadily improved the academic performance of underrepresented students. Devon explains, "it hasn't been a splashy effort, it's been something that's built into the sort of DNA of the school to be aware of these issues and to think about them in everything you do and to evaluate how it's going to happen in any given policy." Finally, Devon suggests a way to improve the statewide articulation agreement. He recommends "lean and mean" common program prerequisites. This change would afford the university more freedom to develop their academic programs with as little micro-management from the state as possible.

Sam's fluency is borne out of his long history working directly with transfer students. His experience is rooted at the "ground level" (orientation, admissions, advising) derived from his academic advising background and combined with his career promotions. As he states, "I've gone through different stages here from being the director of transfer services where it was one-on-one and large group of transfers to where it's more policy aspects." Sam's informal manner of speaking about the agreement, the resulting institutional practices, and his perceptions of underrepresented transfer students are rather complex despite his understated responses. For example, he asserts, "I don't like 2+2 because native students aren't graduating in four. Community college and transfer students aren't graduating in four. They're taking three or four just to get out of the community college because they're going part-time." But a closer

inspection of his transcripts depicts a comprehensive understanding of the system as he provides specific detail of how the policy has changed over time. He asserts:

> The agreements changed and particularly over the last 12 years. The original
> focus, and I used to work for the Legislature and I used to work for the Division
> of Community Colleges, so I had a lot of work with this one. What's revised in
> the last 10 to 12 years is the addition of the AS piece and having statewide
> articulated AS degrees and career ladder degrees and getting people to be a little
> bit more focused on the AS degrees [June 2009].

An even deeper analysis of Sam's interview transcripts reveals a consistent pattern of policy decisions and methods of crafting implementation strategies related to transfer students. For example, he explains:

> If you say they have to pick a major by 45 hours, these students are coming in
> with 60 and they have no major. What do you do with them? What allowances
> are we going to make and how does that fit so we're treating people similarly?
> That's kind of what I try to do and I think in reality that some of the basis for the
> articulation agreement is the idea that we want to treat students…like students…
> similarly when they're at that point. Whether you're a native, junior, or a transfer
> junior, you ought to be treated similarly. That's why we, for example, offer an
> early orientation so that when our students or our juniors are registering for
> classes, the junior transfers can come in and register for classes [June 2009].

Additionally, Sam possesses an acute awareness of the common stereotypes shared by a number of university employees regarding community college students. He elaborates:

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Sometimes faculty at FGPU want to discriminate. 'Oh a transfer student doesn't do as well in my classes, they're not graduating.' Sometimes it's because they're not aware of the data. Sometimes they're making their comments based upon one or two people. But there's that perception in elitist institutions around the country. Everybody wants their natives and the homegrown kinds of students and don't want the transfer students [June 2009].

The text above is an example of how Sam incorporates institutional anecdotes and data from national studies to reflect his understanding of transfer students. Sam's powerful combination as an interpreter of policy and implementer of institutional practices, adds weightiness to his fluency. What is unique about Sam, however is that he simultaneously evaluates and reflects on the effectiveness of the statewide agreement and then furnishes an example. In this case, it is the academic success of underrepresented transfer students.

When we look at our numbers, our students that are minority students, our students that are first generation students, they're hanging in there with everybody else. A percentage point here or there so, when we look at our transfer students, when it comes down to it at the end, they're hanging in there with the natives that have been here for four years. They've gone to a community college, they've gotten an AA degree; they all have at least a 2.0 GPA. We don't see that in a lot of states because the transfer patterns are different and because you don't have that articulated piece [June 2009].

Sam's comfort level in discussing issues around transfer student is a direct result of his past involvement in the state's legislature. He has researched and crafted transfer policy. He has lobbied legislators and worked alongside state staffers. This particular experience

affords Sam an insider's perspective of state-level policymaking and surfaces in a

conversation about Florida's new excess credit hour law. Policies such as these, Sam

notes, will be "incredibly hard to implement" and that when legislators "make policies

and laws they don't think about the implementation piece."

The final characteristic that augments Sam's policy fluency is his scholarly

activity on a variety of national committees where he periodically meets with other

transfer experts to discuss national data, compare state trends, shape the future direction

of transfer studies, and suggest strategies on how to smooth the pathway to the

baccalaureate degree. The cumulative effect is an administrator who is in-tune and ready

to address issues pertaining to underrepresented transfer students to help them succeed.

Therefore, Sam is the most fluent policy expert, followed by Devon.

GECC administrators' policy fluency (Emerson and Leslie). Emerson's fluency

is evident by her analytical ability to describe the state policy, which is a result of her

accrued years of working with a number of different state transfer agreements and her

keen awareness and thoughtful application of student theory. In regard to the articulation

agreement her knowledge is remarkably acute. She can systemically deconstruct its

"unraveling" and "dismantling" (as she calls it), by applying numerous examples of its

slow and steady demise. As Emerson remarks, "The common program prerequisites—

most institutions seem to be following them but some of the institutions, particularly the

big name institutions, word on the street is that they pretty much establish whatever

additional criteria they want and impose that." The only repercussion she has witnessed

typically amounts to "a slap on the wrist" from the state.

Emerson's fluency is also apparent in the way she frames Gradually Evolving

Community Colleges recent growth:

> Different institutions might approach the consistency issue differently. Because
>
> for some institutions it might not be that big of a deal whether the outcome is the
>
> same, it doesn't matter whether we're doing it the same at campus A, campus B,
>
> campus C. For us, because we have a commitment to a one-college philosophy
>
> and I think our own understanding of what we mean by one college, continues to
>
> evolve. That students will have the same service outcomes, the same experience,
>
> regardless of whether they go to campus W, X, Y, or Z. Our own understanding
>
> of what we mean by that is evolving [June 2009].

In the quote above intently frames her response by starting broad and then zeros in on

GECC's evolving one-college philosophy. Emerson repeats this pattern throughout the

interview. For example, when she speaks about improvements to the colleges

communication systems she asserts, "Articulation is about providing greater access and

streamlining, you know, somebody navigating through a program of study and

maximizing what they're able to transfer and it was almost like it was hidden." In this

case, Emerson contributes to the college mission by making the transfer policies more

transparent and accessible via the college website.

Emerson's forte, however, is her student affairs background and her ability to

draw from this literature base to seek innovative solutions to complex problems. This

becomes evident when she discusses the challenges for underrepresented transfer

students. She underscores the necessity of sourcing theory to strategize novel ways to

increase their academic success. Her primary concern is the lack of diversity awareness

among faculty and staff so that they are more aware of the challenges and unique needs of underrepresented students. Emerson insightfully asserts, "On issues pertaining to diversity, we're trying to raise the consciousness and the literacy of staff, and various faculty and staff around issues of diversity and minorities. What are those concerns?" She perceives these students as having difficulty navigating the higher education system stating, "You know our system is confusing to those of us who are on the inside. So if it's confusing to us, how difficult is it going to be for somebody coming in who doesn't have that background" [June 2009]. She then revisits theory:

> How many people know about the books written on good practice, how many people know about Chickering and Gamson's article? Most don't. Maybe they don't have to although I wish more people did. But I think we should be somewhat literate with that's happening out there [June, 2009].

Emerson's combination of her knowledge of student development theory, ability to integrate theory with practice, and the finesse of her responses makes her a fluent administrator. She is placed next to Devon on the fluency scale.

Like Emerson he has also experienced articulation in another state and has served as an administrator at a neighboring community college. Such involvement allows him to compare and contrast different types of articulation policy and practices. Additionally, Leslie has participated on various task forces at the state level and most recently served as the student affairs council chair lobbying legislators. Similar to Sam at the university, this brings an added dimension to his perspective.

Leslie equally focuses on student development theory as a way to increase student success drawing on Tinto's model of social integration, expressing his thoughts using

symbolic language and carefully placed idioms to explain his ideas. For example, when Leslie states that he perceives the articulation agreements as wide-open, he immediately follows-up with this retort:

> The policies are there that allow a student to be successful if they want to be. What may not be there is, does the student have all the tools and resources needed to be successful to even get there? The door may be open but they may not be able to get to the door [July 2009].

He illustrates this point with the anecdote about the low-income single mother who was destitute when she arrived at the community college. The student graduated with honors and entered FGPU with a prestigious fellowship. Leslie uses the story as a device to interweave theory and practice:

> [I]f you have the support systems that are in place and are willing to put the effort into being successful and want to do it, the tools are here to help you. I think the support systems in terms of the social integration and the academic integration (…). Go back to Tinto's theory for retention of why students are successful is trying to keep the student engaged with more activities with faculty, staff, and with other students [July 2009].

Idioms such as "burrs in the saddle" and "putting teeth into the policy" are how Leslie expresses his opinion of the state's lack of policy enforcement when universities fail to comply with the articulation statute. Contributing to this problem are differing governance structures for the community colleges as opposed to the university. When the state fails to take action with violating institutions, this dilutes the power of the transfer policy.

Another area that depicts Leslie's fluency is his command of institutional statistics and his understanding fiscal matters, especially with regard to underrepresented students. He asserts:

> If you look at some of our data, African American males at the college and that's a national phenomena too, in terms of the success rates, why there seems to be a gap. We look at it at the college minority/non-minority. We break out some of our performance metrics that way [July 2009].

He is keenly aware of the national phenomena, academic disparities for minority groups, and solutions to try to shrink these differences. He provides an example of Gradually Evolving Community College's attempts to fix the problem:

> Our strategies are trying to work towards reducing the gaps and it's a tough thing to do, but we think there are some good practices out there that have been helpful. But they generally take dollars and that's what it always works out to be, (…) you need to have some seed money to try and invest in those programs and we just haven't had a lot of extra, given the enrollment growth that we've had [July 2009].

Again, he looks outwards to practices that have succeeded or been piloted elsewhere, but outlines the limitations to potential solutions. The culmination of Leslie's experiences, the manner in which he talks about students, and the suggestions he offers to help underrepresented students make him relatively fluent and is therefore placed next to Emerson.

Summary of the policy experts. Policy experts are well versed in national and state trends related to transfer and articulation because they are close to the articulation agreement. They are problem-solvers, decision makers, policy recommenders, creator of tactics and leverage for the institution at the state level. Metaphors used by the experts themselves include "chief policymaker" or "the academic presence lending technical credence" or "the liaison to the state on behalf of the institution." These individuals also deal specifically with curricular issues, such as program prerequisites and general education credits in terms of course transferability. Developing, implementing, and evaluating policy are some additional expert roles. They are fluent. Policy experts read and quote literature from higher education research, student development theory, and political science. None of the experts see the statewide policy as discriminating transfer students, however, all experts do discern institutional and/or personal barriers for underrepresented groups.

Cross-case analysis of the policy experts. The three continua (proximity, fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students) are displayed in Figure 5, with relationships among the policy experts delineated. With the exception of Leslie, most policy experts are in close proximity to the state articulation agreement, which correlates to their high level of fluency. Although Leslie is further away from the policy, his fluency, based on his comprehension of issues facing low-income, and transfer students and his integration of student development theory into practice make him more fluent; however, Emerson, who is closer in proximity to the articulation agreement, shows even higher fluency. These two community college administrators depart from

each other in the degree to which they perceive differences for underrepresented students; while Leslie sees only some differences and Emerson views considerably more. University administrators Devon and Sam follow the same proximity and fluency trajectories, and split more radically in their view of differences for underrepresented students.
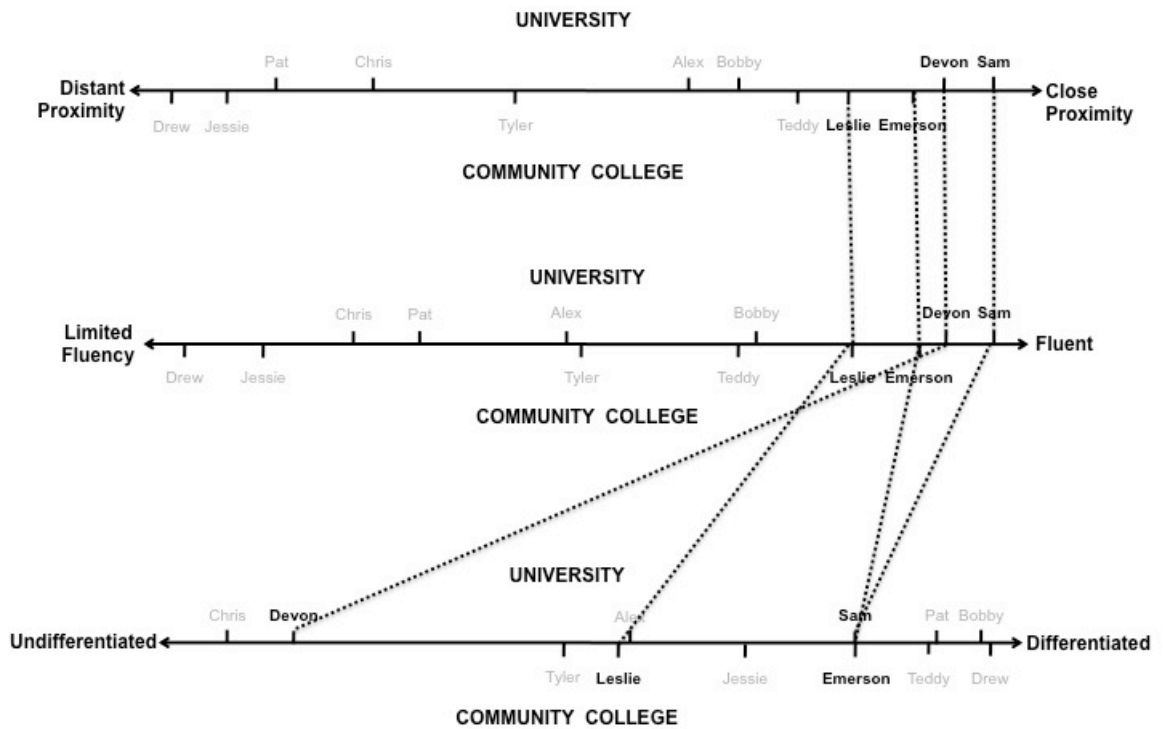

Figure 5. Policy expert proximity, fluency, and perceptions combined. The combined continua of the policy experts displaying closeness to the articulation agreement, level of fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students.

