CARRYING THE TORCH: FIVE FACULTY MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES AS CHAMPIONS
OF ASSESSMENT

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined the lived experience of community college faculty champions of learning outcomes assessment. This study sought to elucidate the experiences of faculty champions of assessment by exploring both what the participants experienced as well as how they experienced their roles in leading assessment work on their campus, in order to describe the essence of the faculty champions' experience leading assessment work. Faculty champions of assessment at a community college were interviewed to explore: how they became engaged in learning outcomes assessment, how they describe the phenomenon of their engagement in learning outcomes assessment, and how they describe meaningful faculty support for engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

Five faculty champions were selected to participate in this study, based on their substantial engagement in learning outcomes assessment at their community college. Data gathered from the five participants through two in-depth interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Data analysis and interpretation were guided by the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Moustakas, 1994) method of phenomenological analysis, as well as through the lens of organizational leadership theory using Bolman & Deal's (2013) four-frame model for understanding organizational behavior.

Key findings from this study suggest that paths of faculty champions of assessment in community colleges to their roles in assessment were unintentional and formative; participants also experienced strong connections between their assessment work and teaching, which facilitated their engagement as champions of assessment. Participants described distinct roles they experienced as champions of assessment, including the roles of leader, learner, implementer, teacher, analyst, partner, and advocate. This study suggests that whereas faculty champions experience their leadership roles as essential and meaningful, their engagement and

leadership are further strengthened when they feel empowered and supported by administration; when they do not feel supported and empowered, they may withdraw and disengage from their roles as champions of assessment.

This research contributes to the field of higher education by illuminating the experiences of faculty champions in assessment, and expanding researchers' and practitioners' understandings of the essential roles of faculty champions in leading assessment work. Results will be useful to inform administrators' support of faculty champions, community college faculty members' understanding of their important leadership roles in assessment, and the design of future qualitative and quantitative studies of faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

Keywords: assessment, learning outcomes assessment, community colleges, community college faculty roles

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To Bud, Aidan, and Oscar

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Chapter 1

Introduction

College completion has received substantial attention in the media and in the political sphere over the last several years. Much of this attention is the result of President Barack Obama's ambitious goal to increase Americans' attainment of a college degree. In his first address to the Joint Session of Congress on February 24, 2009, President Obama announced: "By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world" (The White House, 2009).   Later, in 2015, Obama announced a significant proposal to invest in community colleges by funding the first two years of students' study in support of their completion of a college credential (U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Whereas funding of such substantial nature remains to be seen, the proposal calls attention to the important role community colleges play in our modern economy and society in supporting the President's national goals of significantly increasing the number of college-educated adults in the United States. Walter Bumphus, President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), claims that community colleges have important work to do in supporting the 2020 College Completion goal and argues that assessment of student learning is a key part of this work. Moreover, he asserts that, "If community colleges are going to fulfill their core mission, essential and ongoing assessment must be done to structure an environment of student success and completion" (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011, p. 3). Importantly, the national college completion conversation largely overlooks outcomes related to student learning as compared to outcomes related to retention and graduation (A. Cohen, personal communication, April 11, 2015).

As community colleges are being called upon to increase students' degree completion and at the same time produce more evidence of their learning through assessment, it is important to describe how assessment data are being used. The purposes of assessment are understood as part of two major goals: accountability and improvement of student learning (Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010). In a 2009 national study of learning outcomes assessment practices, accreditation was identified as the most common use of assessment data (Kuh & Ewell, 2010). Among community colleges, a historical focus on assessment for the purpose of accountability has overshadowed assessment for purpose of improvement (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

Research on assessment practices in higher education indicates that faculty have a critical and central role in the learning outcomes assessment process and their leadership is critical to successful assessment practices (Banta, 1999; Evans, 2010; Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry & Kinzie, 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999). Stakeholders both inside and outside of higher education institutions identify the important role of faculty in assessment. Leaders of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) argue that faculty leadership in institutional assessment practices is critical to ensure that academic freedom and shared governance are respected in all stages of the assessment process, and that results are used to improve student learning (Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011). This leadership is important because faculty are the owners of curriculum, and assessment practices designed to improve student learning may impact the design and delivery of curriculum.

The Problem

Despite the important role of faculty in assessment, national survey data indicate that faculty engagement and leadership in these processes are not adequate and that faculty involvement is critical moving forward (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014). Hutchings (2010) asserts that, "the real promise of assessment depends on significantly growing and deepening faculty involvement" (p. 6). Despite the central role of faculty in assessment, "gaining faculty involvement and support remains a major challenge" (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009, p. 7).

Whereas several scholars identify the need to find ways to engage faculty in assessment in a more intentional and meaningful way, much of the impetus behind assessment has been focused on accountability (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Often faculty see accountability work, such as accreditation, as more of an administrative function than one that is led by faculty. Most faculty prefer to engage in assessment when it is designed and facilitated to improve student learning rather than to fulfill accountability purposes, such as accreditation requirements (Gold, Rhoades, Smith, & Kuh, 2011; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Paloma & Banta, 1999). Considering that the body of assessment literature is replete with a central focus on faculty involvement and leadership as being critical to successful assessment practices, more research is needed to describe the experiences of faculty who lead assessment work. Little is known about the lived experiences of faculty who are substantially engaged in learning outcomes assessment for the purpose of improvement of student learning.

Previous Studies

Much research has been done to establish the importance of faculty involvement and leadership in assessment as a critical factor of success in an institution's learning outcomes assessment process (Banta, 1999; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Nunley,

Bers, & Manning, 2011). The vast majority of this work has approached the problem of faculty

engagement from an institutional process perspective, focusing on data collection and use across

the institution, as well as resources and structures to support the assessment process. In this

regard, Kuh and Ewell (2010) call for more "systematic collection of data" to improve student

learning (p. 25). They argue, "While there is considerable assessment activity going on, it does

not appear that many institutions are using the results effectively to inform curricular

modifications or otherwise enhance teaching and learning" (Kuh & Ewell, 2010, p. 9).

Importantly, these claims regarding using results to inform curricular change stem from sources

other than the faculty whose role it is to enact curricular change.

Some important research on assessment practice has focused specifically on the

community college setting. Nunley, Bers and Manning (2011) present 11 challenges for

community colleges in learning outcomes assessment work. These challenges illuminate how

learning outcomes assessment is influenced by institutional-level challenges with regard to the

diverse mission and student body of community colleges, limited institutional research capacity,

and large numbers of adjunct faculty (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). These challenges, as

identified by chief academic officers and institutional researchers, reflect the importance of

institutional support to the assessment process but they do not contribute to a better

understanding of faculty engagement in assessment.

The most recent national study of learning outcomes assessment practices in higher

education reaffirmed calls for faculty leadership and engagement. In this 2013 survey, provosts

rated "faculty ownership and involvement as top priorities" to improve assessment work in their

institutions (Kuh, et al., 2014, p. 4). The survey confirms widespread agreement with previous

studies that indicate "faculty involvement in assessment and improvement is essential to both

improve teaching and learning and to enhance institutional effectiveness" (Kuh, et al., 2014, p. 4). Provosts surveyed also indicated more professional development is needed for faculty in learning and engaging in assessment work on their campuses. Provosts from community colleges, more than any other institutional type, indicated that professional development for faculty was key to effective support for learning assessment practices (Kuh, et al., 2014). These national surveys provide a wealth of data from administrators' perspectives, and while important, they do not explore the experiences of faculty leaders in assessment that may help shape promising practices in engaging and supporting the faculty.

Whereas many studies of faculty involvement in learning outcomes assessment have overlooked the experiences of the faculty themselves, one recent study did illuminate the faculty voice. Fontenot (2012) explored community college faculty attitudes and concerns about the learning outcomes assessment process. Findings from this survey revealed that many faculty members have a positive attitude toward learning outcomes assessment and that their academic discipline influences their teaching priorities and consequently their approach to the assessment process. Fontenot also found that faculty concerns mostly emerged from distrust regarding the use of assessment data, that faculty felt that they were not adequately trained in the assessment process, and that external forces were controlling assessment efforts, influencing their willingness to engage. Faculty members in Fontenot's (2012) study were more engaged in assessment at the classroom or instructional level than at the program or institutional level. Finally, these findings revealed that faculty were more likely to be engaged in assessment work if they believed there was a benefit to doing so and if they believed the assessment data were valid and could be used to improve student learning (Fontenot, 2012). This study is important

because it addresses faculty engagement in assessment by studying faculty perceptions about the assessment process in the community college setting.

Deficiencies in the Studies

The literature on faculty engagement in collegiate learning outcomes assessment leaves important unanswered questions. Both scholars and practitioners assert that faculty leadership is lacking in assessment yet critical to successful assessment practice (Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). The lack of faculty voice in learning outcomes assessment research is critical to understanding faculty engagement. The perceptions of chief academic officers, provosts, and institutional researchers contribute to understanding faculty engagement in assessment, especially with regard to institutional barriers and resources, but they do not detail the perceptions and experiences of faculty themselves. To better understand faculty engagement in assessment, more research is needed to study successful models and faculty experiences in engagement in assessment. Additionally, little research has been done to explore the perceptions of community college faculty's engagement in assessment. Finally, the literature indicates the need for robust systems of support for faculty engagement in assessment through faculty professional development. However, the literature does not describe what meaningful faculty support for learning outcomes assessment looks like in the community college setting.

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Purpose of the Study

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The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of community college faculty members who champion learning outcomes assessment on their campus. Therefore, the central phenomenon under study was championing learning outcomes assessment in a community college setting. Championing assessment was defined as a faculty

member leading and advocating for assessment as a valuable, meaningful, and useful process for faculty. Participants in this study self-identified as community college faculty members who champion learning outcomes assessment processes on their campus. Whereas there may be non-faculty members on a community college campus who identify as champions of learning outcomes assessment, this study sought to explore the experience of community college faculty in championing learning outcomes assessment in order to respond to the extant literature on the importance of faculty engagement in assessment. This study responds to the literature regarding faculty engagement in assessment, which calls for faculty leadership, indicates a lack of faculty engagement, and overlooks the lived experience of faculty champions of learning outcomes assessment. The findings provide an important connection between the growing national interest and urgency in assessment of student learning outcomes and the faculty who serve a key role in that process by offering community college administrators, faculty and higher education researchers a research-based framework from which to design, facilitate and study faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions to address deficiencies in the extant literature:

- What are the lived experiences of community college faculty champions actively engaged in leading learning outcomes assessment?
  - How do community college faculty champions become engaged in learning outcomes assessment?
  - How do community college faculty champions describe the phenomenon of their engagement in learning outcomes assessment?

o How do community college faculty champions describe meaningful faculty support for engagement in learning outcomes assessment?

Significance of the Study

Describing the essence of community college faculty members' engagement in championing learning outcomes assessment is important for three key reasons. First, the findings of this study may assist community college administrators and faculty in meaningfully examining and assessing student learning by describing how faculty engage in championing learning outcomes assessment and what they experience as faculty champions. Importantly, these questions of 'what' faculty experience and 'how' they experience championing assessment are questions best answered by the faculty members themselves. Community college administrators and faculty could use these descriptions of faculty champions' experiences in assessment to inform the design of structures, policies and systems that support faculty engagement in the assessment process. This missing piece of the larger picture of faculty engagement is critical to community colleges' efforts to provide evidence of students' learning as they work to help students to persist and complete their academic programs. Additionally, higher education researchers could benefit from the results of this study as it will contribute to the limited existing literature that explores faculty experiences of championing assessment in the community college setting. Finally, the findings from this study may also inform the development of a framework for supporting faculty engagement in assessment in the community college setting and guide future research in this area.

Definition of Terms

Within this study, the following terms are used:

Assessment: It is important to clarify how this study is defining the term assessment. Institutions and faculty engage in assessment and define the process of assessment in various ways. Ewell (2002) identified three distinct but not mutually exclusive definitions for assessment, one of which is most useful for the purpose of this study. The earliest definition, Ewell claims, has its roots in a mastery-learning tradition, in which assessment represented the process of determining one's "mastery of complex abilities, generally through observed performance." Another definition Ewell identified emerged from the K-12 environment and generally referred to large scale testing used in schools to benchmark performance. The third and most useful definition for the purpose of this study describes assessment as "a special kind of program evaluation, whose purpose was to gather evidence to improve curricula and pedagogy" (p. 9). It is this definition of assessment that this study uses; the terms *assessment*, *learning outcomes assessment* and *student learning outcomes assessment* are also used interchangeably.

Faculty champion of learning outcomes assessment: This study borrows from the literature in project management in defining the role of a faculty champion. Howell and Shea (2001) define "champion behavior" as "expressing confidence in the innovation, involving and motivating others to support the innovation, and persisting under adversity." This study, therefore, applies these same ideas in defining the role of a faculty champion in assessment as a faculty member who expresses confidence in learning outcomes assessment, involves and motivates others to support assessment work, and persists in adversity that they encounter in supporting assessment work.

Engagement: In this study, engagement will be generally defined as regular, willing, and perhaps even enthusiastic participation in learning outcomes assessment. Faculty in this study will be asked to describe their engagement in championing learning outcomes assessment.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This review of literature begins with a brief overview of the evolution of the purpose and value of learning outcomes assessment in higher education, noting key publications, scholars and events that contributed to its development as well as definitions of and support for this work. Next, I elucidate the important role of faculty in the assessment process and consider the engagement of community college faculty in particular. Then, I summarize key studies that reveal faculty perspectives of the assessment process as well as barriers to and support of their engagement. Finally, I give particular attention to a growing interest among scholars in the literature of framing assessment as a scholarly activity.

This review focuses on literature from the 1980's through the present in order to provide a foundational understanding of the field of learning outcomes assessment as well as key challenges and themes that have emerged in the literature with regard to faculty engagement during that time. I chose to narrow my search within this time frame because there is an abundance of literature on learning outcomes assessment, beginning in the mid-1980s as the field grew and drew substantial scholarly attention through the present. The works reviewed were discovered using the electronic journals and databases and print resources (books, journals) available through the Parkland College and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign libraries as well as recent articles in contemporary higher education publications. Much of the work reviewed came from seminal texts in the field, publications by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, recent dissertations in the field, and three prominent journals in higher education research and practice: (a) *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, (b) *Community College Review*, and (c) *New Directions in Teaching and Learning*.

Additional areas not included in this review include the context of assessment work in terms of institutional accreditation processes, as well as accreditors' expectations for learning outcomes assessment practices. Whereas these external factors are important in consideration of engagement in and effectiveness of institutional processes for assessment, this review is focused on the role of faculty and not the institutional context. Though this review focuses on the role of faculty in community colleges, there is a great deal of scholarship regarding learning outcomes assessment across many institutional types. In a broader study of faculty engagement in assessment, it would be important to include these additional works in order to fully understand faculty engagement in assessment across all institutional types.

Purpose and Value of Assessment in Higher Education

A History of Competing Priorities

The assessment movement in the United States began as an emerging interest during the mid- to late-twentieth century in understanding how students experience higher education and how they experience learning. The closest tie to our modern understandings of the assessment process date back to the mid-1960s with the practice of mastery learning, in which assessment was understood as the "processes used to determine an individual's mastery of complex abilities, generally through observed performance" (Ewell, 2002, p. 9). Several scholars such as Chickering (1969), Astin (1977), Tinto (1975), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) also contributed to the development of the assessment movement as they examined students' cognitive gains, academic and social integration and development, and net effects of college attendance (Ewell, 2002). The literature that developed as a result of the work of these scholars and others set the foundation for the assessment movement as questions of quality assurance and outcomes were embedded in these studies of students' experiences in college.

During that same time period there was a growing body of literature on program evaluation that considered a systems approach to examining program effectiveness, which would later extend to institutions (Ewell, 2002). In 1984 the National Institute of Education (NIE) published a report, *Involvement in Learning*, which has become recognized as a critical cornerstone of the assessment movement in higher education (Ewell, 2002; Hutchings, 2010). This report outlines three main recommendations for institutions of higher education: students must be held to high expectations for their academic work, students must be engaged in active learning environments, and finally, students need prompt and valuable feedback to achieve success in college (Ewell, 2002). Providing students with feedback about their learning is a core component of the assessment process. *Involvement in Learning* also argued for faculty engagement in and ownership of the assessment process as a means of improving student learning (Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education, 1984). At the same time, a growing call for accountability was brewing in the K-12 sector of education with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and *Time for Results* in 1986. Each of these reports focused on the potential for postsecondary education and its place in economic and workforce development; the reports also fueled the country's growing interest in outcomes and accountability. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the First National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education, co-sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) and the NIE, was held in 1985 with a particular focus of responding to the 1984 *Involvement in Learning* report (Ewell, 2002). Recognition of the lack of available literature, tools, and practice from which scholars and practitioners could learn to more effectively support students' learning in college began with the 1985 conference and has lasted to the present.

Massification of Assessment for Accountability

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, instruments were developed to assess student learning as a growing number of mandates to demonstrate evidence of student learning were emerging from the states and accrediting bodies (Ewell, 2002). Whereas these tools were developed to address the calls for evidence of student learning in a timely fashion, they did little to engage faculty whose role it is to ultimately use the data gathered in the assessment process to make informed pedagogical changes (Ewell, 2002; Hutchings, 2010). In addition to the emergence of tools for measuring students' learning, scholars were increasingly interested in providing a common framework and foundation upon which institutions could organize their assessment process and communicate its purpose. In 1992, the AAHE published the recommendations of a group of 12 scholars that were intended to guide assessment practices at institutions of higher education. These "Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning" were based on the experience of scholar-practitioners as they brought together their ideas to create a foundation on which to build engaging, ongoing, and effective assessment processes (Hutchings, Ewell & Banta, 2012).

Assessment for accountability gained momentum through both program and institutional accreditation in the 1990s, while scholars in higher education increasingly advocated for assessment as a means for improving student learning (Ewell, 2002). Barr (1993) argued for a paradigm shift in higher education – and community colleges in particular – to move the focus from providing instruction to producing learning. This shift, Barr (1993) argued, was necessary for community colleges to sustain their place in higher education in the face of diminishing resources and increasing student diversity. The focus on learning suggested the need for

institutions to produce evidence of student learning outcomes, to be accomplished through the assessment process. Yet, the urgency of this work stemmed from accountability.

Whereas assessment for accountability continued to gain momentum through accreditation, scholars in higher education grew interested in pursuing assessment as a means for improving student learning. Increasingly, scholars began to urge higher education practitioners to engage in the outcomes assessment movement. Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross were two such scholars who partnered to demonstrate the value and importance of faculty engagement in assessment. Cross and Angelo published *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* in 1993. The handbook introduces the use of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) by instructors to obtain quick and timely feedback on students' learning. The text includes 50 examples of CATs that instructors can use and adapt in their own teaching. This widely-used and practitioner-focused handbook provided higher education faculty relevant and useful applications of classroom-based assessment. During the 1990s and early 2000s the literature on assessment, both in scholarship and practice, became prolific in higher education with the support of organizations such as the AAHE that offered regular opportunity for scholarly conversation, as well as a sustained call for accountability for institutions of higher education by external stakeholders (Ewell, 2002).

A National Priority

In 2006, the United States Secretary of Education convened a Commission to study the *Future of Higher Education*. This commission, named after Secretary Margaret Spellings, expanded the federal government's interest in outcomes assessment with, again, strong calls for accountability and transparency. The Commission argued that too many students were graduating from institutions of higher education and lacking skills they needed to be successful

in the workplace (Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). In its report, the Commission asserted that *all* institutions of higher education had the responsibility of measuring and reporting on student learning outcomes in a more transparent way. More recently, The White House convened the first ever White House Summit on Community Colleges in October of 2010. At this event, Dr. Jill Biden and President Obama, along with a number of community college administrators, policy makers, funding partners, faculty, and students, gathered to discuss the critical role of community colleges in achieving the President's goal of increasing the number of college educated adults in the United States by the year 2020 (The White House, 2013). The conversation continued in a series of subsequent regional summits, and a closing symposium held in April of 2011, with each event focused on "improving student outcomes at community colleges across the country" (The White House, 2011). Among the recommendations that grew from a working group focused on college completion were to "establish common metrics that measure progress and outcomes," and to "foster an institution-level culture of evidence-based decision making" (The White House, 2011, p. 18). Each of these recommendations speaks to the continued focus on assessment as a means to provide evidence of student learning and answer growing calls for accountability as measured by student outcomes.

As evidenced by the literature concerning the history and evolution of the assessment movement, much of the early scholarship in assessment was focused on the competing priorities of accountability and improvement of student learning. The purpose and value of assessment has persistently been argued throughout the literature with regard to these two distinct priorities. However, by the late 1990s the conversation shifted substantially in the literature to a focus on

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faculty. Therefore, this review of literature now turns to explore the role of faculty in the learning outcomes assessment process.

Faculty Engagement and Leadership in Assessment

Among the most recent literature in assessment in higher education, the strongest theme is the central role of faculty (Banta, 1999; Evans, 2010; Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999). Scholars argue that faculty leadership in learning outcomes assessment is critical to ensure that academic freedom and shared governance are respected in all stages of the assessment process, and that the results are used for the purpose of improving student learning (Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011). This leadership is important because the faculty own the curriculum, and assessment practices designed to improve student learning may impact the design and delivery of curriculum. Evans (2010) asserted that the faculty who design curriculum and its improvement are central to the academic outcomes assessment process. Chief academic officers repeatedly indicate the need for more faculty involvement and leadership to make effective pedagogical changes and move towards evidence-based practice (Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010). As recently as the 2013 survey of 1,202 chief academic officers and provosts across two-and four-year public, private and for-profit institutions, one of the major survey findings was that administrators believe that "faculty are key to moving assessment forward" (Kuh et al., 2014, p. 4). Synthesizing findings across nine studies of curriculum development in higher education, Hughes (2007) advocated for the importance of developing a long-term vision for assessment that aligns with the institution's mission, culture and values supported by a collaborative, faculty driven process. Importantly,

determining what and how faculty are teaching and whether students are learning are questions for faculty, not questions others can answer (Hutchings, 2010).

Community College Faculty Engagement

Community colleges represent a substantial segment of higher education as they enroll half of all first-time, first-semester students and just under half of all undergraduate students in the United States (Cox, 2009). Yet, community college faculty are often overlooked in studies of faculty roles in and perceptions of assessment. As noted by Twombly and Townsend (2008), community college faculty are not only neglected in research literature but they are "dismissed as separate and by implication lesser" compared to faculty in the four-year sector (p. 5). They argue that "numbers alone suggest they should at least merit attention" as nearly half of all faculty (full- and part-time) teaching in public, nonprofit institutes of higher education are in community colleges.

Community college faculty have a critical role in students' success through their support of students' learning. As community colleges seek to help more students succeed academically, balance multiple missions, and serve an increasingly diverse student population (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Perna, 2003), they need to understand and support the faculty role in students' learning through the assessment process. Dickinson (1999) calls attention to the importance of the role of faculty in the rapidly changing environment of community colleges:

> Community colleges face an increasingly complex environment that demands reconciling increased social obligations, rapid technological change, and public accountability with the reality of limited resources. At the intersection of these often conflicting demands lies the work of community college faculty. (p. 23)

Little scholarship examines the role of community colleges, and especially the community college faculty, in assessment. However, a recent analysis of perceptions of learning outcomes assessment practices focused on community colleges (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). The data on which this paper is based examined assessment practices from the perspective of 544 chief academic officers (CAO) and 101 institutional research (IR) professionals on community college campuses. IR professionals indicate that the top motivators for faculty participation in assessment are accreditation at both the regional (institutional) and program level. CAOs indicated that improvement of students' educational experience was the second greatest motivator for faculty engagement, just behind regional accreditation. The authors identify 11 challenges that reflect varied community college missions, student characteristics, resources, and compositions of full and part-time faculty in these institutions. Notably, they assert that the low level of faculty engagement in assessment is complicated by large numbers of adjunct faculty who are largely not engaged in learning outcomes assessment. Many scholars agree that adjunct faculty engagement in assessment is a challenge to assessment in this sector (Danley-Scott & Tompsett-Makin, 2012; Hutchings, 2010; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

Faculty Perspectives

Given the central role of faculty, it is important to understand their perspectives with regard to their engagement in and leadership of the assessment process. Three recent studies have focused on giving the faculty voice in that regard. These studies are varied in methodology, setting, and purpose, but each contributes to the literature of faculty engagement in assessment and to the larger picture of the critical role of faculty and their perspectives of their role in the assessment process.

Concerns and engagement in assessment. Fontenot (2012) illuminated perspectives of faculty members on learning outcomes assessment using an online survey of faculty from four public community colleges in Illinois that were participating in the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy. The survey examined faculty attitudes and concerns about assessment as well as their level of involvement in the assessment process. This survey was based on two frameworks: the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) and a framework designed by the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI). Findings indicated that faculty attitudes toward learning outcomes assessment were mostly positive, especially when "faculty teaching priorities, and consequently the manner in which faculty approach assessment, are related to their academic discipline" (Fontenot, 2012, p. 140). Findings also confirmed existing literature that claims faculty members are motivated to participate when they believe there is benefit in doing so, demonstrating a relationship between faculty attitudes and involvement in assessment.

Fontenot's quantitative study pointed to important questions for future work on faculty perceptions about learning outcomes assessment, their roles in the process, and their motivations to engage in learning outcomes assessment. Faculty members' concerns about assessment emerged in the categories of personal, management and consequence concerns. These concerns included some distrust of how assessment information would be used, including uses perceived as punitive; skepticism regarding the validity of assessment tools; and implications for making curricular changes based on assessment data that may be erroneous and or incomplete. Fontenot found no significant difference between groups by tenure status, years employed, and academic discipline regarding concerns, but did find that non-tenured faculty members were somewhat more concerned than tenured faculty about the consequences of assessment for students.

Findings also revealed that faculty felt they were not adequately trained in assessment and that external forces were controlling assessment efforts, causing some faculty to be concerned about whether assessment results would be beneficial for students in the long run. However, as Fontenot indicates, surveying faculty about their concerns in may elicit mostly negative responses, whereas a qualitative study may elicit more balanced both positive and negative perceptions.