The Technocrats

  Policy proximity. The technocrats' proximity is shown below (Figure 6). Alex

is a middle-level administrator and his colleague Bobby is a low-level administrator at

FGPU whereas Tyler is a high-level administrator and Teddy is a middle-level

administrator at GECC. All of the technocrats were placed on the higher end of the

continuum with the exception of Tyler. The university administrators' proximity will be

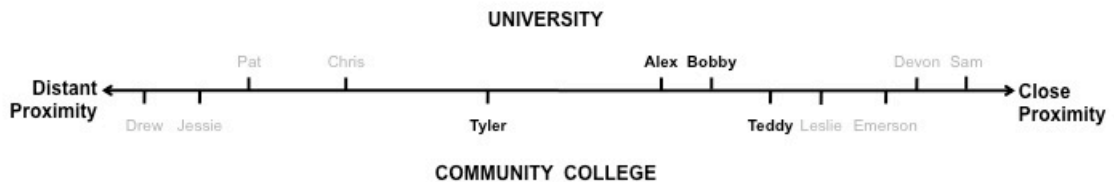presented first, followed by community college administrators.

Figure 6. Technocrat proximity to the transfer policy. This continuum highlights
a technocrat's closeness or distance to state articulation agreement.

  FGPU administrators' policy proximity (Alex and Bobby). Alex's proximity to

policy is closer to the middle of the continua. He presides over the transfer and

articulation process in the role of Assistant Vice President of Regional Campuses Student

Services at FGPU's. While he admits that his title denotes a high level position, he

modestly perceives himself as middle-level manager stating, "I have a senior title but

technically I'm working for a president who has delegated this responsibility to a provost

who is holding a vice-provost accountable for regional campuses." His responsibility is

to "try to provide opportunity within the confines of laws and regulations and statute

agreements." He asserts:

The fundamental state statute that drives all of this is the 2+2 agreement, which is a state statute saying that roughly any community college student with an earned AA degree, to some extent, has guaranteed admission to the state of Florida universities, the specifics of that of course is involved (…) but that's generally the concept [May 2009].

Alex further perceives himself as an indirect implementer whose job is to "simply carry out policy." He views his staff as the "direct implementers" who are "responsible for implementing various policies and procedures," related to institutional policy. In this case, he must "ensure that they are doing what they need to do on behalf of the students." Alex mentions that his main role is to keep the education pipeline between institutions unclogged and smooth—that the process does not get hung up on a "technicality." Such characteristics place Alex further away in his policy proximity than Devon and Sam, and more towards accountability and minimizing implementation problems with regional transfer. Therefore Alex's proximity is close to being centrally located in the continuum given his regulatory role.

Bobby's proximity is similar to Alex's, however she is slightly closer to the policy. Her interview transcripts reflect an intense focus on the office operations over which she presides, accommodating large populations of transfer students, parents, high school guidance counselors, community college advisors and administrators at partnering schools. Bobby must also field enrollment inquiries from prospective students. She is, however, responsible for writing inter-institutional articulation agreements related to "dual enrollment and early admission agreements as well as the articulated by major or program agreements with the community colleges and with private nationally and

internationally institutions." This particular role gives her rich understanding of the state

policy, noting, "The AA is the perfect medium for encouraging students through General

Education to explore a little bit, figure out some strengths and some passions and then be

ready to move forward at the junior level [June 2009]. Bobby even goes as far to

comment on the drawbacks of AS to BS degree critiquing its academic structure and its

tendency to delay a student's graduation by a more than a semester. But ultimately her

influence is at the local level where her office staff "works with students before they

come to the university, and our primary concern there is academic preparation, to assure

that they at least think about a major and take pre-requisites. Summing up her role, she

states, "We're a service office, predominantly a service office." Like Alex, Bobby is

neither close nor far from the policy. She is in the middle of the proximity continuum.

     GECC administrators' policy proximity (Tyler and Teddy). Tyler, the Vice

President of Educational Programming and Chief Learning Officer, is more distant from

the transfer policy despite the fact that she currently oversees Gradually Evolving

Community College's academic programming committee and guides the college through

its Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation review.

Additionally, while she is responsible for the entire academic programming at the

college, which includes course sequencing, course selection, programmatic choices, and

development of certificate programs. As Tyler states, "We [academic affairs] teach the

courses that enable students to transfer." Her proximity is placed near the center,

however, because of her involvement with GECC's new baccalaureate degree program

and her fairly good understanding of how the statewide articulation agreement functions.

She perceives the agreement as a "wonderful document on paper" but struggles with the universities tendency to ignore or manipulate the rules. Tyler continues, "I know other universities… there are cases where what is in the curriculum framework as being required and if you do these things you will be accepted into the program, are not honored by the universities." Tyler's working knowledge of curricula, general working knowledge of the statewide articulation agreement, how courses transfer, along with her accreditation expertise, places her in the middle of the continuum just like Alex and Bobby.

Teddy held the articulation officer position previous to his role as the Director of Enrollment Services at GECC. This places his proximity beyond the center of the continuum. In the mid-1990's he was also a "co-author of the first public to private articulation agreement in the state of Florida," which apparently served as the basis for the existing private to public statewide articulation agreement. Additionally, Teddy has presented nationally at the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Office annual meeting—a non-profit association that examines transfer and articulation from an enrollment perspective, monitored articulation agreements and its ensuing processes for the state. He has also developed "inter-institutional articulation agreements between the county and GECC, which is also used as a model within the state." While not directly involved in transfer processes, Teddy still currently monitors "the articulation of credit coming into the institution." Teddy's notably active past and relatively active present involvement with the statewide articulation agreement determine his proximity as closer in proximity.

Perceptions. Technocrats perceived no encumbrances for underrepresented transfer students in relation to the statewide articulation agreement. Individual and institutional challenges for first generation in college, low-income, and racial and ethnic minority students, however, were discerned by all of the interviewees (Figure 7). The university administrators' perceptions will be presented first, followed by the community college administrators.
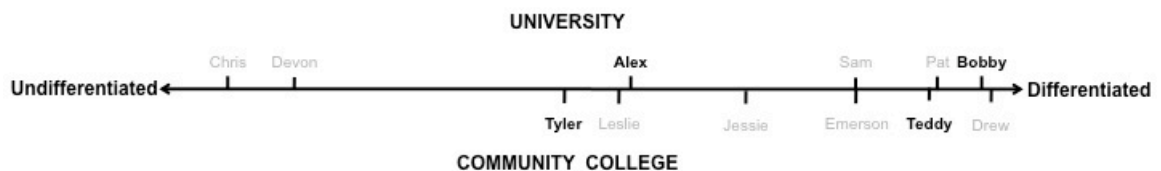

Figure 7. Technocrat perceptions of underrepresented transfer students. Technocrats' perceptions of underrepresented transfer students range from differentiated (seeing no differences) to differentiated (seeing differences).

FGPU administrators' perceptions (Alex and Bobby). Alex is again placed in the middle of the continuum. He describes the historical role of the community college relative to underrepresented transfer students stating, "Community colleges have provided the university a greater segment of diversity, of diverse students than we actually had. We have maintained that relationship and that has provided for the university (an opportunity) to grow and to expand relative to diversity now." When he defines underrepresented students he asserts, "I'm not just talking African American, I'm talking about the broad spectrum of students of color. Latino, Hispanic, all the way to students who really have all kinds of orientations. It's multidimensional." Alex warns,

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however, about the danger of labels and stereotypes. He remarks, "I know we just categorize students and people, for ease of communication, with no disrespect to anybody, but we really don't need labels." He is especially concerned about "putting people in boxes and categorizing them" and that he has "developed a healthy and strong respect for students in all categories." Ironically, when he underscores the fundamental goal of the post-secondary education, underrepresented students are spotlighted:

> What institutions of higher education, particularly four-year universities and colleges need to understand is, this matter of getting them through, empowering them to persist, to be retained, to progress through this process and then ultimately to graduate [May 2009].

To achieve this goal, Alex states that if institutions are "committed to or engage in" this effort, then "transfer students, specifically students of color in general, anybody who wants to earn an education will have the best chance to do so, because the institution takes very seriously those three essential elements." He further believes that the benefits of this goal can only be achieved with the student's commitment to learn. In other words, underrepresented students must "put forth the mental, physical and emotional effort that it takes, and if the institution is doing its part, it is truly their partnership built upon success and access." Given the balance of Alex's responses, which moves from seeing differences and to seeing no differences for underrepresented groups, he is placed near the center of the continuum.

Bobby, like Alex, agrees that the statewide articulation policy is not a barrier, but perceives major differences for underrepresented students beginning in elementary school and moving through higher education. She detects institutionalized differences beginning

in pre-school. Bobby elaborates, "There are disadvantages for them. Those disadvantages are largely institutionalized. Do we have some pathways for them? We do. The College Reach-Out Program (CROP) and TRIO programs." Despite the Florida's CROP program and the federal government's TRIO programs, limitations become progressively more evident and detrimental as students prepare for college and apply to the university. Using a fictionalized scenario she describes the downhill trajectory for these students and connects it to transfer difficulties in their future:

> The students who have the least advising, counseling from the earliest stages will be the ones who will bear the brunt of it because if I'm a student in a 2+2 state and in high school was the first time anyone's talked to me about college and I'm not going to think university, I'm going to think community college. But again, I'm a sophomore or junior in high school and someone finally says to me why don't you apply and go to the local community college? You can do a lot of things there. There's multiple university choices, job choices. You should definitely, definitely go on. Okay, so I get to the local community college and maybe I've taken algebra and maybe geometry and maybe even trig but I might have just done math with the whatever's… get me out of high school math. So I start at the community college and I take the CPT and I need remedial math. So my very first semester I'm doing 0024 and the second semester I do 1033 and then by the third semester I could take my first real math class. Okay that's college algebra and I'm effectively in my sophomore or junior year, if I've been tracked well so far. I'm in my sophomore year and now I'm getting ready to transfer to the university and I'm just catching up and getting my AA credits done

and someone's saying to me but you have to choose a major and I'm thinking

wow let's see I took Sociology, I took Physical Science, I took Computer Science

I would say what is a major, a major, a major, a major… and maybe I'm lucky

enough to get to Career Services and they all do some really great exploration,

major career connections, and then I get to the university and I have to take my

first, oops pre-calculus because I got calculus so I can take physics to be a biology

major or God help me I'm an engineering major because I know now that

engineering's… the students with the least preparation in middle school and high

school, and again, that falls disproportionately on first generation students and

those economically disadvantaged students who may not be I don't know

probably would be first generations as well because they just… there is no one

guiding them step by step by step. That's where the largest problems will

continue [June 2009].

She further asserts that Florida's focus on merit-based scholarships like Bright Futures,

which are a "boon to the middle class," pales in comparison for more needs-based aid and

that the new excess credit hour legislation will only continue to exacerbate the academic

gap for underrepresented students. Bobby is placed on the differentiated side of the

continuum.

GECC administrators' perceptions (Tyler and Teddy). While Tyler does not

perceive problems with the statewide articulation agreement in regard to

underrepresented students, she does see particular challenges to the group. Her first

concern is that underrepresented students lack the family background of college-going

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parents, followed by a lack of finances, and time to participate in extra-curricular activities because they are busy with full-time jobs and can only attend college part-time. She asserts, "Most of our students work and go to school. They don't have the luxury of being full-time students. If minority students are disproportionately having to work, not optional, having to work, then that puts them at a disadvantage." Tyler's answer appears to be somewhat tentative, however, as she comments on the hardships facing underrepresented students:

> I don't know enough about the data to know if minority students disproportionately have to work, disproportionately come from financially challenged backgrounds, but according to County data, census data, that seems to be the truth. So if I assume that, then that's their biggest challenge. It takes time to participate in student activities. We have to do all the optional things. They don't have the time [July 2009].

Tyler knows that low-income, first generation in college, and racial and ethnic minority groups have particular personal challenges. She equally sees academic disparities:

> We also have actively been working to try to close the "achievement gap" I think is the term the press uses so that core completion rates for minorities compared to non-minorities, are comparable and graduation rates and all that. We're not there yet but we are closing the gap [July 2009].

The combination of Tyler perceptions of academic gaps and the personal challenges underrepresented students face, place her in the center of the continuum.

When Teddy shares his insights on underrepresented transfer students in relation to the statewide articulation agreement, he asserts, "It is not geared towards any one

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group of students; it's geared towards all transferring students." This statement seems to indicate that he perceives the policy as all-encompassing. He continues, however, by asserting, "It does nothing to protect minorities or underrepresented populations at all." Underrepresented transfer students are most vulnerable due to the disparities that are to be found on the side of the university, not community college. Teddy claims that the first problem is due to universities' minimal effort to inform student about financial aid options:

> I believe the universities could do a better job of informing the students of the aid that's out there. Especially coming from a community college, given a lot of our students' backgrounds. We have a lot of first generation in college students that are coming through. This is their first exposure [July 2009].

Teddy holds that the average performing student is oftentimes overlooked:

> In all honesty if you are a 3.8, 3.9 student, 4.0 student, everybody's going to be beating down your door. Yes, and you're a minority student. What about the student that's a 2.5 or a 2.6? They're not eligible for this scholarship, where do they go? How do they get into the bachelor's level programs? [July 2009].

For these two reasons, Teddy believes this to be why community colleges are adding more baccalaureate degrees, because "these students won't get into a university because of academics."