The essence of faculty leadership in assessment. Evans' (2010) phenomenological study of faculty engagement in assessment also shed light on faculty members' perspectives in assessment. This study extends the literature in useful ways as it leverages the faculty voice in assessment, and in particular the voice of those faculty actively engaged in learning outcomes assessment. Participants in the study were purposefully selected as information-rich sources as leaders of assessment work on their respective campuses (Patton, 2002). The 10 faculty participants were selected due to their

> involve[ment] in teaching or work related to teaching and learning; involve[ment] on an ongoing basis (for at least the last year) with undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment at the program level or within general education; full-time work at a public or private, nonprofit, baccalaureate or master's institution of higher education regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; self-description as taking initiative in, and feeling a commitment to this work. (Evans, 2010, p. 10-11)

Evans devised research questions based on Seidman's (1998) framework for phenomenological interviews, which includes question(s) about the area of interest, the participant's specific experiences with the phenomenon, and meaning they ascribe to these areas and experiences. The

research questions in Evans' study were: (a) How do faculty who are engaged become involved in this type of assessment? (b) How do faculty describe the phenomenon of their engagement?, and (c) How do faculty describe the process by which they became engaged?" (2010, p. 11). Using semi-structured interviews, Evans listened for rich descriptors of participants' lived experiences. The researcher kept an experiential journal documenting her pre-understandings and her own lived experience during the study. Findings revealed that faculty who were actively engaged in assessment experienced engagement as a result of specific events that ignited their engagement, were supported by development and learning opportunities and described their leadership role as part of their engagement (Evans, 2010).

Evans' study focused on four-year institution faculty members' lived experience in active engagement in assessment. The study contributed substantially to the literature in that it revealed the essence of faculty members' lived experience in engaging and leading assessment. In particular, it prioritized the faculty voice by adding a rich, thick description of the engaged faculty member in assessment. This study provided an important perspective in the literature that so often calls for faculty engagement and yet lacks the faculty voice in the process.

Community college faculty perceptions of learning outcomes assessment. The third recent study is one I completed in 2014 that also prioritized faculty members' perspectives in assessment. Whereas Evans' (2010) study of faculty engagement was limited to faculty teaching in a four-year institution, my (2014) study explored community college faculty members' perceptions of learning outcomes assessment and their role in the process. This qualitative study leveraged Hutchings' (2010) model for supporting faculty engagement in assessment, which is based on six recommendations:

1) Build assessment around the regular, ongoing work of teaching and learning; 2) Make a place for assessment in faculty development; 3) Integrate assessment into the preparation of graduate students; 4) Reframe assessment as scholarship; 5) Create campus spaces and occasions for constructive assessment conversation and action; and 6) Involve students in assessment. (p. 3)

Ten community college faculty leaders in assessment were interviewed to explore (a) their perceptions of learning outcomes assessment in a community college setting, (b) how they describe the purpose and value of assessment, and (c) how they connect assessment to the scholarship of teaching and learning (Hackman, 2014).

Findings revealed that community college faculty leaders in assessment experience high levels of support in assessment work from their colleagues, their administration, through faculty development, and from institutional research offices. Faculty leaders described assessment as embedded in their work, consistently supported by communication, student-centered, and learning-focused. Participants described the purpose and value of assessment as providing evidence of student learning, providing useful data to inform curricular and pedagogical change, and as a process they owned that honored their academic freedom. Faculty leaders did not describe assessment as a scholarly process, but noted the importance of faculty development to support their study of student learning, and noted the substantial challenge of involving part-time faculty in faculty development and the assessment process at large. This study's findings are summarized in a visual model (see Figure 2) that may inform future work in studying community college faculty engagement in assessment.
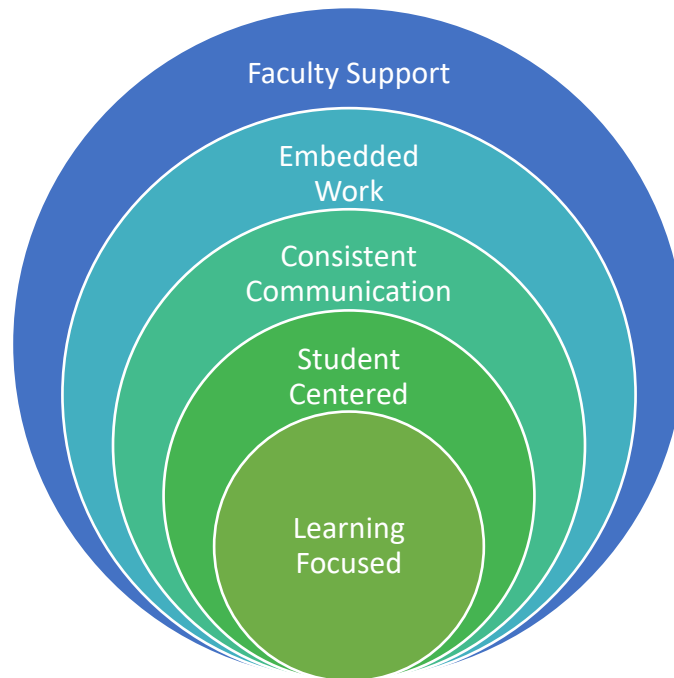
Figure 1. Visual model for community college faculty engagement in assessment.

(Hackman, 2014)

These three studies elucidate important concerns of faculty as well as the essence of their

experience, key supports, and partnerships in their work as leaders of assessment. Whereas these

studies contribute much to the literature with regard to faculty members' perceptions and their

engagement in assessment, it is also important to uncover barriers to faculty engagement in

assessment work. Next, this review will explore key themes in the literature with regard to

difficulty in engaging faculty in assessment work.

Barriers to Faculty Engagement

According to Hutchings (2010), "much of what has been done in the name of assessment

has failed to engage large numbers of faculty in significant ways" (p. 3). First, as demonstrated

in the early literature, much of the impetus of the assessment movement grew out of an external

call for accountability and the need to demonstrate what students learned in college (Ewell,

2002; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Still today, accreditation remains the primary driver of

assessment activity for the vast majority of higher education institutions (Kuh et al., 2014). With institutions' increasing attention to their accreditation processes, faculty may not see their role as central in assessment.

Second, scholars and practitioners indicate much more professional development is needed to support faculty in learning outcomes assessment. Recent national surveys indicate that chief academic officers and provosts have identified that professional development supporting the faculty role in assessment and its close ties to the classroom is still lacking (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014). Increasing faculty development to support learning outcomes assessment is a key recommendation throughout the literature (Hutchings, 2010; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Finally, the large numbers of part-time faculty teaching in higher education, especially community colleges, present a substantial challenge for faculty engagement in assessment in this setting. Across higher education, nearly half of all instruction is provided by part-time faculty (Jacoby, 2006). Approximately 60% of community college faculty are part-time (Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Because such large number of faculty in community colleges are part-time, it is important to consider their engagement in learning outcomes assessment work. Danley-Scott and Tompsett-Makin (2012) assert that involving part-time faculty in assessment has been incredibly challenging. In their small scale, disciplinary study Danley-Scott and Tompsett-Makin (2012) found that part-time faculty participation was greatest when: (a) a peer mentoring model was used to partner part-time faculty with full-time faculty, and (b) communication about the importance and use of assessment data was amplified by additional stakeholders within the organization, such as faculty union representatives. Because their numbers continue to increase, it is important to find ways to involve part-time faculty in meaningful assessment practices. In light of these substantial challenges, and previous studies of faculty perspectives in assessment, it

is important to identify ways to address their concerns and support their involvement in and leadership of assessment work.

Support for Faculty Engagement in Learning Outcomes Assessment

In considering the evolution of the purpose and value of learning outcomes assessment, several distinctions provide insight as to why faculty may not be highly involved and engaged in the process. First, the movement grew out of a call for accountability and the need to demonstrate what students learned in college. Though faculty lead the development and delivery of curriculum, the responsibility for sharing outcomes of student learning has been the role of administrators. Second, on the heels of the call for greater accountability of student learning, the federal government took steps to weave outcomes assessment into the purview of accreditation processes (U.S. Department of Education, 1988). This coupling of assessment and accreditation marginalized faculty engagement in the classroom from the conversation and shifted the focus toward administration and reporting obligations.

When an institution uses assessment primarily for improving student learning, it can demonstrate this priority through the provision of resources and support for faculty's learning about assessment. Faculty members are not typically trained in assessment (Hutchings, 2010), and thus, faculty development programs play a key role in supporting a culture of faculty learning about assessment (Angelo, 2002; Petersen & Vaughan, 2002). Angelo (2002) argues that "many faculty will need training and support in systematic, straightforward ways to do scholarly work on teaching and learning issues" (p. 190). Faculty development strategies include professional development workshops, seminars, and courses focused on student learning outcomes and the learning outcomes assessment process. Administrative support, policies, and practices, as well as widespread sharing and use of student assessment data, should be in place to

support faculty development efforts (Petersen & Vaughan, 2002). Finally, professional development supporting the faculty role in assessment and its close ties to the classroom is still lacking, as demonstrated in two recent national surveys (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014). Despite this lack of support, examples of connections between faculty professional development and the assessment process exist especially through the scholarly approach to studying student learning.

<p style="text-align:center">Assessment as Scholarship</p>

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

A growing body of literature attempts to connect assessment and scholarship in studying teaching effectiveness, suggesting inquiry is at the heart of the assessment process, and data are used to improve student learning. The study of classroom-based pedagogy and teaching effectiveness has been understood as a scholarly process, called the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). As a practice, SoTL seeks to deepen the teacher's understanding of teaching effectiveness, improve practice, and extend findings to the larger scholarly community (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). The growth of the SoTL movement is spurred by the work of several scholars and the support of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). CASTL aims to support the scholarship of teaching and learning in ways that, "fosters significant, long-lasting learning for all students; enhances the practice and profession of teaching, and brings to faculty members' work as teachers the recognition and reward afforded to other forms of scholarly work" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013). CASTL builds on the work of Ernest Boyer, whom identified the scholarship of teaching and learning as one four expressions of scholarship in his 1990 publication, *Scholarship Reconsidered*.

Between 1998 and 2009, over 250 postsecondary campuses participated in the CASTL program (Hutchings, 2010). A survey of the 2009 participants indicated that their involvement "even when involving relatively small numbers of faculty, brings energy and openness to institutional assessment" (Hutchings, 2010, p. 11). Hutchings also notes that a growing number of faculty members from varied institutional types and disciplines are "posing and investigating questions about their students' learning" (p. 11). Hughes (2007) asserts that the process of assessment must be a data-driven scholarly approach, for example using an action research model involving data analysis and application. In most disciplines, faculty members' research in their field of expertise requires an evidence-based approach, Hughes (2007) notes, and so it stands to reason that their work in the classroom should require the same.

The Scholarship of Assessment

Boyer's inclusion of SoTL as part of a larger framework of scholarship in 1990 promoted the concept of classroom research and the study of student learning in the classroom (Angelo, 2002). Angelo and Cross's (1993) contributions to the practice of assessment as a scholarly process have had a major impact on research and practice. Originally conceived as a separate expression of faculty scholarship, in the form of the Scholarship of Assessment (SoA), Angelo (2002) argues that this practice has great potential for "engaging faculty in activities to document and improve teaching effectiveness and student learning quality that are both institutionally and individually valuable" (p. 191). Support structures to guide faculty through the process of studying student learning as well as alignment with institutional priorities are key to the successful implementation of SoA (Angelo, 2002).

Kalina and Catlin (1993) conducted a study across eight community colleges in the state of California in order to investigate whether implementing the Cross-Angelo model of classroom

assessment had any impact on student outcomes. This study revealed that students enrolled in

courses in which the faculty used the Cross and Angelo model of classroom assessment

experienced higher levels of engagement, satisfaction and understanding of academic tasks.

Retention and course grades were also higher in these courses than courses in which the Cross

and Angelo model was not implemented (Kalina & Catlin, 1993). With regard to faculty

involved in the project, the researchers assert that while it was difficult to convince faculty to

participate in the study, those who did liked the Cross and Angelo model. It remains unclear

whether the faculty members' use of the Cross and Angelo model led to the higher levels of

engagement, satisfaction, and course outcomes or whether there might be alternative

explanations for these outcomes. Finally, whereas this study demonstrates SoA in practice, it

does little to describe the faculty role and engagement in the assessment process especially with

regard to their engagement in scholarship.

The SoA and SoTL practices share some common approaches and whereas the specific

focus of each process varies, they may be better understood in partnership with one another.

Angleo (2002) argues that SoA practices can be leveraged by partnering in the larger SoTL

movement. The study of student learning in the classroom has significant overlap with the study

of effective teaching, and both can serve to support one another. Classroom research and the SoA

movement in particular have not gained as much momentum as the SoTL, a more holistic

understanding of the scholarly inquiry of teaching, learning and assessment. Angelo (2002)

argues that together they stand a great chance of more intentional faculty engagement in a

scholarly approach to assessment.

When assessment is framed as scholarly work, it is important to consider the role of a

community college faculty member. Faculty in community colleges shoulder heavy teaching

loads and often are expected to contribute service to the larger college or community as part of their faculty contract (Eddy, 2010). Additionally, the size and location of the community college has a substantial impact on the faculty members' roles and responsibilities. For example, Eddy (2010) notes that faculty in rural institutions wear many hats, including leadership in departmental and college units. With so many demands on their time in teaching, advising, service, and leadership, community college faculty are substantially challenged to make time to engage in assessment work as a scholarly process. Finally, if scholarship is not expected nor rewarded among community college faculty, these faculty members are unlikely to find the process important and valuable as a professional development experience. As scholars argue for assessment work to be recognized as a natural fit for the faculty role supporting students' learning, there are important disconnects between literature and practice in the community college setting that deserve further investigation.

Critique of the Literature

This chapter now turns to a critique of the extant literature, drawing attention to particular concerns that deserve scholarly attention. The lack of faculty voice with regard to their lived experience and perceptions of their role is pervasive throughout the literature. Much of the research on assessment has approached the study of faculty engagement from a deficit perspective and with a quantitative research design. More research is needed to share effective models for faculty support in learning outcomes assessment. Finally, the paucity of research on community college faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment is concerning, given the large numbers of both faculty and students in this sector of higher education.

Lacking Faculty Voice

Throughout the literature on faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment, there is little representation of the faculty voice. The two largest sample national surveys sought perceptions of chief academic officers and other academic administrators (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014). Whereas these perspectives are important, they are limited. The National Community College Council for Research and Planning (NCCCRP) surveyed 101 institutional research professionals in an attempt to illustrate faculty engagement in assessment work. Results from this survey indicate that faculty members' motivation to participate in assessment is program and institutional accreditation processes (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). These national survey data are simply not adequate in representing the faculty, who have such a critical and central role in assessment.

Deficit Perspective

Much of the previous research on faculty engagement in assessment represents the issue from a deficit perspective in that a lack of faculty engagement and faculty members' concerns about the assessment process are strong themes in the literature. National surveys found that administrators indicate more faculty engagement in assessment is needed to improve institutional outcomes (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh et al., 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Kuh and Ewell argue that "While there is considerable assessment activity going on, it does not appear that many institutions are using the results effectively to inform curricular modifications or otherwise enhance teaching and learning" (2010, p. 9). Fontenot's (2012) study of community college faculty perspectives was partially framed around the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM). As Fontenot indicates in her study, surveying faculty about their concerns in assessment may elicit mostly negative responses, whereas a qualitative study may elicit more

balanced positive and negative perceptions (2012). It is important to understand barriers to faculty engagement, but the literature lacks research on promising models and meaningful practices of faculty engagement, which would do much to inform practice. Finally, the deficit perspective is also evident in that so much of the literature portrays faculty as the problem in assessment practices instead of learning from engaged faculty champions who lead assessment work on their campuses.

Lack of Research in Community College Setting

The literature also lacks attention on community college faculty. Evans' (2010) study of faculty engagement, for example, was limited to faculty teaching in a four-year institutional setting. The roles of community college faculty vary substantially from that of faculty in four-year institutions. Therefore, a study of four-year institution faculty members' perspectives is limited in providing scholars and practitioners with useful data that helps to explain the phenomenon of faculty engagement in assessment in a community college setting.

Additionally, despite the large numbers of part-time faculty teaching in community colleges, there is very little research on part-time faculty members' engagement in learning outcomes assessment. Danley-Scott and Tompsett-Makin argue that "increasing part-time participation in student learning outcomes assessment is essential, given the large percentage of classes taught by contingent faculty" (2012, p. 64). Much more research is needed beyond their (2012) small scale, disciplinary study of three part-time faculty members' engagement in assessment.

Faculty Support

Faculty development designed to facilitate engagement in assessment is critical to supporting faculty engagement (Cain & Jankowski, 2013; Kuh & Ikenberry; Kuh, et al., 2014).

The top two priorities identified by provosts in the most recent national survey on assessment practices were "more professional development for faculty members and more faculty using the results" (Kuh, et al., 2014). Yet, the literature lacks research on meaningful practices in professional development for community college faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment. Evans (2010) found that support from colleagues was important for faculty engagement in assessment. Support from institutional research offices has also been found to support faculty engagement (Hackman, 2014), yet scholars indicate that community colleges lack capacity in institutional research functions (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). More research is needed to understand meaningful practice in faculty development and faculty partnerships with colleagues and institutional research supporting learning outcomes assessment in the community college setting.

Quantitative Focus

The vast majority of data on faculty engagement in assessment has prioritized quantitative research design. These studies have provided important findings with regard to national perspectives, institutional resources and relationships between faculty attitudes and involvement (Fontenot, 2012; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2014). The studies, however, have not qualitatively explored faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment and therefore have not provide a rich, thick description of faculty champions' experiences. Fontenot's (2012) study of faculty attitudes and concerns provides a very good entry into the exploration of community college faculty perceptions because the survey data comes from faculty members themselves, but still does not provide a deep and rich explorative description of faculty members' perceptions of their lived experiences in learning outcomes assessment work.

Discussion

The literature on faculty engagement in collegiate learning outcomes assessment leaves important unanswered questions. Literature that casts faculty as part of the problem to learning outcomes assessment but fails to present their voice is not helpful to advancing learning outcomes assessment in any higher education context, including the community college. Future research should prioritize the faculty voice in describing meaningful engagement in learning outcomes assessment. Whereas the literature to date does much to argue for the essential role and leadership of faculty in learning outcomes assessment, my review of the extant literature revealed just one study that details the essence of the experience of engaged faculty champions in assessment themselves. This description is an important missing piece of the literature that calls for increasing engagement and support of faculty leadership in learning outcomes assessment. In order to better support faculty engagement in assessment, it is essential to understand how and why faculty choose to engage in championing assessment.

Specifically, research is needed to explore the experiences of community college faculty champions' engagement in learning outcomes assessment. This review of literature revealed just three studies focused specifically on community college faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment; one of which was a quantitative study and one of which was a very small disciplinary study at a community college. Finally, whereas much of the literature indicates the need for growing systems supporting faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment through faculty development, partnerships with others at the institution, and the scholarly study of student learning, the literature does not reveal a description of the essence of faculty engagement in the community college, which may contribute to faculty professional development in this setting.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study provided an opportunity to explore the lived experiences of faculty leaders in learning outcomes assessment. It contributes to the literature by uncovering the experiences of community college faculty champions in leading learning outcomes assessment, which have not previously been explored in the assessment literature. This study describes the essence of faculty leadership of learning outcomes assessment in a community college setting through qualitative interviews. This chapter will describe the methodology and research design for the study.

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research designs seek to explore how people make meaning in their lives and recognizes that the construction of knowledge is contextual, cultural, and individual (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2013) argues that qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions and uses some interpretive lens to study some human or social problem. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe qualitative inquiry as "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative inquiry by its design seeks to uncover the interactions between the visible and invisible to create a holistic understanding of the topic of study.

There are several characteristics of qualitative inquiry that are common features among all qualitative methods. First, qualitative research is focused on studying phenomena in its natural setting as opposed to a controlled laboratory setting. The researcher is considered a key instrument of research in qualitative inquiry, often facilitating much of the data gathering and at times participating in the setting. Often, multiple methods are used to collect data in qualitative

research such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. The design of qualitative studies is considered emergent as it responds to its setting, context, and participants throughout the study. Another key characteristic is that researchers have a responsibility to exhibit reflexivity and explicitly discuss their own experiences with regard the phenomenon under study that inform their interpretation of the data. Qualitative researchers engage in complex reasoning utilizing both inductive and deductive logic to build comprehensive themes that are representative of the data and constantly checked against the data. Qualitative research also keeps a consistent focus on the meaning that participants bring to the topic under study and seeks to provide a holistic account of the complex factors involved with regard to the topic under study (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research is most useful when a problem needs to be explored and may not have readily identifiable variables that are easily measured. With its focus on complex reasoning, providing a holistic account, and emergent design, qualitative research is well suited when a "complex, detailed understanding" of an issue is needed (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Finally, qualitative research is very useful in empowering voices that are often not heard in existing literature (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology

Exploring the essence of faculty leaders' experiences in learning outcomes assessment is well suited for phenomenological inquiry. Moustakas (1994) describes phenomenology as an approach whose "aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (p. 13). Community college faculty champions of learning outcomes assessment are best positioned to describe the meaning of their lived experience leading assessment work on their campus. Phenomenological

research seeks to develop the *essence* of individuals' lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In his description of the development of essence, Moustakas (1994) explains that "from the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived, in other words the essences or structures of the experience" (p. 13). The rigorous inductive and deductive analysis is central to phenomenological study to ensure a comprehensive representation, or essence, of participants' shared experiences in the phenomenon under study. The essence is developed by exploring both *what* individuals experience and *how* they experience a phenomenon; together these represent the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). "The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

Van Kamm (1966) describes phenomenological research as "experiential and qualitative. It sets the stage for more accurate empirical investigations by lessening the risk of a premature selection of methods and categories; it is object-centered rather than method-centered. Such preliminary exploration does not supplant but complements the traditional methods of research available to me" (van Kamm, 1966, p. 295, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). With the development of the essence of a shared experience through phenomenological inquiry, researchers and practitioners may develop meaningful frameworks and instruments for further study of a topic.

Phenomenological inquiry requires researchers to "suspend all judgements about what is real," especially with regard to the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013, p. 77). This process is called *epoche* and was introduced by Edmund Husserl, whom is considered to be the founder of phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl advocated that epoche

"requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Suspending one's assumptions and judgements about what is "real" is central to the phenomenological method. Through epoche, researchers can "experience the value of returning to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear an in their essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Another key tenet of phenomenological inquiry is that of intentionality of consciousness. This tenet argues that a subject and object are inextricably linked. The existence of some object is real only when one recognizes it as such and is conscious of its existence.

> *Intentionality* refers to consciousness, to the internal experience of being conscious of something; thus the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related. Included in an understanding of consciousness are important background factors; such as, stirrings of pleasure, early shapings of judgment, or incipient wishes. (Husserl, 1931, p. 243-244, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 28)

Thus, in phenomenological inquiry, researchers must actively refuse the subject-object dichotomy. Meaning assigned to an object or phenomena is what makes the object or phenomena *real*. Moustakas (1994) asserts that "knowledge of intentionality requires that we be present to ourselves and to things in the world, that we recognize that self and world are inseparable components of meaning" (p. 28).

Role of Researcher

As suggested by Husserl, in this phenomenological inquiry it was important to reflect on my roles as a researcher in this study and share my past experiences and connections to both the work and the participants in this study (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). In my professional role, I have supported faculty in learning about and participating in the assessment

process. I have both a scholarly and professional interest in community college faculty members' leadership in the learning outcomes assessment process. This is the third study that I have conducted to explore the experiences of faculty in leading learning outcomes assessment. The first study was a small pilot of three community college faculty at the institution in which I previously worked as an administrator. The pilot study was conducted in the fall of 2013 and informed the design of my second study as a broad exploration of faculty leaders in learning outcomes assessment.

In my second study (Hackman, 2014), I decided to expand my research question and identify faculty leaders at two new research sites. I met three of the participants in this study at a state-wide assessment conference, which I attended to support my professional development as an administrator at my community college. After listening to the three participants talk about their successful practices of supporting faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment, I invited each of them to participate in my study and asked their assistance in identifying other faculty leaders on their campuses. Other than meeting the participants at the conference, I had no other previous experience or contact with these participants at that time. Throughout the study, I formed a collegial relationship with the participants in the study and especially the initial contact I met at the state-wide assessment conference and who assisted me in securing additional participants.

After completing the second study, I had infrequent contact with the participants but we did occasionally converse at conferences related to assessment in the state and region. I contacted the participants from one of the two colleges in my second study to invite their participation in the current study. Securing participation was relatively simple since I had previously established a collegial relationship with each of the participants. However, I was

challenged to explain the purpose of the current study as well as how the questions and implications may be different from the previous study in which they participated. To that end, I explained to participants the importance of exploring of their lived experience as faculty champions of learning outcomes assessment. Whereas my second study of faculty engagement sought to describe the perceptions of faculty leaders in assessment, I explained how this phenomenological study sought to describe the essence of their experience as faculty champions in leading learning outcomes assessment work.

Throughout my work in studying faculty's engagement in learning outcomes assessment, I have been and continue to be especially cognizant of my dual interests (scholarly and professional) in this topic of inquiry. One challenge I have experienced repeatedly is carefully considering whether to communicate with the participants as a researcher or as a practitioner. Early in my second study, I communicated with the participants using my professional email account because they knew me first as a community college practitioner. I maintained my communication through my professional account up until my interview with the participant. After interviewing the participant, I switched to communicating with them from my student email account through the University of Illinois. I made this choice intentionally to emphasize my role as a researcher as I concluded my research work by conducting member checking and thanking the participants for their contributions to the study. This visible change in my role may have also communicated a transition in my relationship with the participants, from colleague to researcher. The change did not affect the quality nor completeness of the data, as data collection had already ended, but it may have communicated to the participants that I was prioritizing my researcher role over my practitioner role after completing my data collection. In the current

study, I communicated electronically with participants using only my University of Illinois email account in an effort to continue to prioritize my role as researcher.