Regarding institutional policies and practices at Gradually Evolving Community, Teddy alleges, "Our institution does not specifically have any policies I'm aware of for any underrepresented population to go ahead and try to move them on specifically like cohort group." Even so, he mentions a program designed for men that "specifically

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targets to African American males to come in, meet our Equity Coordinator, to give them

early registration. They have a mentor, things along those lines, in hopes of them coming

in to get their degree." A second example provides yet another institutional barrier. Due

to severe state budget cuts, the college recently made a tough decision. Teddy notes,

"We just lost our men's and women's basketball program. We know that at our level we

just eliminated educational opportunities for predominately minority students coming

in—students that never would have sought a degree at a community college." Teddy

seems to recognize some differences for underrepresented students, positioning him

further up the continuum than his colleague Tyler.

Policy fluency. Fluency is an administrator's ability to integrate theory into

practice and quote national and state studies pertaining to transfer. Bobby and Teddy

appear to be more fluent than Alex and Tyler (Figure 8). University administrators'

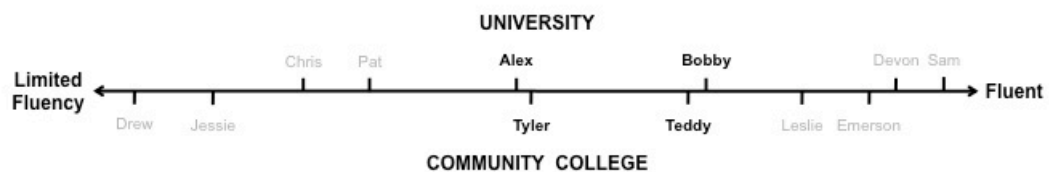fluency will be presented first, followed by community college administrators.

Figure 8. Technocrat fluency of the transfer process. This continuum depicts a
university and community college technocrat's ability to fluently discuss the state
articulation policy and the resulting institutional practices in relation to
underrepresented students.

FGPU administrators' policy fluency (Alex and Bobby). Alex is a semi-fluent administrator. He understands the basic goal of the articulation policy, but his responses are more geared towards practice at the local level as oppose the state level. Unlike Devon or Sam, he tends to shy away from quoting theory and loosely connects his answers to state and national trends. Alex does, however, incorporate a popular transfer metaphor (the educational pipeline) and shares a personal philosophy of education.

When discussing the statewide articulation agreement, his response is directed at educating Florida citizens. Alex asserts, "I think it's an excellent idea for this state to do what it can to retain and keep the brilliant talent that we have in this state." This quote shows how he is acutely aware of the policy ramifications and negative impacts on students should the state decide to stray away from the original focus of the agreement.

> What we don't want to have happen is that our native students feel that they don't have (the) opportunity within the state to remain here because of some antiquated system we have that does not allow before 2+2, students who began at the community college for whatever reason and then want to move on in this process to the university, but can't [May 2009].

He then connects the policy to institutional practice, which is Alex's forte. He aptly lists clogs in the educational pipeline including communication breakdowns that he must periodically quell between the community college and the university:

> We have tried to remove most of those if not the great majority of those but every now and then we hear of a lack of communication that existed between a specific community college and our institution because our calendars were not aligned properly [May 2009].

Additionally, Alex's local level knowledge enables him to express the primary goal of higher education institutions: retention, persistence, and graduation—especially for underrepresented students. Florida's newly developed state colleges system also has its responsibility:

> [T]hey still share the fundamental idea and concept of educating Florida's citizens with an open door; providing skills where there are very little or no skills. Raising students up to the point where they can do college level work, persist, graduate and become useful and productive citizens (…). It's the ideal of taking students from level A and moving them to level Z, or from one to 10 and preparing them to serve the community; become useful, productive citizens [May 2009].

Alex carries this idea forward by fervently stating that every citizen has the "fundamental right" to have access to and afford a good post-secondary education. These examples provide evidence of an administrator who is further away from the policy but able to fluently describe implementation. He is therefore deemed a semi-fluent administrator and placed in the middle of the continuum.

Bobby, being a political scientist, a higher education administrator, a parent of an honors student, and a well-informed taxpayer, makes her incrementally more fluent then Alex. She is able to easily verbalize her thoughts on the political maneuvering involved behind the crafting of educational policy. In the following example she elaborates on the newly passed excess credit hour legislation:

I just think we've gotten kind of whacked out over money and really silly about

some things that are just if we didn't try to be all things to all people all the time

through legislation, we might be a little smarter [June 2009].

She eloquently carries this sentiment forward by highlighting the bureaucratic nature of

the government and the lethargy of policymaking that tends to miss the voices of those at

the bottom as a result.

It's just that there's a lot of disjuncture between what we're doing at ground level

and what the state legislature sees and responds to. It just seems to me that we

might be in different worlds, different universes even. Because there is a long,

long lag time in the state legislature between making any changes, even though

out here in the functional world of colleges and universities there are dynamic and

dramatic changes going on almost daily, well, yearly for sure [June 2009].

Bobby is equally concerned about what she calls "piecemeal legislation in response to

constituent demands" where "long-term staff people who wrote the original legislation

and can say to the current new legislator who's bound by term limits and only going to be

here… I mean the way we have interwoven education policy and the practice of politics

in Florida, leaves us vulnerable to the least best everywhere." Again, her comprehension

of the way policy is enacted is very fluent. However, unlike Devon and Sam, she

integrates less theory and focuses more on local level knowledge and the educational

problems occurring in Florida.

   GECC administrators' policy fluency (Tyler and Teddy). Tyler's semi-fluency

can be seen in her firm replies when she lists the types of improvements needed to make

the statewide articulation agreement better. Like her colleague Leslie, she calls for

"teeth" from the state to correct the behavior of non-compliant universities. When she

speaks about recommendations to remedy this problem, her suggestions are not only

rigorous, but they are systematic. For example, she does not see academic advising at the

community college improving unless there is a simultaneous change in the way the

universities communicate its programmatic changes in a timely manner. If not, university

will have to abide by what is written:

> I would want a way to ensure that when students are advised, based on those
>
> curriculum frameworks, then the upper division institutions honor those courses.
>
> Now, and I'd do that for several reasons. Advisors at community colleges cannot
>
> possibly stay on top of all the curriculum committee changes that happen at all the
>
> universities in the state of Florida. We cannot possibly stay on top of that. The
>
> curriculum frameworks are a way that you can do that [July 2009].

Her policy fluency can be recognized in her second recommendation, which addresses

the myth that community college students are wholly unprepared for university classes.

Again, her advice is deliberate and directed at the university.

> You define the learning outcomes, the learning competencies you expect students
>
> to have when they enter your upper division programs…or the first required
>
> course and build those in. Universities, community colleges, you define the
>
> learning outcomes for the common course numbering system. I would do those
>
> two things. I would tell the university, you can't just point fingers and say the
>
> quality is not what it needs to be, you need to define what the students need to

know when they come in and then the community colleges need to meet that

standard [July 2009].

A final concern voiced by Tyler highlights some suspicion of university advisors located

on the community college campus, and the remote possibility of their dissuading

community college students from attending the university. Tyler segues this uncertainty

into a major reason why community colleges should continue to develop more

baccalaureates. The culmination of her insights and logical nature of her suggestions

make her a semi-fluent administrator.

Teddy possesses a similar fluency of the statewide agreement—one that is

gradually acquired after many years inside the community college system. What is

unique about Teddy however, is not only his ability to describe overarching issues, but

his capacity to provide examples that highlight reoccurring problems with the articulation

of course credit. His critique of the policy builds off his initial thesis that Florida has "a

model, that if properly followed, guarantees the transfer of credit from community

colleges to the university." A cascade of criticism then follows. The driving metaphor

he uses to convey the universities lack of compliance with the state statute, which he

states is, "to guarantee students' rights to transfer to the universities and that they'll be

treated as the natives" is one of "playing games." He perceives the universities as

ignoring the common program prerequisites required for their upper-division classes,

which results in leaving the community college student scrambling to make-up credits.

He remarks, "Where is the commonality in that?" Teddy also loosely incorporates a

reference to national studies to level the playing ground.

There are various statistics that will back that up, because obviously retention

ratios, etc., universities have viewed native students as performing better.

However all statistics show that transfer students perform at the same level or

better than a native student. That argument's been blown out of the water [July

2009].

Teddy's final assessment of the community college provides a deeper look into his

philosophical difference of opinion with the way campus operations are run and how this

negatively affects some students:

I believe that right now most college presidents are running educational

institutions as a business. I think they're losing sight of what educational

institutions are supposed to be. Now it's easy for me to come back and say that

when you have a Board of Trustees clamoring for what's the endowments like,

what's this and what's that? But still, what's the purpose of an educational

institution? What are we here for? That goes back to the Arts, that goes back to

Athletics, (…), we have to provide especially at the community college systems,

we cannot be run like a business because we do not know what pathway, what

might trigger an individual to go seek an education. We don't know that. If we

did we'd be offering it. The next question becomes a question of finance. We

can't afford it. How do you go ahead and tell the student out there, I'm sorry

because of funding we're going to eliminate a possibility, an educational

opportunity for you to get a better life, to lift you up from where you are.

Because let's face it whether you're an underrepresented student, whether you are

an affluent student, whether… it doesn't matter what your background comes up

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is that education itself is a ticket out of poverty. We know that. Every single

study out there I think will tell you that. I'm not quoting any study because I

don't have any with me [July 2009].

The combination of Teddy's perspective on articulation, his views on underrepresented

students, and the way he portrays his misgivings towards community colleges being run

like businesses, help to characterize Teddy as a semi-fluent administrator.

Summary of the technocrats. The technocrats' proximity is between close and

distant. While they are familiar with the articulation agreement, their knowledge is more

focused on operational level details, although Bobby and Teddy display more fluency

than Alex and Tyler. Metaphors used by the interviewees to describe their roles were:

mediator, gatekeeper, broker, and negotiator. While there are some vague references to

nationally based research studies more emphasis is placed on local level matters such as

programmatic oversight, accountability, accreditation issues, and institutional practices

making this group predominantly semi-fluent. The technocrats as a whole did not see the

statewide policy as discriminating towards underrepresented transfer students. However,

Bobby and Teddy did see some institutional and system-level differences, where as Alex

and Tyler saw disparities that were concerns for all students.

Cross-case analysis of the technocrats. The three continua (proximity, fluency,

and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students) are displayed in Figure 9, with

relationships among the technocrats delineated. The technocrats are more or less parallel

in proximity and fluency. The first university/community college pairing, Alex and

Tyler, assume centralists positions where as the second university/community college paring, Bobby and Teddy, show a slight correlation between their positions on the fluency continuum and differentiation continuum (e.g., the more fluent the administrator is, the more differences they see for underrepresented groups). Fluency for the technocrats, however, is less than for the experts.
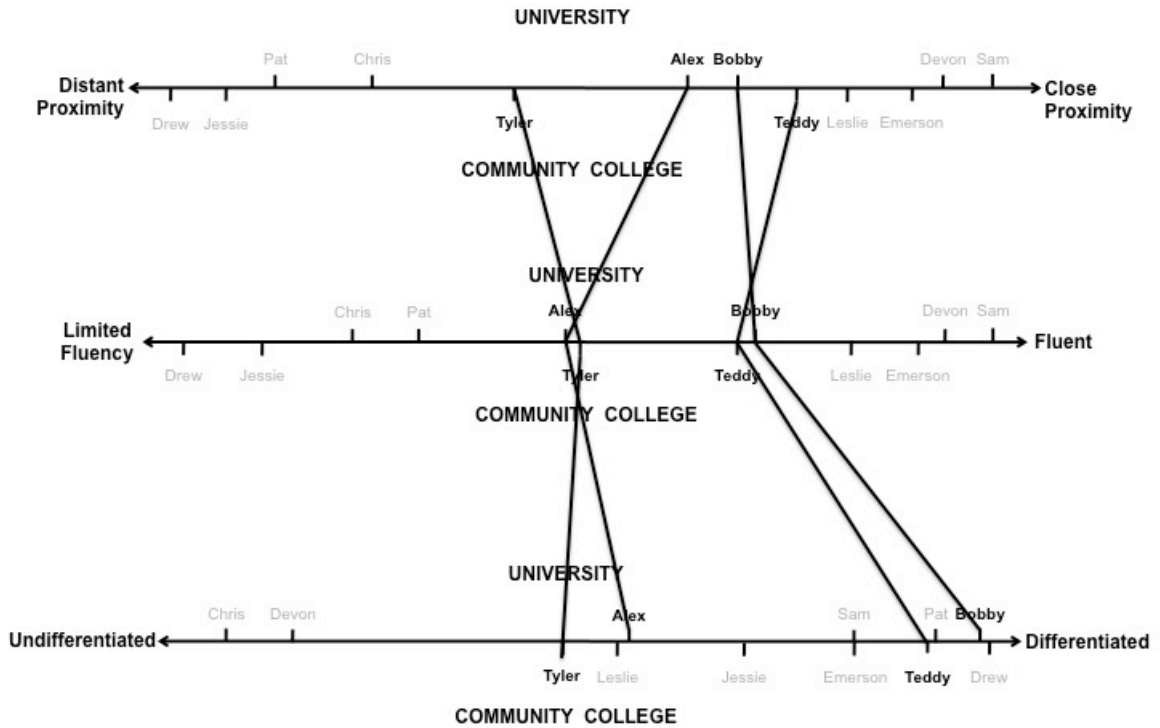

Figure 9. Technocrat proximity, fluency, and perceptions combined. Combined continua of the technocrats displaying an implementer's proximity to the articulation agreement, level of fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students.