Further, I speculate that by explicitly sharing with participants my professional role of supporting faculty in learning outcomes assessment in my second study, I may have shaped the participants' responses to be more positive than if I'd not shared this information. However, since I intentionally chose to focus on faculty who are already leading assessment work, I do not believe that participants' awareness of my professional role would have unduly influenced their responses. Finally, in my second study and in the current study I intentionally focused on interpreting data carefully without looking for evidence to support my beliefs regarding the role and experiences of faculty in learning outcomes assessment. Therefore, the practice of epoche was essential in the current study of community college faculty champions' experiences in learning outcomes assessment, in order to bracket my assumptions and previous experiences and work in this area. I will describe this process in more detail in Chapter 4, as I begin to introduce my findings.

Methods

This qualitative inquiry explored the following "grand tour" research question (Creswell, 1998): What are the lived experiences of community college faculty champions actively engaged in leading learning outcomes assessment? The study also seeks to answer the following sub-questions: (a) How do community college faculty champions become engaged in learning outcomes assessment? (b) How do community college faculty champions describe the phenomenon of their engagement in learning outcomes assessment? and (c) How do community college faculty champions describe meaningful faculty support for engagement in learning outcomes assessment?

Participants and Setting

As a phenomenological inquiry, this study sought to describe the essence of lived experience of community college faculty leaders in learning outcomes assessment. Therefore, purposeful sampling was utilized to identify participants who could describe the phenomenon of their lived experience in this role. One large, public, Midwestern two-year college was selected as the research setting. The college was selected based on its participation in and presentation at a statewide two-year college assessment conference. Presenters in this annual statewide conference submit proposals to a committee of assessment leaders from peer community colleges throughout the state. Proposals are selected for presentation at the conference based on the committee's selection of the presentation as a worthy model of practice in learning outcomes assessment work in Illinois community colleges. The college was also selected based on its representation at the conference by faculty leaders who presented the colleges' successful practices of engaging faculty in assessment work at the annual conference in the spring of 2015. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Approval was also obtained from the institutional research office at the study site before entry into the environment.

I utilized snowball sampling in working with the faculty leaders from the college who presented at the statewide assessment conference to identify additional faculty leaders at the institution who were substantially engaged in assessment work. I defined "substantial engagement" as regular, willing, and possibly enthusiastic participation in assessment. This study identified these faculty as "faculty champions" in assessment, due to their substantial engagement and leadership in assessment work on their campuses. I prioritized the selection of these "information rich" participants by extreme-case sampling (Patton, 2002). These faculty

leaders represented extreme-cases because of their substantial engagement in leading assessment.

Some examples of substantial engagement included current or former membership on the

institution's assessment committees, current or former roles in leading faculty development

opportunities in learning outcomes assessment, and leadership of assessment efforts at the course

or program level. Five faculty were invited by e-mail to participate in this study, and each of the

five agreed to participate. All of the participants were current members of their institution's

faculty-led assessment committees, further demonstrating their role as faculty leaders in

assessment. All five participants also participated in my previous study of faculty perceptions of

learning outcomes assessment (Hackman, 2014).

Data Collection

This study was designed as a qualitative phenomenological inquiry, with faculty

interviews serving as the primary data source. The aim of phenomenological inquiry was to

explore the essence of a shared phenomenon within a group, anywhere from 3 to 4 or 10 to 15

individuals (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). Polkinghorne (1989) suggests in-depth interviews with 5 to

25 people in phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) explains that in phenomenological

inquiry, the "essential criteria include: the research participant has experienced the phenomenon,

is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in a

lengthy interview and (perhaps a follow-up interview), grants the investigator the right to tape-

record, possibly videotape the interview, and publish the data in a dissertation and other

publications" (p. 107).

After consenting to participate in the study, each faculty member was invited to

participate in two individual, in-depth, semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60-90

minutes. The first interview was conducted in person at the participants' community college.

The second interview took place approximately 9 months later, and was conducted via phone. Faculty participants were each assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity and were asked to agree to have their interviews audio recorded and transcribed. I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A), drawing on protocols used on other phenomenological studies such as Evans' (2010) study of faculty members' experiences in learning outcomes assessment, Johnson's (2010) study of internal conflict among community college department chairs, and Owen's (2013) study of elementary principals' experiences with response to intervention and socially just educational practices. Questions on the interview protocol are designed to elucidate the essence of participants' lived experiences as leaders of learning outcomes assessment. The questions in the second interview drew heavily from participants' responses in the first round interview. In the second interview, I asked participants to respond to the themes that emerged from the first round of interviews; I also asked them to critique the themes and discuss their experiences with the themes in more depth. This helped me, as a researcher, to uncover the essence of the experience of faculty leaders in assessment.

To ensure continuity and decrease variation, all questions were prepared in advance, and during each interview, the questions will be asked in a relatively uniform order and manner (Patton, 2002). However, the interview protocols were designed as a starting point to the conversation and in many cases additional, follow-up questions were asked to further facilitate data collection. I conducted all of the interviews myself to ensure uniformity and consistency.

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was the primary approach in this exploratory study of faculty experiences. I followed the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Moustakas, 1994) method of phenomenological analysis, which began with detailing my experiences, as the researcher, with

the phenomenon under study. Next, I utilized the analysis process of horizontalization and developed several significant statements. The statements were comprised of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements, in the form of sentences or quotes from the transcripts, which provide an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon. From 10 verbatim transcripts, 32 significant statements were extracted. Next I grouped the statements into themes, or larger units of information and checked these themes against the codes from each of the verbatim transcripts (all data were entered into a spreadsheet for analysis). The themes were then organized into two categories: *what* was experienced as part of the phenomenon, and *how* the phenomenon was experienced. The description of themes under *what* was experienced formed the textural description of the phenomenon and the description of themes under *how* the phenomenon was experienced formed the structural description of the phenomenon. The themes from the structural and textural descriptions were then used to describe findings in response to the 3 Research Sub-Questions, discussed in Chapter 5. The composite description of the phenomenon – the *essence* of faculty members' experiences as champions of assessment (Moustakas, 1994) is presented in Chapter 6.

As suggested by Creswell (2013) the qualitative data in this study was analyzed in three broad stages. First, the data were prepared and organized into transcripts and field notes for analysis. Next, is the phase of data reduction wherein I assigned codes to the data and began to organize the codes into themes. Finally, the data were interpreted and represented in tables in Chapters 4 and 6, and discussion in Chapters 5 and 6, as well as a visual model in Chapter 6 (Figure 3) which represents the "essence" of the experience of faculty champions of assessment.

Three stages of data reduction were used in this study. First, I read each transcript in full, making notes in the margin of each transcript (Huberman & Miles, 1994). After reading each

transcript, I made notes about the overall salient themes that emerged from this first reading. Second, open coding was used on each transcript to develop themes to describe the essence of the experience of faculty leaders in assessment. In this stage, I also described personal experiences through epoche. Through epoche, the process of bracketing, I attempted to set aside my personal experiences with the phenomenon under study in order to focus the analysis on the experiences of the study's participants. Third, axial coding was used to group open codes into broader categories or meaning units in order to develop significant statements that represent the phenomenon under study.

Trustworthiness

In order to enhance trustworthiness, multiple methods consistent with techniques outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were employed during this study, including a) an audit trail; b) member checking; c) cross-checking for negative cases; and e) use of participants' quotes.

An audit trail was created to specifically document the methodology used to conduct this study. Documents in the audit trail included all raw interview data, transcripts, coded documents, recruitment scripts, consent documents, and the contact database. Member checking was used to verify accuracy of data gathered during interviews. Transcriptions were supplied to each participant to confirm the accuracy of the documents. Cross-checking for negative cases occurred during data analysis. Direct quotes were used as another means to accurately portray the views of the participants.

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Limitations

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This study contributes an important missing piece in the literature of faculty engagement in assessment by focusing a lens on the experiences of faculty champions. Whereas this study sought to illuminate key themes regarding the experiences of faculty champions of assessment,

the study does not describe the important experiences of faculty who are not engaged in assessment work. As a phenomenological study, this study does leave out contextual factors that may be useful in describing the experiences of faculty champions from other perspectives, such as the organizational context. Additionally, this study is focused specifically on the experiences of faculty champions in the community college setting and does not seek to compare the experiences of faculty and varied institutional types. These comparisons could be important in any framework that describes faculty engagement. Whereas these limitations are noteworthy, I believe that findings from this study contribute to the existing literature by informing the development of a framework for supporting faculty in learning outcomes assessment in the community college setting.

Chapter 4

A Cast of Many Actors: Faculty Roles in Assessment

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of community college faculty members who champion learning outcomes assessment on their campuses. This study responds to the unanswered questions in the extant literature on faculty engagement and leadership in learning outcomes assessment. Whereas previous studies have argued that faculty have a critical role in championing assessment, they have not explored engaged faculty champions' experiences in advocating for and supporting assessment practices on their campuses. This study sought to elucidate the experiences of faculty champions of assessment by exploring both what the participants experienced as well as how they experienced their roles in leading assessment work on their campuses.

My interest in this phenomenon stems from my experience working with community college faculty to support their learning about and engagement in assessment. I have worked in a community college setting for 13 years, first as an adjunct faculty member and then as my college's Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). When I interviewed for the CETL director position, I was asked to prepare a presentation on "CATs", which stands for Classroom Assessment Techniques. I was familiar with CATs because my faculty mentor had introduced me to the practice of designing short, targeted tools for obtaining feedback from students about their learning. I typically used CATs a few times during the semester in my classes, and found the tool to be quite valuable in helping me understand where the students were in terms of their learning in my course. The CETL was a central hub for supporting faculty's work in assessment from course-level CATs to program-level and institution-level (general education) student learning outcome assessment. Therefore, I believed

that, as the Director of the CETL, I had to be well informed about assessment, as well as advocate for and support faculty engagement in assessment work.

I served as the CETL Director for five years and in that time, I joined the College's shared governance academic assessment committee that was largely comprised of full-time faculty from across the college. I worked with the committee to ensure that CETL facilitated workshops and courses on various assessment topics each semester. I also added a workshop titled, Introduction to Assessment to our year-long new faculty orientation series. I partnered with the assessment committee's leadership to facilitate the recognition of best practices in assessment across the college by using brief, engaging videos highlighting the findings and impact of assessment work. In the brief videos, faculty from the assessment committee shared examples of their use of assessment and changes they have made in their teaching as result of the assessment data. I played the videos as part of the college's all-faculty meeting at the beginning of the semester, as I believed it was important for faculty to hear about their peers' stories of their use of assessment.

I also worked with the Chair of the academic assessment committee to present our college's best practices at regional, state, and national conferences, including our regional accreditor's (Higher Learning Commission) annual conference. We presented at the Assessment Institute, one of the top assessment conferences in the country held annually at Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis. Through these presentations and conversations with peers at other colleges, my passion for assessment work grew stronger. I felt proud of the work that my college was doing and always returned from conferences with affirmation for the good work our assessment committee had underway as well as ideas for improving our work in the future. For example, one of the topics I presented a number of times with faculty was titled

"Progress through Partnerships." In this presentation, we shared our approach to re-vamping the assessment of general education courses across the college and highlighted the ways we made the process manageable by using customized rubrics and leveraging internal expertise and resources to support faculty's participation in general education assessment. Supporting faculty in assessment was just one part of my job as the CETL director, and in that role I was always working with faculty to design workshops and create resources that faculty would find valuable and useful in their teaching. This was important to me because our faculty carried heavy teaching loads and had very little time to participate in professional development activities, so I worked hard to ensure that when they did participate they found the activity useful and worth their time.

I loved my job in the CETL because I am passionate about providing professional development to facilitate opportunities for my colleagues to grow and learn as educators. When I began considering a topic that I wanted to pursue as a dissertation, I knew I wanted to talk with community college faculty about their roles, and decided to focus specifically on assessment because of my work in supporting faculty learning about assessment on my campus. I felt frustrated with the literature I read on learning outcomes assessment, which often paints faculty as disengaged and resistant and yet calls for their leadership of assessment work. The lack of faculty voice in the literature on assessment compelled me to focus my research on the experience of engaged faculty in order to provide a better understanding of the faculty engagement that is so critical to assessment work.

My professional work supporting faculty in their learning about assessment was useful in this study, as I was able to gain the trust of participants early in our interview conversations. I spoke with participants about the importance of their voices in the literature on faculty

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engagement in assessment. I also explained that I wanted to understand their experiences as faculty champions of assessment and that I would listen deeply to their words so as to not insert my own biases or interpretations in our interviews. As I described in Chapter 3, I made an intentional effort to recognize, note, and to be highly reflective and introspective about my own personal experience and how it relates to this study. In the process of practicing bracketing, or epoche, I took a couple minutes before each interview to reflect on my previous research on faculty engagement in assessment as well as my professional experiences working with faculty in assessment. I noted my previous research findings and professional experiences and preferences related to faculty engagement in assessment, so that I would be fully aware of them in engaging in my interview with each participant. This activity gave me the capacity to be consciously aware of my own professional experiences while gathering data from others. I did not share my experiences with the interviewees because my focus was on them and I wanted to be immersed in understanding their experience. Later, when reviewing notes from each interview I reflected on what I heard them say relative to my own experience as a level of data analysis and interpretation. Now that I have discussed by personal experiences with the phenomenon under study, I will begin to detail my findings.