The Generalists

    Policy proximity. The proximity of the generalist group is shown below (Figure 10). At FGPU, Chris is a high-level administrator as is Pat, where as Jessie and Drew are

lower-level administrators at GECC. All four generalists are considered distant from the transfer and articulation agreement. The university administrators will be presented first, followed by community college administrators.
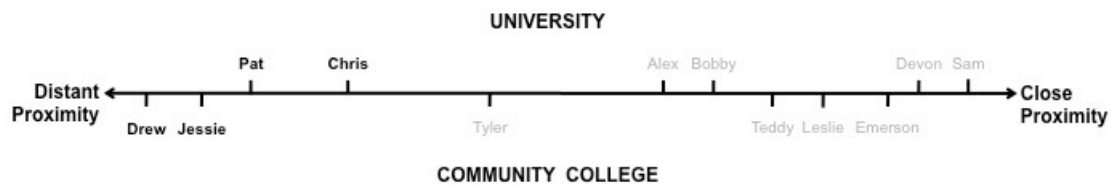

Figure 10. Generalist proximity to the transfer policy. Policy proximity continuum highlights the generalists' closeness or distance to state articulation agreement.

FGPU administrators' proximity (Chris and Pat). In her role as the Vice-Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Chris's proximity to the statewide articulation agreement is far. However, she is able to refer to the policy as "a good pipeline" that it is "pretty wide open," despite the fact she felt she was "not the best person" to interview on the subject. Chris's own academic background being in the sciences, her understanding of the statute is mostly drawn from her personal interest in the STEM subjects, whose disciplines also contribute to her understanding of the agreement. From this viewpoint she can easily converse on curricular alignments and its challenges and opportunities when aligning courses in relation to the community colleges. Chris asserts:

> We tend to have to respond to things that come down the pipeline, with things like the common program prerequisites. Obviously there's a lot of discussion going

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back and forward, being able to have articulated agreements with our community

colleges [June 2009].

She lists the strengths of the agreement as the common course numbering system and a

student's ability to concurrently enroll at the community college to earn course credit. In

this following quote, she explains this process further indicating a better than average

understanding of the agreement compared to the other administrators in the generalist

category.

We are looking at the fact that these students don't come from community

colleges to the university, they go back and forth and if you think of the number

of students, for instance at our university, and then think of the number for

transient (students) for the summer or whatever. Having the common course

numbering system has really helped that tremendously. Again, it helps our

students work faster towards (a) degree because they are able to go home and do

things elsewhere and then transfer that credit back into the university [June 2009].

"Seamless transfer" was another phrase Chris used to describe the ease of a transfer

student's movement from the community college to the university. Overall, Chris's

accrued insights place at her in the distant category.

As the Associate Vice President of Student Development and Enrollment at Fast

Growing Public University, Pat's focus is predominantly placed on freshman, making her

proximity to the statewide articulation agreement since this group of students typically

enrolls directly to the university from high school versus transferring in from a

community college. However, she is knowledgeable about transfer students. As she

explains, "My areas of expertise would include working with first year and second year

students, academic advising background, academic support background, grant background, working with at-risk populations. At one time I worked with transfer students." The combination of her experiences therefore deepens her ability to comprehend how state policies impact students—the way they are communicated and perceived by students, is very well honed. Thus, Pat is placed on the slightly higher end of the far category.

GECC administrators' policy proximity (Drew and Jessie). Drew's proximity to the statewide articulation agreement is distant. As the Director of the Academic Success Center at GECC, Drew is responsible for the oversight of all four of its academic support centers. She maintains budgets, hires credentialed tutoring staff, makes programmatic decisions, and tracks the number of students who use the center—a place frequented by many prospective transfer students. Unlike the other administrators in this study, her interaction with students is high.

Drew's awareness of the state statute is predominantly drawn from her personal experience as she remarks, "I think it's a great way for students to transition to the university. I did it. If it weren't in place for me, I wouldn't have done it." She sees the agreement as a critical mechanism to transfer, but maintains that "jumping through the hoops" is the greatest challenge for students. In turn, Drew advises them, "If you can get through the coursework and proceed on and continue passing your classes, be it face-to-face or online, and the instruction is at the level it's supposed to be, you're doing okay." No matter what the student's end goal, her responsibility is to assist students in passing their classes.

Jessie's range of job responsibilities makes her distant from the policy. As the equity and diversity officer at GECC she must evaluate all institutional policies and practices for potential issues of diversity and equity. Transfer policies fall into this category. As Jessie states, "I make sure that we have appropriate policies and procedures that would lead people to be successful." On the state statute itself she remarks, "I think without the agreement many students might be locked out of opportunities." Jessie also presides over the college's annual diversity training workshop for faculty and staff. Other minor responsibilities include mentoring a pilot program that recruits at-risk men to earn their AA degree and encourages them to transfer to the university with a fully paid scholarship, developing workforce programs, and creating a first-year experience class.

Perceptions. The generalists perceived no hindrances for underrepresented transfer students in relation to the statewide articulation agreement. However, individual and institutional challenges for first generation in college, low-income, and racial and ethnic minority students were discerned by all of the interviewees (Figure 11). The university administrators' perceptions will be presented first, followed by the community college administrators.
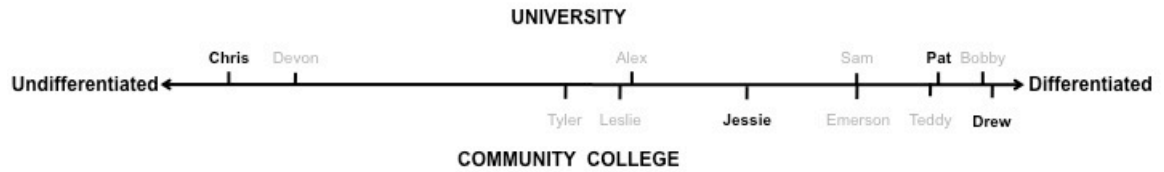
Figure 11. Generalist perceptions of underrepresented transfer students. Generalist perceptions of underrepresented transfer students range from differentiated (seeing no differences) to differentiated (seeing differences).

FGPU administrators' perceptions (Chris and Pat). Chris perceives no differences for low-income, first time generation in college, racial and ethnic minority students. She considers herself "somewhat diversity blind." That is she just "sees people." While she momentarily vacillates on whether this perspective is good or bad, she finally concludes by saying, "it doesn't matter to me who the student is or what their background is, I want to get them to get an education. We need to make sure that we have processes in place to be able to do that." Based on Chris's definition of diversity, she is placed on the undifferentiated side of the continuum.

Pat, on other the hand, perceives personal and institutional barriers for underrepresented students. She worries that community college transfers might not be actively engaged enough in campus activities before transferring and therefore fail to seek out such opportunities at the university. Pat states, "[I]f they don't get connected, if they do not get involved in this institution, they will have some challenges." Pat who equates the achievement of a higher academic degree with a better quality of life, further elaborates on this sentiment:

We also see students who transition in, as low-income, first generation and they don't really know about scholarships and other funding that's available. They don't know about graduate teaching assistantships once they finish their four-year program. A lot of times they're so busy trying to take care of that junior and senior year that they don't look beyond that. It's like, what is that next step? We do have a program here now called the McNair Program. We have been trying to get students connected onto the McNair Program, because the McNair program really prepares students for a graduate education. Our transfer low-income first generation students, they should be moving on to grad school, you know? Or they should be looking beyond a BA or a BS degree because it's just not going to be enough in today's society [May 2009].

A second issue related to engagement is that underrepresented groups lack assertiveness. She explains, "Their background might be such that they don't want to ask for help. They don't know how to ask for help." This is especially the case with financial aid as Pat explains, "It goes beyond just a Pell Grant, what other opportunities are available?" A third issue raised, is an institutional roadblock:

I'd still think especially for students of color, oftentimes what we tend to forget is that it's not only the student that we have to work with, it's the families. I don't think we do an effective job with that [May 2009].

A fourth area that needs improvement is the increasing of the Black student retention rate, especially for African American and Hispanic males.

What I'm hearing from the young men in that program is that oftentimes men of color just don't feel connected. Many of them are working long hours. A lot of

times students will say I don't see people who look like me. We are about 28%

diverse in terms of the ethnic groups. I've heard students say to me you're not

offering me external programs and services that I connect with that will help me

grow and develop [May 2009].

The university has convened a task force to "look at black students' retention and

graduation" including "black transfer students and seeing specifically what we're doing

with those students."

Promoting the true educational pipeline is Pat's final recommendation. This

pipeline starts in high school and follows minority students through higher education. If

properly repaired, average or better than average students who are minorities, will enroll

at the university immediately upon completing high school:

I would develop some type of program where there would be better access for

students to enter post-secondary education. I'm not talking about at the

community college levels. I know that there are students who need to start at the

community college level but I do still feel that there are students who have the

capability of starting at the university level and having those wonderful

experiences that we can provide for them, but they can't get access. I would

probably begin in the 9th grade and start some type of initiative where we were

truly preparing students for post-secondary education. Not only preparing them,

but students truly having a pipeline and access to post secondary education at the

university level. A lot of times students of color (and right now I'm talking about

students of color) students of color, they're not in the pipeline, they're not in the

AP classes, they're not in the honors classes, they're in the standard classes, thus

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they don't understand that when you get to the 12th grade and you're applying for

college, your credentials are looked at much differently than someone who's been

in AP, dual enrollment. It's an education for the students and for the parents. But

ultimately many of those students are not able to move into post-secondary

education because they don't have the equipment, the tools that they need. I

would like to see some change in that regard. I would look for ways in which we

could make that policy so that funding would be available for these students

because it's one thing to provide the access but if they can't pay for it, then that's

just another strike against them [May 2009].

To reach this goal, Pat underscores that it would take the combined commitment of

university and secondary education "working together looking at what is the Math

curriculum, what is the Science curriculum, who do you have in the pipeline for those

courses?" Pat's perceptions on underrepresented transfer students, place her on the

differentiated end of the continuum.

GECC administrators' perceptions (Drew and Jessie). Drew perceives

supportive relationships between faculty and students as the most important aspect of the

transfer process, especially for underrepresented groups. She states, "The majority of

them need to get connected with someone to walk them through [the transfer process]."

Drew evokes the story of the African American woman, who is currently employed as

school bus driver, as an example. Many years she mentored this woman through her AA

degree and is presently encouraging her to transfer to the university to get her bachelor's

degree in elementary education. Drew uses this anecdote to underscore the importance of

connecting with faculty, especially for minority groups. She then adds, "I'd do it for anybody, I don't care," indicating that she mentors all students no matter where they come from or who they are.

While Drew does not see the statewide articulation agreement as outright hindering underrepresented transfer, she does perceive some institutional practices at GECC as disconcerting. Drew finds the atmosphere in the admissions building to be "unwelcoming". As she states, "I can't explain it, but it does." Without her college nametag she observes, "No one looks up. No one says, 'Can I help you?'" Her worry is for students who are unaccustomed and petrified at the prospect of attending college and who might get discouraged and leave. She continues, "Every human being needs to be greeted (…). That doesn't happen in that little building over there." Drew remarks that she has heard "White, Hispanic, Black, every walk of life," complain about the apparent "condescending attitude" of the admissions staff. Contributing to this problem is the classroom numbering system that Drew labels, "insane." She has brought these issues repeatedly to the attention of higher administration, but has witnessed little change.

A second area that needs immediate attention is the improving the faculty's awareness of the diversity of students on campus. Periodically she finds herself advising faculty on how to converse with non-native speakers, "Don't just say you can't understand a student. Slow down and listen." Additionally, she would like to see more diversity on campus, especially on the college's board of trustees.

The final problem area that Drew mentions is a difference in today's generation of underrepresented students compared to her generation. She explains:

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My mother always taught us to 'You speak up. You ask questions. You speak English. You speak very intelligently.' These kids now 'Like, man, where can I find' so and so. You know all that, the way they talk. People don't always like that. The way they look, they don't always like that [June 2009].

She tries to address this issue through her work in academic support services by modeling assertive behavior so that minority students feel more comfortable voicing their needs. As far as state policy is concern, Drew is hesitant to agree that they are neutral. Drew is placed on the differentiated end of the continuum.

Jessie, on the other hand, perceives state policies to be written as a "one-size-fits all" and to be purposefully "generic" so as not to advantage one group of students over another. In this way, she asserts, "[t]he policies and procedures (…) fit for any circumstance." On the topic of diversity, her 16-year tenure at GECC has allowed her to see significant growth by age, gender, and even individuals with disabilities, adding, "however you define underrepresented." Jessie recalls a time when African Americans students did not re-enroll for the spring term. Now, she sees the same students returning annually. When asked why this is the case, she responds:

The hope would be that because they're seeing more people that look like them, whether it's in the classroom or with the instructor or other people that is encouraging them to stick around, as well as creating a climate that says you know everybody is welcome here. Which hasn't always been the case. At least that feeling hasn't always been the case [July 2009].

Jessie is equally surprised by how some underrepresented students actually manage to succeed given some of their obstacles. She relates a story about a Guatemalan student

whose parents were immigrants and whose father abandoned the family. This particular

student was forced to drop out so he could find full-time employment and contribute to

the household income. She has also encountered recent high school graduates who have

declared that making money is more important than earning a college degree. Jessie tries

to impress them that a college degree "increases their earning potential," but sometimes

to no avail. Unmotivated students who do not show up for class are vulnerable to

failure:

> I think things that we take for granted because either our parents might have told
>
> you that you need to go to class or somebody emphasized the fact that you needed
>
> to do that and what you needed to do to be successful, some of these students just
>
> have no idea, nor do they have the support at home to be successful [July 2009].

A student's lack of intrinsic desire to learn and their inability to recognize what a college

degree offers is what Jessie finds the most challenging issue when "working with this

group of students."

The second area that Jessie struggles with is transforming some of the negative

feedback from faculty and staff towards "all this diversity crap." Her objective is to

match the diversity goals of the institution and try to get everyone on board with "the

same vocabulary." As Wildeboro County is changing so is GECC's student-body. The

administration should be next:

> It would be nice to see, on every single level, demographic representation. Then
>
> provide people opportunities to achieve something in those levels. If you're a
>
> career professional and/or career service employee, you see people in that
>
> professional category who look like you, regardless to what that is, even disabled

individuals. You see somebody here and you have an opportunity to compete for a position, and you know that you have an opportunity to get it based on your merit. If you're professional and you want to be an administrator you see people in that administrative group, not one or two, but you see people and you know that, and you say 'okay, I have an opportunity as well' [July 2009].

When asked if such growth is a possibility among the administration, she answers:

Not at the moment I don't. I think that's primarily because of the budget. I think because the intent hasn't been for the administrative ranks to be so large because then you have that proverbial faculty versus administrative conflict. They're saying we're not growing, but administration is growing. They've intentionally tried to curtail the growth in that rank. So, no I don't see it growing [July 2009].

A follow-up question on this topic reveals her projection for future faculty growth and what students will or will not see:

No. And we won't be in a few months. We're going to have a lot of our faculty of color retiring.

When asked whether she perceives this as a loss for the community college, Jessie's response is very clear and direct:

Absolutely. There has been no plan to and I wouldn't say replace them because I wouldn't want to say that it's one for one. But there has been no plan to increase the diversity that we may be losing. I think it's going to be getting worse. Although the President has said to them, I want you to be mindful this is what's coming up, you need to be mindful of hires, as you move forward [July 2009].

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Jessie believes the diversity in Wildeboro County is not yet reflected on campus in its

administration, faculty and staff and will not be for the foreseeable future given the

downturn in economy. Although she acknowledges great strides in student retention;

there is still a great deal of work to be done. Students who lack the intrinsic motivation

to learn, underrepresented groups who are unaware of the earning power of a college

degree, and those students who fail to show-up for class, are areas for growth according

to Jessie.   For these reasons, Jessie is placed in the differentiated category.

Policy fluency. Fluency is an administrator's ability to integrate theory into

practice and quote national and state studies pertaining to transfer. Pat and Chris appear

to be more fluent than Drew and Jessie (Figure 12). The university administrators'

fluency will be presented first, followed by the community college administrators.
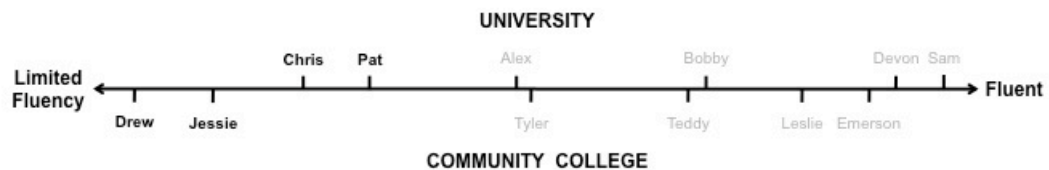

Figure 12. Generalist fluency of the transfer process. This continuum depicts a university and community college technocrat's ability to fluently discuss the state articulation policy and the resulting institutional practices in relation to underrepresented students.

FGPU administrators' policy fluency (Chris and Pat). Chris possesses a

medium to low fluency of the articulation agreement although she does integrate some

common terminology associated with the transfer process such as the aforementioned

metaphors of the "educational pipeline" and "seamless transfer." She also professes to core philosophies, student engagement and the building of a culture of collaboration, which are hallmarks of her tenure. She explains that these philosophies have an underlying agenda aimed at transfer students:

> All of these things are set up to ensure that the students are engaged, that they are part of the community, that they get faculty contact as soon as they come on campus, that they are well mentored and advised by peers, faculty and staff. The policies and procedures to allow that to happen are in place and they go through many of the committees that also are part of undergraduate studies to make sure that these things stay current [June 2009].

Chris's ability to describe the statewide articulation agreement in-depth by integrating theory and attaching it to practice is in the limited fluency range.

Pat, on the other hand, is somewhat semi-fluent. She possesses a good understanding of how state policies can have negative effects on students. For example, she laments the state's tendency to hurriedly pass legislation that forces institutions to scramble under tight deadlines to implement new policies, making it difficult to clearly communicate these changes to students.

> Some of the concerns that I have with state policy is that often times it's policy that's put into place and it's put into place with a short turnaround time for the universities to actively put that policy into place effectively. I just wish that sometimes that (…) there was more input. I wish that they would do a better job of engaging students and getting students' input. More importantly, engage the institutions; do a better job in engaging the institutions, because ultimately we are

the ones that have to make sure that the policies are enforced. As I indicated, you

want to do that in a manner where it's more effective and efficient so that your

students will not be penalized on the back end. Sometimes that's what happens, is

that students clearly don't understand. At the university we really do an effective

job and I really do mean that. I couldn't have said this 10 years ago but now we

have people who are in place that are very student oriented [June 2009].

Pat's student theory approach to working with students increases her fluency rating. As

Pat asserts, "that is why I initially entered higher education, because I really believe in

student development. I believe in the holistic approach and working with students. I

want them to be retained. I want them to graduate. But ultimately I want them to have a

good experience that's going to be a lifelong experience for them."

   GECC administrators' policy fluency (Drew and Jessie). Both Drew and Jessie

possess a limited fluency. Neither of them directly connects their perceptions of

underrepresented students to student development theory nor do they draw from state or

national studies to support their viewpoints. This fact is not surprising given that transfer

is not either individual's area of expertise.

   Summary of the generalists. The generalists possess limited familiarity with the

statewide articulation policy and therefore as a group are considered distant from the

policy. This group was largely non-fluent with little mention of national research studies

on transfer and/or connecting theory to practice. On the category of underrepresented

students, while no difference was discerned in the state policy, three generalists saw

institutional and personal differences. The metaphors mentioned by interviewees to describe their respective roles were: store keeper and community collaborator.

Cross-case analysis of the generalists. The three continua (proximity, fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students) are displayed in Figure 13, with relationships among the generalists delineated. Once again, parallels arise between proximity and fluency. However, there are striking differences between administrators in relation to the differentiation continuum. Compared to Pat, Drew, and Jessie, who all share differentiated views of underrepresented transfer students, Chris is the outlier. She views no difference. It is important to point out that the three administrators who do perceive particular challenges for low-income, first generation, and racial and ethnic minority groups are African American women.
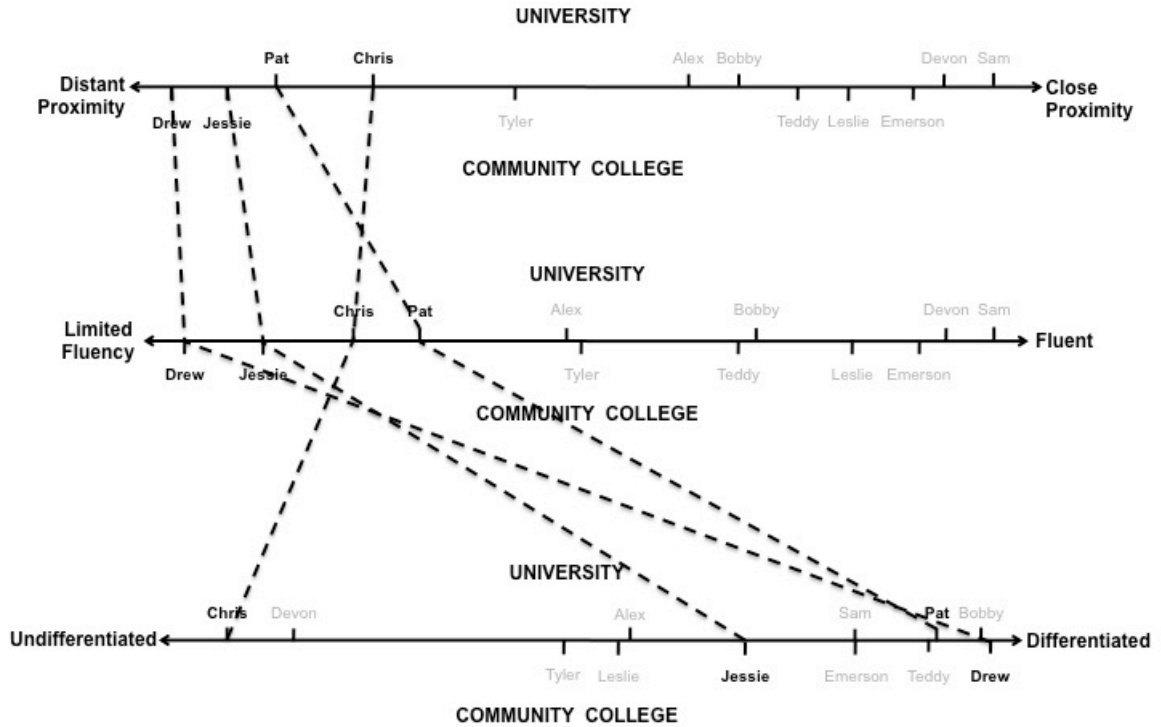
Figure 13. Generalist proximity, fluency, and perceptions combined. Combined continua of the technocrats displaying an implementer's proximity to the articulation agreement, level of fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students.

Cross-Case Analysis Summary

A summary of the cross-case analysis including all three groups is presented in Figure 14. From the figure below it is apparent that proximity and fluency are generally correlated. The most notable outliers on these two continua are Alex who is closer to the policy and less fluent and Pat who is further from the policy and yet possesses a higher fluency. On the category of differentiation, the majority of the administrators perceived institutional or personal differences for underrepresented transfer students. Where Devon

and Chris are outliers in their groups seeing no difference, Drew, Jessie, and Pat show substantial variation on this category. Alex, Tyler, and Leslie remain in the centralist's position.
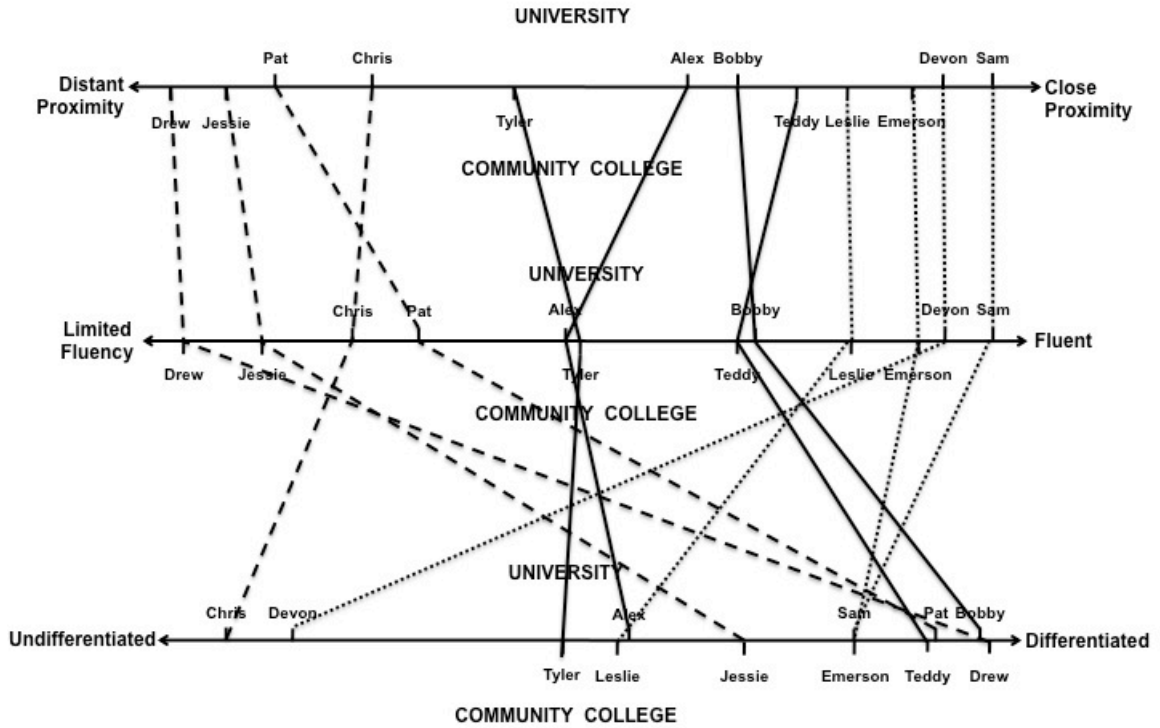

Figure 14. Combined continua: policy experts, technocrats, and generalists. A display of each type of implementers' proximity, level of fluency, and perceptions of underrepresented transfer students.

Analysis of the Findings

Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that "coherent and consistent descriptions, themes, and theories" should speak to the study's research questions (p. 202). The three exploratory research questions guiding this study and the resulting findings are offered below:

1. What elements constitute university and community college administrators'
    perceptions of the Florida statewide articulation agreement in relation to
    underrepresented transfer students?

Regardless of administrative rank, proximity, or fluency, all administrators in this
study, perceived no hindrances for underrepresented in relation to the statewide
articulation agreement. The policy was described as wide-open, neutral, generic,
a great vehicle for all students, a perfect medium, a critical mechanism to transfer,
and an exemplary model. However, community college administrators describe
some potentially detrimental affects if the state continues to disregard universities
in constant violation of the agreement. Emerson and Teddy, for example, warn
that "big name" universities keep changing the rules and are playing games with
the common course program prerequisites. Actions such as these are seen as
contributing to the unraveling and dismantling of the agreement having a negative
impact students; especially those students who do not know how to navigate the
system. Leslie and Tyler, ask for more "teeth" from the state rather than slaps on
the wrists to make the universities accountability. Drew, an administrator with
limited fluency and proximity thinks that the legislators are too far removed from
education to care.

This finding was confirmed by document analysis of the Florida
Articulation Committee minutes. There was evidence "that the majority of the
institutions are not in compliance with the 14 targeted program prerequisites as

listed in the common prerequisites manual" (FLDOE, Oct. 22, 2008). The

reasons for lack of universities compliance were: "staff turnover, differences of

opinion, lack of institutional knowledge regarding the definition of common

prerequisites, different information provided across advising resources. The

common course manual overall and update, which had been conducted 13 years

ago, "underscored the importance of ensuring widespread agreement regarding

the practice and intent of common perquisites" (FLDOE, Oct. 22, 2008, p. 3).