Participants and Setting

River Road Community College (RRCC) is a comprehensive two-year college located in a suburban area of a major metropolitan city in the Midwest. The College is proud of its commitment to educational programs in the humanities, its applied degrees in more than 40 career areas, and its support for sustainability practices across its campuses. On its website, RRCC honors its historical founding as an all-female college and highlights its beautiful grounds featuring fountains and sculptures across the main campus.

The college organizes and supports assessment work through a shared governance committee called the general education assessment committee. This committee is comprised of six faculty leads, each of whom represent a specific area of general education: communication/writing, communication/speaking, global awareness, critical thinking, teamwork skills, and mathematical reasoning. The committee is also chaired by a full-time faculty member, who is given some course release time to lead the committee. All other faculty members on the committee are paid a small stipend (the equivalent of one contact hour) to serve as leads for each of the general education areas. The faculty members voluntarily serve on the committee, and serving on the committee fulfills the college's service requirement that all full-time faculty serve on at least one committee as part of their role as a faculty member. Each of the participants in this study serves in a key leadership role for assessment work on the RRCC campus. Four of the six faculty leads on the committee, as well as the faculty chair of the committee participated in the current study. Each of the five participants previously participated in my 2014 study of faculty perceptions of assessment.

Below are brief profiles for each of the participants that include the faculty member's academic discipline; length of tenure at RRCC; previous teaching experience; and details regarding their path to teaching, to RRCC, as well as their roles in assessment. I include this information because it is important to describe each participant's background and the range of experiences they bring to their leadership roles in assessment, as part of the overall description of their engagement in assessment. These profiles lend depth to the findings of the study in response to the research questions, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Table 1 (below) summarizes participants' demographic profiles.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Name	Gender	Years Full-Time Teaching at RRCC	Years Part-Time Teaching at RRCC	Years on Gen Ed Assess Committee	Program Discipline
Brittany	F	13	3	8	Career
James	M	11	8	9	Transfer
Liz	F	14	1	9	Transfer
Paul	M	11	0	7	Transfer
Sean	M	13	2	8	Career

As illustrated in Table 1, the five participants have substantial experience teaching at RRCC, with each having been a member of the full-time faculty for more than a decade. Four of them began teaching at RRCC as an adjunct (part-time) faculty member before joining the full-time faculty. The participants are also long-standing members of the College's general education assessment committee, ranging from 7 to 9 years, and as a matter of their longevity, they demonstrate a strong commitment to assessment. Their teaching disciplines span both transfer and career programs, representing a broad range of disciplinary areas at RRCC.

Faculty Roles in Assessment

During my interviews with each of the participants, I asked questions about their experiences in assessment: their first memories of learning about assessment as well as subsequent learning experiences; I also asked them to describe the experiences that they saw as important to sustaining their engagement in assessment over so many years. As I analyzed the text in the interview transcripts, I noticed that the participants shared some common experiences that could be categorized as specific roles in assessment. I looked for the role to appear in at least three of the five participants' experiences in order to include it as a faculty role in assessment (see Table 2). The first three roles (*Learner, Implementer,* and *Leader)* were experienced by all of the participants, and the remaining four roles (*Analyst, Partner, Teacher,* and *Advocate)* were experienced by three of the five participants. The names of the roles represent the participants' descriptions of their experiences; in some cases the name of the role emerged from the participants' words themselves (*Analyst* and *Partner*, in particular). Table 2 below includes a summary of the roles that were identified. Definitions for each of the roles are presented, as well as an exemplar quote from one of the participants that serves as evidence of the role.

Table 2

Faculty Roles in Assessment

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote
Learner	Participates in professional development activities related to assessment; pursues opportunities to expand knowledge of assessment.	That CATs class got that dialogue going in my head. So, then at different in-services we would have, or different faculty classes, we have these things called EDTRs – Educational Development in Teaching Resource kind of things. - *Paul*

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote
Implementer	Uses assessment in his/her own teaching and learning processes; makes changes to pedagogy or curriculum in response to assessment findings	Well, in the classroom, I talk about it, I use the tools, I analyze it, I interpret it, I provide the results, I share the results with my students; I share it with faculty when the opportunity presents itself. –*Brittany*
Leader	Provides leadership for assessment efforts; coordinates reporting; empowered to support faculty colleagues' participation in assessment	So I would say that the six leads plus the chair, we have owned the process. Owned the development and the ongoing logistics of the committee and so in that we, we faculty have owned it certainly with support and mentoring from the administration but it really felt as though we, the faculty, owned that thing. – *Paul*
Analyst	Analyzes and translates assessment data for faculty peers; creates maps of curriculum to ensure alignment between course, program, and/or institutional outcomes	Personally, I guess, I just like to analyze things in general, even if I'm reading the simplest little fiction novel I try to analyze things. So I guess it's just in my nature to do so. –*Liz*
Partner	Collaborates with another faculty member to coordinate assessment work across multiple discipline areas; may collaborate on the development of assessment tools	I'm a huge partner with critical thinking because obviously, my program requires a heavy amount of critical thinking. So, when they generated that rubric and asked me to be a partner; that was two leads ago. I love that rubric. It helped me do my job because it was a perfect fit for so many different assignments in so many of my classes. – *Brittany*

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote
Teacher	Teaches other faculty on what assessment is and ways to do it; develops rubrics and other tools to ease the involvement of other faculty (adjuncts and full-time); listener, supporter, and mentor of other faculty who want/need to do assessment in their courses/programs	I like it when a new faculty member will call me – or not necessarily even a new faculty member but a faculty member who has not necessarily participated in gen. ed. assessment, and they say, "I would like to participate in gen. ed., I just don't know where to start. I have no idea where to start." We'll sit in their office and I'll ask them, "What are some assignments that you already do in your classes?" And we figure it out. And you can kind of see the light bulb go off above their head and they never thought about, "I can use this assignment to assess both oral presentations and maybe even critical thinking." *–James*
Advocate	Advocates for assessment as a valuable tool for faculty; shares assessment work outside of the institution; advocates for faculty leadership in assessment	I just feel like at this point it's not something I feel like I can just easily lay down, not even pass, but I feel like it's something that I have to continue to do and to carry that torch. In my conversations with other faculty who don't really have a sense that they have that same ownership of assessment, to share with them some of these [tools] and reading about it I was like, "Wow! It's almost like going and witnessing your faith kind of thing." It's like, "This is what has happened and this is what I've been able to see and these are the positive things that can come if you really truly get this thing called assessment." *– Sean*

I've included a description of each of the participants' roles in assessment, which emerged during my analysis of our conversations, in the narrative profiles below. These roles are summarized again in Table 3, at the end of this chapter to provide a visual summary of the distribution of participants' roles in assessment.

Participant Profiles

Paul

   Path to teaching and assessment. Paul teaches in the music department at RRCC. He

mentioned on several occasions that he was not trained as an educator and had not really planned

to be a teacher. His undergraduate and master's degrees are in Music Performance, and he

always intended to be a professional musician. Paul explained, "I was never trained to be a

teacher. I never took any '*edumacation*' classes or anything like that." He began teaching at a

mid-sized university in the Midwest and felt as though he was teaching students because he was

a skilled musician, not because he was a good teacher. Paul explained that he entered teaching

as a "trial by fire." He wasn't sure whether he was a good teacher but did enjoy the work. He

said that, with the support of mentors and students along his path, he determined that he wanted

to pursue teaching as a career.

   Paul began teaching at a few different colleges and universities part-time, ranging from a

small liberal arts university to a community music school within a larger university. He joined

RRCC as a member of the full-time faculty in 2006. Four years later in 2010, he joined the

general education assessment committee when he was asked to replace the current lead for

campus-wide assessment in Global Awareness. He described the process of joining the

committee as similar to his entry into teaching; he didn't have a full understanding of

assessment, especially at the institutional level for general education outcomes, but nonetheless,

he decided to give it a go. He expressed interest in the Global Awareness curriculum and thought

that joining the committee as the lead for Global Awareness would give him the chance to

highlight students' learning in this area of the college's curricula.

I met Paul at a state conference on assessment for community colleges when I attended a session that he and a colleague facilitated in which they told their story of successfully engaging faculty in assessment work. Later while attending the conference, I spoke to other community college colleagues about the presentation by the RRCC faculty, and I learned that Paul and his colleague had presented at the conference for the last few years and attendees recognized RRCC's assessment work as an exemplar in the state. One person I spoke with at the conference said that he always looks for presentations from RRCC when he attends that conference. When I attended one of their sessions at the state conference, the room was packed and the audience was very engaged with Paul and his colleague as they presented their assessment work from RRCC.

Paul's roles in assessment. Throughout my interviews with Paul, I learned that he participated in a Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) course as a new full-time faculty member in 2006. He also participated in a subsequent course on course-level assessment offered through the College's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). These learning experiences set a strong foundation upon which Paul continued to build as he joined the general education assessment committee and served as a faculty lead for the last 7 years. Due to his longevity as well as his appreciation for his engagement in assessment, Paul demonstrated a number of roles in the ways he talked about and enacted assessment work at his college.

First, Paul's learning experiences related to assessment through these courses as well as his participation at the state assessment conference demonstrate his role as a *Learner* of assessment. He also described ways he used assessment in his own teaching, demonstrating his role as an *Implementer*. In one example, Paul described re-writing a course-level assessment to better align with a student learning outcome for one of his courses. He also stated that he talks with his students about assessment early in each semester. He narrated the friendly, easy-going

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way that he typically welcomes students to the first day of class and introduces the idea of learning being deliberate and evolving over time. His introduction sounded something like, "Welcome to my class. My name is Paul. These are the goals of the class, and we are going to spend the whole semester getting better at that." He talked about assessment terminology with his students during the class, and he discussed the importance of involving students in the assessment process rather than hiding it from them. Paul was the only participant in my study who described involving students in this way, and this perspective demonstrated to me that he understood that assessment is valuable learning to students' learning.

Paul also described his role as a *Leader* in assessment as he served as the lead faculty for the Global Awareness general education outcome. He also partnered with faculty across the college (namely in English and biology) to reinvent the college's rubric for Global Awareness, which also exemplifies his role as a *Partner*. Paul noted that the process of re-writing the rubric led to motivating other faculty leads on the general education assessment committee to look at their own general education areas and make similar changes. Finally, Paul identified his role as an *Advocate*, as he described his efforts to promote RRCC's assessment work through several presentations at state conferences – in his words, "waving [their] flag of assessment" was an important role for him as a leader of assessment. Paul also discussed his role in internal advocacy - working within the college to "carry the torch to the masses (faculty across the College).

James

Path to teaching and assessment. James is a faculty member in the communication department at RRCC. While working on his bachelor's degree in theater performance, he took a

speech class and fell in love with the discipline. He then decided to go on for his Master's degree in Communication so that he could teach. Upon completion of his Master's program he taught theater in a high school for a few years where he directed theater programs and helped fill in different areas where needed across the high school, such as substituting when a teacher was absent. One day while substituting for another teacher, James thought, "I'm burned out." He reflected on his teaching experience and decided that he really wanted to teach Speech courses that use his Master's degree. He took a full-time teaching position at the local community college, RRCC, where he later became a faculty member. As a result, James noted that many students he had taught in recent years at the local high school were now enrolled at RRCC. He said that he enjoyed teaching these students at the college level because he observed that they felt freer to discuss difficult topics, and he enjoyed seeing the students' maturity levels increase since their time in the high school. He has been teaching at RRCC for 19 years, beginning as an adjunct and then, in 2006, taking a job as a full-time faculty member.

James discussed his students' college education as a process akin to building a house, and he described the general education curriculum as being the "foundation of the house." He believes that the general education curriculum should serve as a strong foundation for students' future success in college and in life. James served as the general education assessment committee's lead faculty for all Communication/Speaking assessments since 2008 when he joined the general education assessment committee. His tenure was long in this formal capacity as he continued to serve on the committee for the nine consecutive years. James indicated, however, that he engaged in assessment work since he started as a full-time faculty member in 2006.

James's assessment roles. James described his role as a *Learner* in assessment by recalling that when he began teaching at RRCC as a full-time faculty member he participated in the CTL's CATs course, which was his first formal learning experience with assessment. After the CATs course, he continued to learn about assessment through his work on the general education assessment committee and through his conversations with other faculty leads on the committee. James also discussed his role as an *Implementer* when he described his use of assessment in the classroom, with one CAT being an especially important go-to technique for him for many years, called the "Muddiest Point." In James's use of this CAT, he asks students to take out a sheet of paper and write down one concept or idea that is still unclear, or "muddy" to them at that point in the course. He said that he finds a lot of value in gathering student feedback about their learning through CATs so that he can make changes to his class that are responsive and help students learn.