The dominant themes discovered in this document analysis were: (1) the future

viability of the 2+2 system and the rise of the community college baccalaureate,

(2) selective admissions causing proximity issues for place bound and financially

unable students, (3) compliancy problems found at the university in following the

established common course pre-requisites, and (4) trustworthiness of FACTS.org

for degree audits.

University administrators raise entirely different concerns. Experts,

technocrats, and generalists alike voiced complaints regarding shortsightedness on

the part of the state legislature to require universities to implement new policies

with unrealistic deadlines or little guidance on how to apply these changes.

Examples that were offered included: the new excess credit hours legislation,

modification to Florida's residency requirements, the elimination of the CLAST,

and changes in Florida's Bright Futures merit-based scholarship program. Devon

and Pat, virtually polar opposites in terms of their fluency, proximity, and

diversity, both question the hurried manner in which these decisions are made and

the potential repercussions to students and institutions when they are haphazardly

imposed. Pat notes that disseminating clear information to students is critical and can be difficult when deadlines are tight, which in turn, may have a detrimental affect on students. On behalf of the institution Devon perceives monetary ramifications, especially when the state unexpectedly levels down classes. Modifying the course taxonomy, Devon asserts that, "There are costs involved." Chris, Sam, and Alex perceive fewer and fewer opportunities for career exploration and an increased focus on a student's graduating in a timely matter.

2. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' perceptions of institutional policy and practice in relation to underrepresented transfer students?

The elements that constitutes the perceptions of policy and practice for underrepresented students are grouped into two sections: opportunities and obstacles to transfer.

Opportunities to transfer for underrepresented students. Efforts have been underway at both GECC and the FGPU to facilitate transfer for underrepresented students. At the community college, all three types of implementers offered responses with the generalist and technocrats offering slightly more responses than the experts. Most notably, as part of its vision statement GECC hopes to "champion diversity and inclusiveness" (GECC's

2008-2009 Planning Manual). To this end, the offices of diversity and equity and institutional research developed a diversity scorecard. Faculty and staff can access the scorecard online using a password protected website to review up-to-date diversity statistics about students and employees. The strategic indicators used to measure student success are "College Prep Math, English and Reading, as well as, student re-enrollment rates by demographic category" (GECC website). Tyler, a technocrat, discussed the diversity scorecard in depth. A pilot program to attract minority men to transfer was referred to by administrators from all three levels. One a policy expert (Emerson) and one a generalist (Jessie) noted that diversity training of faculty and staff was an asset in terms of sensitizing the campus community to the specific needs of underrepresented groups. Drew, a generalist, stressed faculty and student relationships as well as academic support services as critical resources for the underrepresented student. Jessie and Leslie (a policy expert) discussed the implementation of a Freshman Experience class that was being developed to start for fall 2010.

Like GECC, generalists and technocrats at the university mentioned efforts to increase diversity transfer services the most. Pat, a generalist, noted that FGPU was forming a task force to track the movement of minority transfers, specifically Black and Hispanic men to identify barriers and brainstorm strategies to increase retention. Bobby, a technocrat, emphasized the online resources with hyperlinks to minority transfer scholarships and workshops provided by the transfer and transition office. Additionally, a peer mentor program hosted by Bobby's office recently established a web presence on Facebook with more than

300 current and prospective student members. Chris, a fellow generalist, listed a research and mentoring program designed with community college students in mind and targeted at first-generation in college and academically aspiring underrepresented students intending to go to graduate school. Transfer orientations, an academic advising manual, and an admission website (all in Spanish), were underscored as important resources by Sam, a policy expert.

Barriers to transfer for underrepresented students. Almost all the administrators perceived individual barriers for underrepresented students ranging to students unable to navigate the college-system because their parents did not attend college, to part-time enrollment status, poor pre-colligate preparation, failing to pass remedial education classes, and limited time to engage in social activities on campus due to the need to earn money. A lack of an intrinsic motivation to learn and little extrinsic support from parents, guardians, or peers to stay in school along with being place bound were also mentioned as deterrents.

Institutional barriers at FGPU. Four out of the six administrators at FGPU saw institutional barriers that could negatively impact underrepresented transfers students. The responses were equally distributed across the groups. For instance, Sam, a policy expert, felt that faculty stereotypes were most prevalent. Alex, a technocrat, sees a wavering focus of post-secondary educations goals with not enough attention placed on retention strategies, helping students persist, and making sure that underrepresented students graduate as hindrances. Bobby, also a

technocrat, perceives the abolishment of recruitment strategies for academically promising minority students to be a dreadful mistake, stating, "You cannot be blind in admission and create an equitable community in the university." Pat, a generalist, observes exclusions:

> I also think another area of growth for us is to be more inclusive. Even though we reach out to the African American and the Hispanic Latino populations in Central Florida, I think there's opportunity to enhance that here at the university [June, 2009]

And room for growth:

> I also think even though they're transfer students, I'd still think especially for students of color, oftentimes what we tend to forget is that it's not only the student that we have to work with, it's the families. I don't think we do an effective job with that [June, 2009].

Chris and Devon did not mention any institutional barriers.

Institutional barriers at GECC. At the community college five out of six administrators perceived institutional barriers for underrepresented transfer students. Emerson, a policy expert, saw cultural illiteracy and diversity awareness as major obstacles for transfer student. Leslie, also a policy expert, asserts that it is a paucity of funds to further enhance advising systems or expand academic support services as deleterious.

> Our strategies are trying to work towards reducing the gaps and it's a tough thing to do, but we think there are some good practices out there

that have been helpful. But they generally take dollars and that's what it always works out to be is you need to have some seed money to try and invest in those programs. We just haven't had a lot of extra, given the enrollment growth that we've had [July 2009].

Teddy, a technocrat, laments the recent cut of an athletic program that traditionally drew minority students and was equally a viable pathway to the baccalaureate. Jessie and Drew, both generalists, detected environmental issues. Where Jessie saw minority transfer students missing role models in positions of power at the college, the barrier that Drew names is more insidious. She believes that the unwelcoming environment manifests through the college's physical structure and the failure on the part of admissions staff to connect with underrepresented students when they first set foot on campus. Tyler did not mention any institutional barriers.

3. What elements constitute university and community college administrators' suggestions for improving the transfer process for underrepresented community college students?

Based on the accumulated perceptions of community college and university administrators as to their recommendations on how to improve the state level transfer policy for underrepresented students, their responses included: (a) consider more inter-institutional agreements between local universities and their major feeder community colleges that guaranteed acceptance for all transfer students with AA degrees, (b) allow the community colleges to have pre-majors,

(c) repair the K-12 education system, (d) provide more needs-based financial aid, and (e) hold the universities accountable to the state transfer policy.

At the institutional level, recommendations were: (a) improve academic and career advising at the community level, (b) increase diversity at the community colleges and at the universities, including the representation of underrepresented populations in faculty, staff, administration, board of trustees, and school boards, (c) make remedial-education placement a priority upon initial entry into college to prevent future failures of students repeating remedial math classes, (d) develop and fund more collaborative projects to engage students in service learning projects and study abroad programs, and (e) meet the needs of the average or lower performing students with additional community college baccalaureate degrees.

Discussion

Despite administrators falling all along the differentiation continuum, none of them perceived the state policy itself as differentiating (although one administrator said policy is never neutral, but did not care to further elaborate). The policy as was described as "generic," "non-differentiating," and "wide open". This finding runs counter to a recent study by Dowd, et al. (2009). Using document analysis, the authors systematically examined seven purposely-selected states and their legislated transfer policies and accountability practices for the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities. Adopting a critical race theory (CRT) lens to examine transfer policy, as opposed to a traditional

rationalist and positivist approach to policy analysis (p. 7), they found state transfer

policies and practices to be discriminatory (p. 8) versus neutral, objective, and providing

equal opportunity (p. 8). Florida was one of the seven states studied. Florida's six

legislative transfer polices and accountability practices were considered predominantly

"color blind"; that is, the state statutes made no specific reference to race and ethnicity.

There was a single reference to tracking African Americans males for degree/certificate

completion in the accountability measures, but the state has recommended that this

indictor be removed. Of the seven states studied, California was the only state to include

"specific references to racial-ethnic groups" in its statutes (p. 30), yet the authors were

quick to note that transfer rates for racial and ethnic minorities were still low, suggesting

a "misalignment between legislation and accountability" (p. 31). Moreover, the

researchers found that "No state requires that transfer-related indicators (transfer

preparation, transfer out, and post transfer success) be monitored or reported by race and

ethnicity" (p. 29). Administrators' perceptions in this dissertation study were not

examined through a CRT perspective.

However, structural flaws in the state agreement were identified by four of the

community college administrators. Structures are defined by Dowd, et al. (2009) as

mechanisms to increase vertical transfer from two-year to four year-institutions (p. 32).

These four administrators cited problems with Florida's course numbering system and

regulation issues with the common program prerequisites. One administrator

acknowledged that transfer policy was not biased towards any one group, but it does

nothing to protect minorities. Another remarked that "the confusion" was "unraveling

and dismantling" the agreement. This finding aligns with Dowd, et al. in that structural

deficiencies can unintentionally inhibit transfer for underrepresented students. Common course numbering systems and congruent core course requirements are named as advantageous to underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups in particular. When conflicts arises over curricula resulting in tension between institutions, the Dowd, et al. (2009) note that a consequence could be disproportionally shouldered by racial and ethnic minority students due to their general lessened tendency to ask for help (as was mentioned twice by African Americans in this study). Racial and ethnic minority students tend to rely more heavily on published sources of information and peers, instead of the "secret handshakes" they could uncover if they actually interfaced with an advisor. For example, knowing for certain which Physics or Accounting classes will be accepted for transfer by which university.

Furthermore, the Florida articulation agreement lists "guarantees" for those students who transfer with a state accredited AA degree. Dowd, et al. explains attaining the AA degree is simpler for members of historically privileged groups; accordingly, these AA-based articulation agreements disproportionately disfavors members of underrepresented groups (p. 33). The AA degree is harder to achieve if remedial education is necessary. If a disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities require several semesters of remedial education because of poor pre-collegiate education, time to degree substantially increases and chances of transferring to the university decrease (Huber, et al., 2006; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Florida does not track the number of racial and ethnic minorities in remedial courses, leaving Dowd, et al. to conclude that, "excluding race and ethnicity in transfer legislation suggests that students of color are not a state priority in terms of baccalaureate degree attainment" (p. 31).

This problem will only be exacerbated in the future, as underrepresented populations are increasing in the K-12 system. In a study on the southern states, Florida's K-12 minority population is substantial, with large populations of Hispanics (25%) and African Americans (23 %). In 2009, the total number of low-income students in secondary education was 48% (Southern Education Foundation, 2009).

Institutionalized inequities in the K-12 system exacerbate the difficulties underrepresented students face once they progress from high school to the community college. One administrator referred to secondary education as a "morass," especially for those students attending low-income schools. Another administrator stressed that students of color are virtually absent in the accelerated mechanism programs (e.g., Advance Placement and Dual Enrollment), which are direct routes to the university. Both of these factors continue to compound at the higher education level, which results in part from not having an insider's perspective on what it takes to navigate through the system. The insider typically possesses AP credit, dual enrollment, and balanced K-12 curricula (e.g., strong STEM), allowing them to pass out of prerequisites and into the major, while outsiders are doubly penalized by history to enroll in remedial classes in addition to the prerequisites. One would think collecting longitudinal data would be a critical step in assessing whether underrepresented groups are successfully traveling through the K-16 system. The collected data could inform any necessary transformation of state policy. What is the reason for the absence of longitudinal data collected on racial and ethnic minority groups in higher education state policy? Is it a product of benign neglect, discriminatory intent, or is it something else entirely? Should the Florida

statewide articulation agreement take into account the rise of these minority populations legislatively or with accountability measures?

The second research question explores administrators' perceptions of institutional practice in relation to underrepresented transfer students. Here, the perception continuum is like a prism (Figure 15), which takes people of concordant fluencies and proximities and disperses them into a spectrum of divergent perspectives related to underrepresented groups.
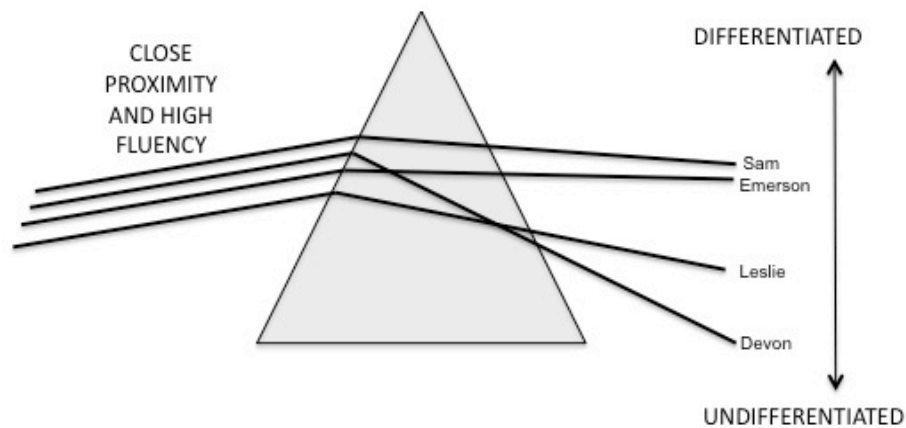

Figure 15. Perception prism. A perception prism depicting policy experts' congruency in policy proximity and fluency, but a spectrum of divergent perspectives on the category of underrepresented students.

Although institutional policy and practice is the main focus of this study, individual barriers to transfer for underrepresented populations were frequently mentioned. Administrators' perceptions, no matter what their level of proximity and fluency, had similar responses to the types of obstacles minority groups encounter. Many of these barriers were previously mentioned in the literature review, including the

tendency for low-income, first generation in college, and racial and ethnic minority groups to be place-bound, single parents, financially incapable of affording college, possessing a poor pre-collegiate education (Adelman, 2006), shortage of time for extra-curricular activities, enrolled part-time, lacking parents with college backgrounds (Perna, 2007), unable to intrinsically motivate (Suarez, 2003), suffering from transfer shock (Hills, 1965), grappling with peer pressure, etc. Reasons such as these were named as decreasing successful transfer to university for students from underrepresented groups. Additional concerns were expressed in regard to the poor persistence rates of African American and Hispanic males.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Tinto's model of social integration was most often cited or referred to in administrators' discussions on closing the educational gap for underrepresented students to help them better acclimate and succeed. Tierney (2008) argues that this model is epistemologically flawed because it borrows from two social theories from anthropology and fails to directly translate into student development theory (p. 70-74). Furthermore, he asserts that this model perpetuates the practice of forcing racial and ethnic minority groups to undergo a cultural conversion into the predominantly White culture of higher education institutions if they are to succeed (p. 73). Tierney states, "from a social integrationist perspective, individuals attend college, become integrated or not, graduate or depart. Conformity is the norm and is the responsibility of the individual" (p. 73). Blame is then shifted onto the minority student if they drop out or fail to succeed because they are unable to acclimate. Instead, Tierney advocates "culture as the theoretical

framework" (p. 105). He asserts, "cultural integrity transfers the problem of education inequity from the student to the institution and identifies cultural background as an essential element for academic success" (p. 108) rather than a students' failure to assimilate. Thus, the institutional barrier raised by Drew at GECC as supporting "an unwelcoming atmosphere" is an issue that needs to be addressed in this light. The university task force studying the phenomenon of low persistence rates of African American and Hispanic males may want to consult Tierney's research for potential strategies to retain these men. Raising faculty and staff 's awareness at the community college may also be considered as a culturally responsive approach. An assessment tool to measure diversity awareness may need to be developed. Additionally, Community College Baccalaureate may be a viable route to a four-year degree for underrepresented minority groups; especially in critical areas such as nursing, education, and criminal justice.

The improvements posited by administrators to increase transfer of underrepresented students are not new. Several administrators suggested improving academic advising and career guidance at the community college and high school level. Additionally, half of the administrators in this study see the K-12 education pipeline in great need of repair and suggest that more needs-based financial aid would be beneficial. The suggestion that community colleges be allowed to offer pre-majors may provide underrepresented populations a more streamlined path to the baccalaureate by facilitating career choices earlier on. However, college advisors would still have to stay abreast of any changes in university program structure and students would need to make regular visits to academic advisors.

Reoccurring themes mentioned by administrators in this study were also echoed in the minutes of Articulation Coordination Committee (from February 2009, May 28, 2008, October 22, 2008,) including (1) the future viability of the 2+2 system with the rise of the community college baccalaureate, (2) increasingly selective admissions at local universities causing proximity issues for place bound community college students, (3) non-compliance problems found at the university in following the established common course pre-requisites, and (4) trustworthiness of FACTS.org for degree audits.

The proposal that seems most plausible, but potentially problematic, is to guarantee local community college students access to their local university. It appears that the state is already cognizant of potential future change, as an Articulation Coordination Committee member indicated that transfer students holding state conferred AA degrees while technically guaranteed admission into the SUS, may have major difficulties moving from home and affording the costs if the local university did not accept them.

Lipsky's (1980) definition of the street-level bureaucrat is most embodied by Bobby and Alex, university administrators and technocrats, as these two individuals reside most at the "ground level" of policy implementation next to academic advisors who work directly with students. However, all technocrats and generalists heavily rely on the policy experts and their micro level knowledge of the state level articulation agreement; not only to interpret policy, but to evaluate its outcomes and make changes where necessary. The valuable benefit of highly fluent and close proximity policy experts such as Sam and Devon at the university or Emerson and Leslie at the community college may help to create a leveling out affect on those administrators who do not see

encumbrances for underrepresented groups. The same can be said about the technocrats (Bobby and Alex) and the generalists (Pat and Chris). Perhaps the more vocal advocates, such as Sam, Emerson, Teddy, Pat, and Drew, will be able to assert their concerns and influence changes in policies. Thus, another potential implication for theory and practice when conducting policy implementation studies, is to be mindful of the multiple levels of administrators actors and not just "front line" or "street-level" bureaucrats. Even those administrators slightly removed from the policy may provide useful insights on the organizational culture of the institution, as was the case in this study.

Future Research Recommendations

Qualitative research methodology can be used to examine the effects of state mandated changes in educational policy to provide local level knowledge of what policy means and how policy is interpreted and implemented. The future directions of this research study on transfer policy are as follows:

- Florida/Nationwide: Schedule one-on-one in-depth interviews with members of the Florida Articulation Agreement Committee to glean their understanding of the statewide articulation agreement in relationship to underrepresented students.

- Redesign this study with six purposely-selected administrator with two in-depth, face-to-face interviews on racial and ethnic minority groups and perceptions of the state transfer policy.

- Conduct a three state case study in Texas, Florida, and California using in-depth interviews with university and community college administrators and state

departments officials to gather their perceptions of diversity as related to transfer policy.

- Create an action-research study in partnership with a community college or university as a way to improve organizational and change the transfer process; such as, periodic observations of the admissions office during high peek use times to make the environment more culturally responsive.

- Develop this study from critical race or feminist theory as a lens to examine the interview narratives. Would any differences emerge in terms of administrative rank, gender, and race/ethnicity?

Chapter Summary

This study describes and explains selected university and community college administrators' perceptions of a state-level policy and the resulting institutional practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students and argues the importance of challenging administrators' belief systems through their understanding of state and institutional policy and practice; this is especially the case in relation to underrepresented students. Emphasis is placed on qualitative research methodology combining social constructivism, philosophical hermeneutics, and interpretive policy analysis. Together, both the researcher and the respondent socially construct meaning through the interview process. Philosophical hermeneutics expands the role of the researcher as "creator" in the collection and analysis of data, and interpretive policy analysis underscores the significance of capturing policy knowledge at the local level to instigate broader change.

A careful examination of the data resulted in three types of policy implementers: the policy experts, the technocrats, and the generalists. Three categories: policy proximity, perceptions of underrepresented students, and policy fluency were used to establish the members of the three groups. All three cases were examined for themes and subthemes using cross-case analysis guided by the three exploratory research questions. Policy experts tended to be well-versed in national and state trends related to transfer and articulation. They read and quoted literature [from student affairs, public administration, political science] and could clearly articulate the micro level details of the agreement. Technocrats were less involved with policy development and more concentrated with executing policy at the institutional level. Their comments focused more on policy technicalities used to monitor, evaluate, and recommend changes to make the process more effective. They possessed both a macro and micro view of policy. The generalists sampled here, tended to have little or no experience with transfer policy, but added insights on the particular obstacles underrepresented transfers students encounter. Whether administrators were familiar with the details of state policy or only superficially aware, commonly held beliefs directly affected how they interpreted and/or enforced policy. Philosophies ranged from seeing all students as a uniform block, to highly differentiated perspectives. For example, one administrator viewed herself as "diversity blind," while a second administrator remarked that there is "nothing all White at her community college anymore."

Higher education in America is entering a particularly tumultuous phase in its history. With massive budget shortfalls, large influxes of returning adult students, and growing numbers of minority populations in the K-12 pipeline and community colleges,

institutions are forced to do more with less. While attention has been predominantly placed on quantitative studies examining issues of race, ethnicity, and the success of low-income minority groups in postsecondary education, many scholars have voiced the need for more qualitative policy-based research at the institutional level. Despite this urgent call, policy studies remain scant. Few studies explore campus administrators' perceptions of state policies and how such policies are implemented at the institutional level. Even fewer studies apply an interpretive qualitative approach to examine the experiences of underrepresented students from a higher education administrator's perspective. This particular point of view is essential to understand because administrators must interpret and enact policy.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sample Interview Transcripts

University Administrator

RS: What is just your job title and in what capacity do you work with transfer students?

UA1: Well I'm Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Services and that's really two offices; Undergraduate Studies houses about seven or eight different units including the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, Undergraduate Research, and Interdisciplinary Studies and a few others. Academic Services is one of those units.

UA1: The Academic Services office itself deals with a lot of student issues having to do with withdrawals, medical withdrawals, drops, grade forgiveness, or late grade forgiveness actually, the Registrar's Office deals with that, transient requests, transfer of courses. So we get into that.

UA1: In my job separately, and attached to this position whether it's with Academic Services or Undergraduate Studies, I oversee the articulation process between and the State Course Numbering System. And so I deal with every course on campus and having to do course numbering and I'm the administrative presence on the university's course review... Undergraduate Course Review Committee as well, and so give technical expertise about policies and about the courses and our course database that we have. Then when things are approved I send them up to the state and get them back from the state so technical stuff like that.

UA1: I also participate in the Common Program Prerequisites with the state and that actually is not part of Undergraduate Studies that comes from another Vice Provost, but I've gotten involved, because I'm also involved in the Undergraduate catalog process, and that all these things sort of mix together in an interesting way and land here with some dimension.

UA1: So a lot of it has to do with curriculum, it has to do with students who are students who are here and either have situations that are atypical, in the sense that they're... they need a late something or a drop something, or they're not covered by the first stage of a process such as transfer courses.

UA1: I don't do the transfer courses myself, there's another person in the office who does and a lot of the courses that transfer in, a) they're common course numbering so they automatically transfer in, in Florida and that's the greatest amount of courses; or they've already been transferred in before from another non-FCNS institution and so we can... the degree audit process takes care of that. But there are others that have to be evaluated and whether... The colleges determine whether it meets major requirements

and our office will determine whether it meets general education program (Gordon Rule) other requirements that we have at the university level, university level requirements.

UA1: So in terms of transfer, how do I involve myself? Well you know in that sense sort of I do in a large scale of the coursework and everything else. In terms of the students it's nothing direct, it's indirect and every once in awhile students want to appeal something or engage in lengthier discussion about an issue and so I'm involved in that way.

UA1: I also work with all these offices; the College Advising Office, the Transfer and Transition Services Office, Admissions and the Graduate College.

UA1: Because I do these courses for the Graduate College as well. I'm the university representative to the state for course numbering. So that all comes through me too although I have you know I'm sort of recipient of material, process it and send it back to them. I have much less of a role than obviously with undergraduate courses.

Community College Administrator

CA6: In terms of looking at transfer students and, for me and what I'm doing, I am just at this particular moment looking at policies and procedures and just really making sure that we have appropriate policies and procedures that would lead people to be successful.

RS: What do you mean by appropriate?

CA6: Well, it would be to ensure that we don't have any barriers that are in place. Whether it's you know a process or something that would persuade someone, maybe this isn't what I want to do. We want to make sure that it's an easy process for everybody. So when we have those institutional barriers, it's like hey let's think about this kind of thing. So, just trying to make sure that everybody has an opportunity.

RS: Have you found resistance to your mentioning that a particular policy might have a barrier? Would you describe for me maybe a case where you were confronted with some resistance?

CA6: I think everybody here at the institution, we all have the same goal and that's to ensure that students are successful. We all look at things from the vantage point of, okay, you're the expert, you know, in your field. I don't tell you how to make recommendations and that kind of thing. As an executive team when we talk about policies and procedures and everybody's pretty open, and there isn't a whole lot of resistance to let's look at this because we're all looking at it from a different perspective.

So there really hasn't been a whole lot of resistance to a lot of recommendations that we make because the bottom line is student success and we want them to be successful.

RS: Okay. You have been able to identify potential areas inside of a policy or the process inside of the policy that could be…

CA6: Challenging?

RS: …challenging? That you've been able to shed some light onto potentially… how would you describe it? How do you handle a process when something like, you know, you're saying that your team all comes together in an equitable manner to discuss it as experts. So give me an example of what one of those situations might look like.
CA6: Let's talk about the equity report for example. There's something in the equity report about, or at least last year there was—they wanted us to look at student success in a particular Math course—and so what we were able to do is because certain students were disproportionately not passing Math.

CA6: A group of us were able to look at the process. How are students identified to go into these courses? What support mechanisms do we have in place? Let's call the students and find out, why they didn't re-enroll after they took this Math class. So a group of us get together and we're trying to figure out, we want these students to be successful, we know that if they're not successful in Math they're probably not going to continue, so let's figure out, let's pick it apart, and figure out what can we do to make it easier for students that come after them, because those students may not come back.

CA6: The unfortunate part with the equity data is when they ask us to start investigating the students who are probably are already gone—because they're looking at a student group from 2007 or 2005. Hopefully they're already graduated, if they were able to get through that class. Those are the kinds of things that we look at in terms of making sure that they all have the same support.

Appendix B

Examples of Reflective Journal Entries

May 24, 2009

<u>On Remembering:</u> From what I am reading it is really necessary to keep track of the steps because all of that gets lost later on. So, for remembering sake, I am going to try to organize something to remember the process. For now, I will just try to jot down everything I can think about around the interview and hope that I can pull a good list together later.

Examining Rubin and Rubin (2005) chapter title "The First Phase of Analysis" will help me both improving my interview technique and learn how to commence on the interview analysis phase which is exciting me and scaring me at the same time. I am hoping that some how all these notes that I am taking on the process will somehow help me write the introduction of chapter 4. And, perhaps free me from the stress of writing that will allow the words to flow more naturally since there seems to be less risk here for now. I am looking at ongoing analysis. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend that the first set of interviews require razor edge focus because they are critical to fine tuning the ones going forward, thus, constant comparative analysis or maybe it's ongoing analysis—need to understand the difference if there is one. What is most critical is "to make sure your project makes sense and concerns matters important to your conversational partners" (p. 16). They recommend that after each interview, a careful examination ensues with a critical eye on the content to see what has been learned and what still needs to be probed for more learning (p. 16). By examining the content and the results of the interview, the main interview questions can be adapted and the probes perfected to "pursue emerging ideas" (p. 16).   I am looking to reap "coherent and consistent descriptions, themes, and theories" that speak to my research questions (p. 16).