James has served as the faculty lead for the Communication/Speaking general education outcome for nine years. As the lead, he coordinates college-wide assessment and reporting in Communication/Speaking, which demonstrated his role as a *Leader* in assessment. He also described various experiences with collaborating with colleagues as a *Partner* in assessment, including working with other disciplines since many faculty assign speeches in their courses. Together, James works with other faculty to design tools for assessing speeches across varied disciplines. Closely related to this work is James' role as a *Teacher*. In James' work collaborating with other faculty, he also finds opportunities to teach them about assessment and ways to assess students' learning. James explained, "So part of my job is to help them maybe create course assignments that can be oral, rather than written, [and] teach them what to look for in a speech, as far as delivery." James often sits with faculty members in their office to discuss

ways they can use existing assignments in their classes to participate in college-wide assessment of communication. Like Paul, James also discussed his role in assessment as serving as an *Advocate* for assessment. He described himself as a "cheerleader" for assessment and said that once he got involved with the general education assessment committee he also became a "believer" and now is "trying to make other people believers as well."

Brittany

Path to teaching and assessment. Brittany teaches in the business department. She has a corporate background with ten years of experience working in legal departments and human resources. For the last two years of her corporate career, she was the manager of recruiting for a Fortune 500 company. When she decided to start a family, she decided to change careers so that she could spend time with her growing family but while being involved part-time in the workplace. It was during this time and beginning in 2001 that she came to RRCC as an adjunct. She taught a few courses each semester until a full-time position opened in the business department three years later in 2004. Her corporate work experience and earned MBA were assets to the college and part of why she was encouraged to apply for the full-time position, which she acquired successfully.

While working in the private sector, Brittany facilitated numerous training programs for legal- and compliance-related topics such as sexual harassment. She reflected on her experience as a trainer and attributed it with being a catalyst for her interest in pursuing teaching at the community college. She also had been trained in a paralegal program that was accredited by the American Bar Association and the college wanted to develop a paralegal degree program for students. She was offered and accepted the full-time position and thus began developing the

Paralegal program. Brittany believes her corporate experience was valuable to share in a classroom setting, and she spoke about drawing upon her experience it in her teaching.

Brittany's roles in assessment. Brittany describes her role at RRCC as wearing "two different hats" in that she teaches various business courses for the College, but also serves as the director of the paralegal program. She also described several roles that she experienced in learning outcomes assessment at RRCC, and she described a few different ways she served as a *Leader* in assessment work. Brittany has been teaching at RRCC since 2001; she joined the general education assessment committee in 2011 and was asked to serve as the faculty lead for general education for all Social Relations assessments across the College. Relatively recently, the college renamed this general education focus area to teamwork skills instead of social relations the faculty on the general education assessment committee felt like the label "teamwork skills" was more reflective of the curricula and more aligned with employers' needs. Brittany feels strongly that this area of general education is increasingly important for college students, explaining, "we took a look at where our students are finding jobs and industries, and it's very difficult to find an industry where there wouldn't be the need to have strong teamwork skills." For several years, Brittany also served as the lead for all of the college's five-year program-level reviews, which includes gathering, summarizing, and analyzing assessment data from courses across an entire program. Brittany describes her experience of leading the program-level assessment as being influential on her leadership of assessment work with other faculty at RRCC.

> So that was really where I got pretty heavily involved with faculty, helping them [to] construct plans for embedding assessment into their programs or reporting on assessment, and primarily dealing with the program coordinators that were doing the program reviews. So, I was in charge of preparing them [the faculty] for their program reviews, their five-year reviews.

This quote also exemplifies the assessment role of *Teacher*, as Brittany described ways that she worked with faculty to teach them how to plan and conduct assessment in their own programs and individual courses. Brittany also works with several part-time faculty who teach in her program. She described how she works with them as a *Teacher* in assessment: "So I give [them] the tools, and I ask [them] to use them on assignments to provide us with feedback, basically making sure that our learning outcomes are being achieved."

Brittany also described her work as a *Partner* with other faculty in assessment. She collaborated with the faculty lead for critical thinking, who also serves on the general education assessment committee, to give feedback on the redesign of the critical thinking rubric. Together, they determined where in the paralegal program to use the rubric. Brittany then gave assessment data from her students to the critical thinking lead on the general education assessment committee. Brittany believed that this partnership added value to the college-wide picture of critical thinking across disciplines.

Finally, Brittany described her role as an *Analyst* in assessment. As the program director for the paralegal program, Brittany felt strongly about ensuring that course learning outcomes were aligned with program outcomes and general education outcomes. I do not know, but I wonder if Brittany's corporate human resources and compliance background may have influenced her affinity for ensuring that all outcomes were distributed and assessed throughout her program.

Finally, Brittany described the extensive curriculum maps that she designed as a visualization of the courses in which each outcome were assessed; her role as an *Analyst* was strong theme throughout both of our conversations. Curriculum maps are tools that are often

used to "check whether a curriculum is delivered as planned and able to accomplish the expected learning outcomes" (Lam & Tsui, 2016). Essentially, curriculum maps create a roadmap for the assessment of student learning. These maps are plotted out in a matrix or table format (often using a spreadsheet), which lists learning outcomes and depicts where and how they are assessed throughout a course or program (see Appendix B for examples). Brittany described her process of creating spreadsheets that captured where each learning outcome was assessed in each course of the paralegal program. She also created a curriculum map of the program learning outcomes, and documented where each program learning outcome was assessed throughout the courses in the paralegal program. She described the importance of being able to use the curriculum maps as a clear visual map of the assessment of learning outcomes throughout the program.

Sean

  Path to teaching and assessment. Sean teaches in the computer science department at RRCC. He's been at the college for 24 years, in various roles. He started working as a financial aid counselor when he started his job at RRCC, and after about one year in that role was offered the position of director of Career Services due to his previous work in a job placement agency. While serving as the director, Sean began working on his Master's degree with a focus on creating online courses. After about 5 years as the director, he accepted a new position that the College created to support faculty in creating content for online courses. He continued in this role for four years while teaching a few web design classes part-time until a full-time time faculty position opened up in the Computer Science department in 2004. He has been a member of the full-time faculty at RRCC since that time, accumulating about 13 years of service to the college.

Sean described his experience of working with faculty to create online course content as influential to his future efforts support faculty in their assessment work. Sean discussed feeling responsible for supporting his colleagues, due to his length of time at the college. He explained,

I feel a very strong mentorship role. We have quite a few new and younger faculty who, either, I'm on the committees with or have some connection to [them], and I tend to be the go-to person for, well, "he has been here forever. Ask him."

Sean has been part of the general education assessment committee since 2009, and he served as the committee's Chair when he was part of my study. He believes strongly that assessment is part of a faculty member's role at RRCC, explaining,

Assessment is a very strong, important part of what we do in that it has helped me to see beyond this committee. If nothing else, has helped me to see the role that assessment plays throughout not only a course of a program, but throughout a student's time at any institution, and how important that could be; to be able to use that as kind of a snapshot of their progress as they move through.

Sean's roles in assessment. As a *Learner* of assessment, Sean took CATs course when he joined the full-time faculty. He also described other ways he continued learning about assessment, with one most notable way being built on his experience of going through program review the first time. In Sean's first experience with program review, he described becoming much more aware of how students' learning was being assessed throughout his program. He described how much he learned about the organization and documentation of assessment at the course and program level, just by having to lead his own program's five-year review. Sean also attended several conferences on assessment to learn from other institutions and faculty peers. Sean and Paul, another faculty member who was part of my study and introduced earlier in this chapter, often attend these types of conferences as a team. Explaining their contribution to his knowledge and perspective toward assessment, Sean discussed the importance of his discussions

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with Paul after the conferences and their strategizing about how to share what they learned when they returned to their campus.   Sean shared this learning about assessment in one-on-one conversations with his faculty peers, but also through all-faculty meetings as well as workshops through the college's CTL.

As an *Implementer*, Sean described ways he uses assessment in his own teaching. For example, after learning about CATs, Sean integrated them throughout his program in his and others' classes and used the results as part of his and others' courses in a five-year program review. Sean also described his students' involvement in assessment in a way that reinforces his role as *Implementer*. As a regular part of his teaching, Sean talks with his students about how he assesses their learning so that they learn to critique their own work along the way. Sean felt strongly about creating a classroom environment that is engaging for students and closely mimics a workplace, as his students are typically going straight into the workforce upon completing their degree at RRCC. He talked at length about the importance of guiding students through learning activities, while embedding assessment as part of their learning. Sean explained, "So starting to get them actively engaged in helping to understand the assessment of their work, I think, helps them to understand, too, how they can put that into practice once they are gone."

Sean demonstrates his *Leader* assessment role in several ways. First, he chairs the general education assessment committee that provides leadership on assessment for the entire campus in across all of the college's academic programs. In this work, he describes much of his role is to keep the faculty leads engaged and support their leadership role in assessment. He explained:

Keeping that group of faculty engaged as well and letting them know that they are supported and that I am kind of that connection between them and the IR (Institutional Research), and the IT (Information Technology) person who is not getting them what they need, and [when they say] "VP is driving me crazy because I feel like…" whatever, and so just being that person who is kind of the buffer.

Sean also discussed his focus on curriculum mapping, an example of his *Analyst* role. As part of his program's five-year review process, Sean mapped his curriculum by creating a matrix of the courses in his program, including where each of the program's learning outcomes were taught and assessed. He used the matrix to demonstrate where each learning outcome for the program was being assessed, and also used the matrix to present data showing students' attainment of learning outcomes over time.

Sean described several experiences that demonstrate his role as an *Advocate* in assessment work. He discussed experiences in which he advocated to the administration for strong faculty leadership in the design and implementation of the assessment process at RRCC. He shared that he believes he has an important role in advocating for faculty leads' work and ensuring they do not become marginalized in the assessment process. While the college has endorsed a strong commitment to faculty leadership in assessment for at least the last 10 years, the complexity of assessment contributes to an ever-changing, unstable, and complex environment. Sean believed his role was, partially, to advocate for faculty leadership that would keep a steady focus and facilitate faculty engagement in the assessment process. Sean said that when the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) moves too fast or the faculty leads feel they have not been adequately involved in decisions, he sees it as his job to hold the VPAA accountable to the committee. Sean also described his advocacy role outside of the College with Paul. As noted previously, he co-presented with Paul at regional conferences to share RRCC's assessment work and to share examples of successful engagement of faculty in that work. He

said that he believes his role is to "carry the torch" of assessment at RRCC, which he likened to "witnessing [his] faith."

Liz

Path to teaching and assessment. Liz started teaching in the English department at RRCC in 2002 in a part-time status when her husband was hired there for a full-time faculty position. In 2003, a full-time position opened in the department, and Liz was pleased to be selected for the position and began teaching full-time. While in college herself, Liz did some student teaching in a local junior high school, and she found she loved teaching. She was drawn to the college-level classroom due to the "level of conversations and discussions that [she] could have with college students." Liz noted that, in her experience, junior high and high school teachers were quite limited in what they could ask students to read and discuss.

Liz has served on the general education assessment committee for 9 years, though those years were not consecutive. She joined shortly after she began teaching full-time at the college in 2003 when the committee was newly created. At that time, she served on the committee for 5 years and then decided to take a break while another colleague took her spot for the next 5 years. When her colleague was ready for a break, Liz stepped back in and has been part of the committee again since 2013.

Liz serves as the lead faculty for all communication/writing assessments across the college. She is thoughtful about her role, linking assessment to improvement because faculty are always reflecting on their work, in her view. She explained:

> So with the big emphasis being on teaching, we are always questioning, asking ourselves: "What can we do better? What has gone wrong and how can we improve in those

areas?" So, assessment just gets at the heart of that. It allows us to ask questions and look at data to help you through the questions.

Liz believes that assessment is just a natural part of teaching. She said she was first drawn to assessment work because she likes to reflect on her teaching and her students' learning and is committed to improvement as a teacher.

Liz's roles in assessment. Liz discussed her experiences as a *Learner* of assessment work, beginning with the CATs course that she participated in as a part-time faculty member in English. She said that the VPAA encouraged her to participate in the course despite that fact that part-time faculty are not expected to participate. Liz described her decision to do so as a clear indication of her interest in learning about assessment. Later, when the VPAA sent an invitation to all faculty to participate in a series of meetings to discuss assessment at RRCC, Liz also chose to attend so that she could learn more about how to improve assessment reporting in the English department. For example, at the time, Liz was very interested to look at examples of rubrics used to assess writing in other colleges, because she wondered whether the rubric that RRCC had developed could be improved.

As mentioned earlier, Liz describes herself as one who loves to analyze just about anything, including her own teaching and her students' learning. It is not surprising, therefore, that Liz would describe her role as an *Analyst* of assessment. Liz discussed her interest in analysis in general, saying, "even if I'm reading the simplest little fiction novel I try to analyze things." She described the way that she analyzed and questions assessment results – asking questions such as: Why are those numbers high/low? And, is the rubric clear enough so faculty can use consistently? She also described using Microsoft Excel to explore assessment results more deeply than the aggregate results she compiled from the English courses.