<u>On Intuition:</u> While Rubin and Rubin praise the importance of intuition, they underscore the importance of systematization. And that relying on memory of events is dangerous. The act of recording and carefully organizing data so that it is easily retrievable is paramount. It is equally wise to do this for a committee of professors who perceive the qualitative process as flimsy. The painstaking effort now to get everything down on paper will not only archive my thoughts and reflections but also serve as a record of events (Rubin and Rubin call these permanent records, 2005, p 203). Intuitions can be recorded inside of this journal. As Rubin and Rubin warn "memory can be flawed and selective and what you think was said months before is not a substituted for careful examination of the actual transcribed words of the conversational partner" (p. 202). In other words the more exacting, the better the "extracting of information from the transcripts" (p. 202).

September 30, 2009

Case 4 is driving me nuts. There is so much evidence, it don't quite know how to succinctly explain it. I think it has to be broken down further in the perception category inside of differentiated and undifferentiated. I am hearing the two themes of Tinto's model of ritual of integration. I am going to try to analyze my data from Tinto's model of ritual and integration and see if this helps to focus the analysis. I keep asking myself: "what am I hearing?" it this just takes time. I also have to read. Read on the topic at the same time. It helps me to understand what I am hearing. I am hearing themes of competition, collaboration, mission of the institution. Then I need to also parse out whether or not the administrator sees difference. This is getting harder because things are very muddy. On one hand I see the themes of rites of passage, along with administrators talking about the importance of social and academic integration. Rendon and Garza incorporate both Tinto and Astin's concepts of student engagement and learning to navigate the system. However, they depart from these models when they adopt Tierney's suggestion for institutions to become more culturally responsive organizations. His argument is placed on institutions making clear organizational changes that are more responsive to the needs of minority students which Rendon stresses is only growing larger within the community college systems, especially urban environments and states with growing minority populations. But Rendon goes a step further to suggest a validation-active intervention, which can be influenced by institutional factors. The institutional factors are what I am interested in. I am less interested in the student-related factors. I want to know what institutional-related factors may or may not be hindering success.

Surprising discoveries and obvious contradictions

Appendix C

Examples of Field Notes

Date: June 23, 2009 **Participant:** CA2	**Time:** 10-11:35am **Location:** Community College **Total Interview Time***:* 1:17 minutes
Observation	*Description*
Pre-Meeting Notes	Tried to email several times and called to confirm a time but didn't realize that the college was closed on Friday's. Participant expressed that she was concerned that she was the not person to interview with because she works in the tutoring center. I assured her that she was a perfect interviewee. The truth is, I don't know. The website give such little information about individuals on the website that I had to guess. Interviewee asked again about having the interview questions in advance. I told her "no" by saying that no other interviewees are given the questions in advance and I might not ask those questions current on the list directly.
Communication via email	Interview and correspondence established via e-mail. Response time for interview less than 24 hours. She wanted to know if I would provide the questions for the interview in advance.
First Impressions	Warm. Welcoming. Motherly. Took me on a tour of the academic center after the interview and introduced me to some of her tutoring staff.
Prior Work History	History with the institution. Teacher in the public school system. Was a GECC community college transfer student before transferring to FGPU.
Title: Major responsibilities	Director of Academic Services-4 campuses.
Office Setting	Located in the faculty building. Office upstairs from Academic Success Center.
Physical Description	In her mid-50s. Larger build.
Interruptions	None
Office description	Quiet administrative office.

Appendix C (Continued)

Examples of Field Notes

Date: May 21th, 2009 **Participant:** University UA1	**Time:** 9:30am-10:30am **Location:** University **Total Interview Time:** 56:32
Observation	*Description*
Pre-Meeting Notes	Arrived early and was welcomed into participants office immediately.
Communication via email	Interview and correspondence established via e-mail. Response time for interview less than 24 hours.
First Impressions	Very kind and interested individual. Witty. Precise answers and speaks in metaphors.
Prior Work History	Groomed for his current position. A political science background.
Title: Major responsibilities	Oversees Academic Affairs and Student Affairs
Office Setting	Located in the wing of undergraduate studies. Smallish office with cubicles with very youthful looking staff, which appear to be students.
Physical Description	White man in his mid-50's. Open collared oxford shirt. Glasses.
Interruptions	No interruptions.
Office description	Nice big window over looking the reflecting pool and the library. Second Floor. Partly shaded by trees. Artful posters and photo of cocker spaniel. Family photo. Two packed full bookshelves with scholarly texts. L-shape dark stained desk. Two monitors. Meticulous.

Appendix D

Original Categories and Codes

Policy Proximity (pprox)

pprox.cls (close proximity)

pprox.dist (distant proximity)

Policy fluency (pflu)

pflu.flu (fluent)

pflu.semi (semi-fluent)

pflu.lim (limited fluency)

Implementer type (imptype)

imptype.pw (policy wonk)

imptype.tech (technocrat)

imptype.nonspc (non-specialist)

Administrators' Perceptions (admpercp)

admpercp.diff (differentiated)

admpercp.undif (undifferentiated)

Coupling Preference (cpling)

cpling.loose (loose)

cpling.tight (tight)

Appendix E

Final Categories and Codes

Implementer Type (imptype)

      imptype.pe (policy expert)

      imptype.tech (technocrat)

      imptype.nonspc (generalist)

Policy Proximity (pprox)

      pprox.cls (close proximity)

      pprox.dist (distant proximity)

Administrators' Perceptions (admpercp)

      admpercp.diff (differentiated)

      admpercp.undif (undifferentiated)

Policy Fluency (pflu)

      pflu.flu (fluent)
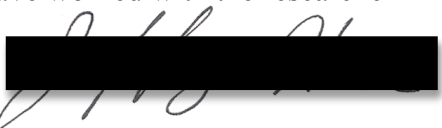
      pflu.semi (semi-fluent)

      pflu.lim (limited fluency)

Appendix F

Peer Reviewer/Outside Reviewer Form

I, _____Jeffrey Hall_____, have served as a peer reviewer/outside reviewer for
University and Community College Administrators' Perceptions of the Transfer Process
for Underrepresented Students: Analysis of Policy and Practice, by Ruth C. Slotnick. In
this role, I have worked with the researcher in identifying emerging issues and verifying
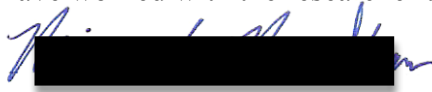the cases.

Signed: _____

Date: _____3/3/2010_____

Peer Reviewer/Outside Reviewer Form

I, ____Miranda Sloan_____, have served as a peer reviewer for "University and Community College Administrators' Perceptions of the Transfer Process for Underrepresented Students: Analysis of Policy and Practice," by Ruth C. Slotnick. In this role, I have worked with the researcher to verify the cases.

Signed: ███████████████████

Date: _____1/13/2010_____

Appendix F (Continued)

Peer Reviewer/Outside Reviewer Form

I, ___Tamar Ascher____, have served as an outside reviewer for "University and Community College Administrators' Perceptions of the Transfer Process for Underrepresented Students: Analysis of Policy and Practice," by Ruth C. Slotnick. In this role, I have worked with the researcher in reviewing transcripts and assisting in identifying emerging issues.

Signed: _____

Date: _____12/18/2009_____

Appendix G

Interviews by Institution, Role, and Length of Interview

Institution Type	Interviewers by Role	Length of Interview
University		
	Assc. Dean & Director of Undergraduate Studies	1 hours
	VP & Dean of Undergraduate Studies	1 hours
	Assc. VP of Admissions, Enrollment, Articulation	1.25 hours
	Asst. VP Regional Student Services	1 hours
	Assc. VP Student Devlp. & Enrollment Services.	45 minutes
	Director, Transfer & Transition Services	1 hours
Community College		
	VP of Success & Chief Student Affairs Officer	45 minutes
	VP Educational Programs/Chief Learning Officer	1 hours
	Director of Enrollment Management & Registrar	1 hours
	Assc. VP of Student Success	1 hours
	Director, Academic Success Center	1.25 hours
	Asst. to the President for Diversity & Equity	45 minutes

Appendix H

Interview Script

Thank you again for agreeing to meet with me today to share your insights on transfer students and the policies and practices of your institution.

The purpose of the study is to explore administrators' perceptions of policies and practices relating to underrepresented students transferring from a community college to a four-year institution to earn the baccalaureate. By underrepresented students, I mean low-income, racial/ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students.

I will be conducting the interviews in Summer 2009. Participating in the study will take approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes of your time. The interviews, with your permission, will be digitally recorded and transcribed. To uphold privacy, your comments will not be identified by name. I and/or a professional transcriber will be transcribing the recordings; however, to maintain confidentiality, an ascribed letter, such as participant A, B, C and so forth will be used to identify each transcript. At any time during the interview you may turn off the digital recorder.

If you have no further questions, let's get started.

Appendix I

Demographic Data Form

Please indicate the following:

1. Position (check one)
☐ Assistant Vice Provost/President
☐ Associate Vice Provost/President
☐ Dean
☐ Director
☐ Other – Specify _____

2. Institution Type
☐ Community College
☐ University

3. Number of Years in Current Position (check one)
☐ 1-3
☐ 4-7
☐ 8-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-19
☐ 20+

4. Number of Years at Institution (check one)
☐ 1-3
☐ 4-7
☐ 8-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16-19
☐ 20+

5. Gender (check one)
☐ Male
☐ Female

6. Race/Ethnicity (check one)
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic
☐ White
☐ Other – Specify _____

7. Highest Level of Academic Degree
☐ Bachelors
☐ Masters
☐ Doctoral
☐ Other – Specify _____

Appendix J

IRB Approval Form

USF
UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

DIVISION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 ● Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 ● FAX (813) 974-5618

April 13, 2009

███████████████████████ on

Tampa, FL 33647

RE: **Expedited Approval** for Initial Review
IRB#: 107827 I
Title: *University and College Administrators' Perceptions of the Transfer Process for Underrepresented Students: Analysis of Policy and Practice*
Study Approval Period: 04/10/2009 to 04/09/2010

Dear Ms. Slotnick:

On April 10, 2009, Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above protocol **for the period indicated above.** It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review based on the federal expedited category number six (6) and seven (7).

Approval included with the Adult Minimal Risk Informed Consent Form.

Please note, if applicable, the **enclosed informed consent/assent documents are valid during the period indicated by the official, IRB-Approval stamp located on page one of the form.** Valid consent must be documented on a copy of the most recently IRB-approved consent form. Make copies from the enclosed original.

Please reference the above IRB protocol number in all correspondence regarding this protocol with the IRB or the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance. In addition, we have enclosed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) Quick Reference Guide providing guidelines and resources to assist you in meeting your responsibilities in the conduct of human participant research. Please read this guide carefully. It is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB.

Appendix K

Script for Recruitment Call or E-mail

Dear_____,

I am contacting you to enlist your help in a research project I am doing for my doctoral dissertation in higher education administration under the supervision of Dr. Donald Dellow in the USF College of Education. My other committee members are Dr. Valerie Janesick, Dr. Thomas Miller, and Dr. Robert Sullins. Your name was given to me by _____, because they perceived you as an individual who has worked closely with transfer students or transfer student-related policies and practices.

The purpose of the study is to explore administrators' impressions of policies and practices as they pertain to underrepresented transfer students transferring from a community to a four-year institution to earn their baccalaureate. By underrepresented students I mean low-income, racial/ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students.

I will be conducting the interviews in Summer 2009. Participating in the study will take approximately 1 hour of your time. The interviews, with your permission will be digitally recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, your comments will not be identified by name. I and/or a professional transcriber will be transcribing the recordings; however, to assure confidentially an ascribed letter, such as participant A, B, C and so forth will be used only to identify each transcript. At any time during the interview you may turn off the digital recorder.

The USF Institutional Review Board has approved the project and all appropriate measures will be taken to insure confidentiality.

If you are willing to meet with me to talk about transfer students, or if you have any questions, I would appreciate hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me at this email or at 813-732-2639. I look forward to the possibility of meeting with you.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my request. If you are interested in participating in my dissertation study, I would like to schedule an interview time.

Sincerely,

Ruth C. Slotnick

Appendix L

E-mail or Soliciting Call for Participation

Dear_____,

I am contacting you to enlist your help in a research project, which relates to my doctoral
dissertation in higher education administration under the supervision of Dr. Donald
Dellow in the USF College of Education. My other committee members are Dr. Valerie
Dr. Janesick, Dr. Thomas Miller, and Dr. Robert Sullins.

The purpose of the study is to explore administrator's insights on policies as they pertain
to underrepresented transfer students transferring from the community to the four-year
institution to earn their baccalaureate. By underrepresented students I mean low income,
racial/ethnic minorities, and first-generation in college students.

I will be conducting the interviews in Summer 2009. Participating in the study will take
approximately 1 hour of your time. The interviews, with your permission will be
digitally recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, your comments will not
be identified by name on the recording. I and/or a professional transcriber will be
transcribing the recordings; however, to assure confidentially an ascribed letter, such as
participant A, B, C and so forth will be used only to identify each transcript. At any time
during the interview you may turn off the digital recorder

The USF Institutional Review Board has approved the project and all appropriate
measures will be taken to insure confidentiality.

If you can recommend an administrator at your institution that can participate in my
study, I would appreciate hearing from you. If you have any other questions, please feel
free to contact me at this email or at 813-732-2639. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for you thoughtful consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Ruth C. Slotnick

Appendix M

Human Participant Protection Certificate

Certificate of Completion

Ruth Slotnick

Has Successfully Completed the
Course in

Foundations in Human Research
Protections at USF

On

Thursday, December 31, 2009

USF

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

1/20/2010 8:55:32 AM

About the Author

Ruth's research argues the importance of challenging administrators' belief systems through their understanding of state and institutional policy and practice; this is especially the case in relation to underrepresented students. Whether administrators are familiar with the details of state policy or only superficially aware, commonly held beliefs directly affect how they interpret and enforce policy. Philosophies can range from seeing all students as a uniform block, to highly differentiated perspectives.