Like each of the other participants, Liz described her use of assessment results in her own teaching, demonstrating her role as an *Implementer*. She said that she likes to use CATs in her classes so that she can get feedback from students on their learning and make necessary changes quickly at the classroom level. Liz serves as the faculty lead for the Communications/Writing general education outcome, demonstrating her role as a *Leader* of assessment work. She also led a departmental review of assessment data early in her tenure as a full-time faculty member. Finally, Liz described her role as a *Teacher* for assessment as she discussed her experiences teaching faculty members how to use rubrics. She also described how she showed individual faculty results from college-wide assessment and discussed ways to improve results. Liz also stated that much of her focus is on listening to faculty to understand their questions and concerns and helps clarify what faculty participation involves in order to facilitate their engagement in the process. Liz described these interactions as an important part of her role in teaching and mentoring faculty in learning how to use assessment in their own teaching.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided a summary of demographic profiles and roles in assessment for each of the participants in this study, which emerged from my analysis of the interview transcripts. It explored these faculty champions' paths to teaching at RRCC as well as serving as leaders of assessment work at the College. The profiles reveal participants' experiences of assessment and their roles as leaders as well as their unique backgrounds that influenced their approach to their roles as champions of assessment at RRCC. As illustrated in Table 3 below, the participants in this study each identified distinct roles that have been important to their experiences as leaders of assessment.

Table 3

Participants' Roles in Assessment

Role	Brittany	James	Liz	Paul	Sean
Learner	X	X	X	X	X
Implementer	X	X	X	X	X
Leader	X	X	X	X	X
Analyst	X		X		X
Partner	X	X		X	
Teacher	X	X	X		
Advocate		X		X	X

The participants all identified with the roles of *Learner*, *Implementer*, and *Leader*. The roles of *Analyst*, *Partner*, *Teacher*, and *Advocate* were each experienced as an important part of 3 of the 5 participants. These distinct roles suggest that there are core experiences that are important for all leaders of assessment, but that there are distinct roles that contribute to faculty leadership of assessment within a community college that add meaning and value to the individual leaders' identities in their leadership roles. Implications of these roles in assessment will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5

The Lived Experience of Faculty Champions in Assessment

This chapter provides further analysis of the qualitative data gathered through interviews of the five assessment champions. This chapter builds on the profiles and faculty roles in assessment that were described in Chapter 4, and focuses on findings from the qualitative data, and discussion of the findings, organized by the primary research question and sub-research questions. The following research questions guided this study:

- What are the lived experiences of community college faculty champions actively engaged in leading learning outcomes assessment?
    - How do community college faculty champions become engaged in learning outcomes assessment?
    - How do community college faculty champions describe the phenomenon of their engagement in learning outcomes assessment?
    - How do community college faculty champions describe meaningful faculty support for engagement in learning outcomes assessment?

In Chapter 6, implications of the findings, recommendations for practice and research, and conclusions will be stated.

Primary Research Question

What are the lived experiences of community college faculty champions actively engaged in learning outcomes assessment? The answer to this question is revealed through the exploration of the three Research Sub-Questions. The sub-questions examined how faculty champions become engaged in assessment, how they experienced their roles as champions of assessment, and finally, how they described meaningful support for faculty engagement in

assessment conducted by their college. Overall, the findings showed that the faculty became

engaged in assessment because they saw assessment as an important part of teaching and

learning. They valued learning about assessment and felt ownership of assessment because it is

provided them with useful information that supports their efforts to improve teaching and

learning within their own classrooms as well as the classrooms of other faculty in their college.

The five faculty champions that participated in my study valued assessment data and they

supported the use of assessment by their faculty peers. This is not a finding from this study but a

requirement to participate in the study; recall, I chose faculty who were identified by their

college and by themselves as champions of assessment. Despite this sampling requirement,

results of my study involving these faculty champions is not without nuance. What I found is that

these faculty leaders did not attribute their appreciation for assessment and their ability to carry

out their work to themselves alone. They valued the support of administration and institutional

researchers when it empowered them to lead assessment work in a way that they and other

faculty find meaningful for teaching and learning improvement.

Research Sub-Question 1

How do community college faculty champions become engaged in learning outcomes

assessment? As I talked with the participants about how they came to their roles of leading

learning outcomes assessment, each took a different path to those roles, and each shared that they

hadn't sought out leadership in assessment but rather leadership in assessment came to them.

Four of the five participants described feeling unprepared for their roles as faculty and as leaders

of assessment when they first got involved. Despite the lack of initial preparation, the

participants described becoming increasingly engaged in assessment work as they learned to use

assessment processes to gather and analyze data. When they began to see a strong connection

between assessment and teaching, their interest in assessment increased even more. My description of the experiences of these five faculty extend to their engagement in faculty support and development opportunities, which I describe in more detail under Research Sub-Question 3.

Participants' paths to leadership in assessment were unintentional and formative. As noted above, none of the participants sought out their leadership role in assessment, rather each was asked by a supervisor or colleague to serve in that role. Recall that the structure of the general assessment committee includes a faculty chair and six faculty members who each serve as the lead for one of six institutional general education outcomes: critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, communication/writing, communication/speaking, teamwork skills, and global awareness. Other members of the committee include the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and a staff member from the Office of Institutional Research (IR). Joining the committee as a faculty member, therefore, requires them to not only participate on the committee but also serve in a leadership role. Often these faculty members were initially asked to join the general education assessment committee to take the place of a faculty colleague who was stepping down. Examples of how this process worked for the faculty leaders may be useful, so I offer some specifics below.

When Liz joined RRCC as an adjunct, the VPAA encouraged her to take a course on assessment that was offered through the College's Center for Teaching and Learning. Soon after completing the course, the VPAA asked Liz to serve on the general education assessment committee as the lead for writing assessment. Liz engaged in these activities and she attributes her continuing involvement and leadership in assessment to this beginning point. As another example, James recalled that early in his time as a full-time faculty member at RRCC, he considered which committee he would be interested in joining since all full-time faculty were

required to participate in committee work at the College. He described wanting to "be in the fun committees" and when he was asked to join the general education assessment committee, he wasn't very excited about the opportunity. James explained, however, that once he got involved in the committee he realized how important their work would be to him and his faculty colleagues, and he became more engaged and committed to the work as time went by.

Despite their lack of intentionality at the time of their introduction to learning outcomes assessment, each of the participants served on the general education assessment committee for several years (see Table 1). Liz, for example, served on the committee for nine years over two different spans of time, first for a span of five years and more recently for the four years. As James described to me, before he joined the assessment committee, he was not at all interested in assessment work. However, by joining the committee he became engaged and began to value the work as an important part of his role as a faculty member. When I asked Liz to describe one of her earliest memories of learning about assessment, she said "I didn't really know what I was signing up for, but, yeah, the deeper we got into it, I guess, I saw it as more meaningful…I saw how I could learn how to improve as a teacher."

Whereas their involvement led to deeper understanding and appreciation of assessment, all but one participant described feeling overwhelmed and unprepared to lead assessment work when they joined the committee and began their leadership role. Sean explained his earliest experience with assessment:

> I remember when it was first introduced, I remember a sense of being pretty overwhelmed by the concept at first because it wasn't just specifically rote testing. It wasn't giving a quiz or an exam for whatever purpose; assessment was a much bigger view of things, and how one might use what you got from that assessment further. Just the thought of how it's not just this static thing. It's a pretty dynamic and useful tool [sic], and I just remember feeling kind of overwhelmed thinking, "Oh my gosh!"

This quote from Sean is illustrative of four of the five participants' memories of their early experiences as faculty leads in the general education assessment committee. When they described these early memories with me, the participants each spoke with more trepidation in their voice as they recalled their first experiences – indicating the unease they felt at that time. Considering their lack of preparation for their roles as leaders in assessment, it is not surprising they conveyed feelings of anxiety and feeling overwhelmed when describing their early memories of their roles.

Despite their lack of intentionality in serving as a faculty lead for assessment, the participants described their decision to join the committee as stepping up to represent their discipline area at the college. Oftentimes, faculty members were asked to step up and serve on the general education assessment committee simply to fill a vacancy. As noted above, James joined this committee without knowing what he was getting himself into:

> I was thrown right into it. No glamor at all. One of our areas is world communication, and so we had a speech teacher on it already, and she wanted to move on. She was starting to look at retirement and things like that, and so we needed another speech instructor. Now, what happened was, we had three full-time speech instructors. She was going to leave, the other speech instructor was already the chairman of general education, and someone was needed to take over the assessment part of it…So by default it was me. Now I kind of kicked and screamed a little bit.

It seems possible that the appointment of James to fill the general education assessment committee spot for his department contributed to his lack of enthusiasm for the committee appointment but once he got involved his attitude began to change. At first, he was quite skeptical of the usefulness of participating on the committee; however, as he learned more about the committee's work he saw a strong connection between general education assessment and the learning foundation he sought to develop for students in his general education courses. He explained:

[When I first joined the committee] I thought it was boring, and thought "I don't really want to do this," and now they keep asking us every year, "Do you want to come back? Do you want to come back?" Most of us always say, "Yes." Once I got into it, I realized, "This is important. What we do is important." Again, going back to setting that foundation – that good foundation that students need, and it has evolved, it has really evolved in those eight years I've been on it.

This quote from James illustrates the formative process he experienced upon joining the general education assessment committee as a faculty lead. He first joined the committee to fulfill a contractual obligation, as all full-time faculty were expected to participate in at least one college committee. As James spent more time on the committee, however, he found meaningful connections to his work as an instructor and increasingly found his role on the committee to be meaningful.

Another faculty member in my study, Paul, described feeling unprepared to lead assessment work when he was first invited to participate in committee work, explaining that he had never been trained to be a teacher and hadn't intentionally sought out teaching as a career. Paul described his earliest teaching experiences as "trial by fire" but he quickly learned that assessment work was an important part of his role as a faculty member. One thing he learned was that the college expected faculty to become involved in assessment and to take it seriously in their own classrooms and in supporting assessment by their faculty peers. Paul noted that it was clear to him that assessment was an integral part of learning to teach, not an add-on or optional activity. He described his experience as being "a little scary at first, but then clearly it became, 'These are the tools that are just going to help me along the way." Paul went on to describe that he believes assessment is about getting better at teaching, and his appreciation for getting better as an instructor has increased over time. Paul explained:

I think, in that, it was a process of me going from 'I don't even know what this is,' to going, 'Oh, I see, okay, so we assess stuff so that then we find out what's going on to then improve." I mean, I guess it does what we all do, it's how you learn the walk, and it's how you learn the talk. You try and fail. You try and fail. I think to have it frames as "this is a thing called assessment and this is what you do in education or what you can do in education" and that that's how we can get better at fill-in-the-blank whether it's getting better in engaging with students in a classroom setting or just how we get better at making sure our students have general education as part of their thing, I think that would be the process, really, if I really had to be taught what assessment was and then taught how you use that for improvement.

These findings illustrate the participants' unintentional paths to leadership in assessment, and yet their intention to represent their discipline in a college-wide committee. The above examples also demonstrate that participants' early experiences serving on the general education assessment committee were formative in that as faculty members learned more about their role and more about assessment and gained more experience, they became increasingly committed to their roles as faculty champions.

Connections to teaching facilitate engagement in assessment. Community college faculty members see their primary role as teaching (Townsend & Twombly, 2008). Therefore, it stands to reason that community college faculty are more likely to be engaged in work that they see as connected to teaching in some way. The participants in this study saw assessment as a critical component of teaching and learned about assessment as playing a role in their faculty jobs at RRCC. Coming to understand assessment as meaningful for teaching, however, didn't happen quickly. It happened over time and through a series of experiences where they learned about the assessment process and learned how to use assessment results in their teaching. Each participant described early experiences in learning about assessment and discovering that the results of assessment can be useful to them as they consider improvements in their own teaching. For example, the participants enrolled in the faculty development workshops on Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) (Angelo & Cross, 1993) soon after they joined RRCC, either as

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adjuncts or as full-time faculty members. In both rounds of interviews, they discussed a focus on improvement of teaching and learning, which is a key tenet of the CAT theory and methodology. Whether the focus of assessment work was for a course, program, or larger aspect of the institution (e.g., general education), the faculty participants described the use of assessment data that they acquired using a CAT to make improvements to teaching and learning in their own classrooms and assisting fellow faculty to do the same.

Participant Brittany described how her experiences in the corporate setting contributed to a feeling of some level of preparation for leading assessment work. She saw a strong relationship between learning outcomes assessment work at RRCC and her previous work as a trainer and human resource professional. For example, Brittany described her strong commitment to continuous improvement, giving the example of how she tracked students' progress on learning outcomes across all courses in her program, including a detailed mapping process using spreadsheets. Referencing her mapping process, she said "It's a straight line way to look at the program; the quality of the program, and look at where they [the students] are measured, and where you can make improvements, most importantly, for the future." As someone who invests in continuous improvement and who enjoys teaching, Brittany saw learning outcomes assessment work as a tool for improving her teaching and learning. Though slightly different than other faculty leaders, Brittany grew in her appreciation for assessment because she saw the value it contributed to her work, linking her past work in the corporate sector to her current role as faculty.

Looking more deeply at the connections that the faculty made between their work and assessment, each participant described a shift in their thinking about assessment, from not being very relevant to later being integral to their primary role of teaching. This shift was important

because the participants described teaching as the most important focus of their role as faculty, recognizing that their faculty roles are multi-faceted and complex. Specifically, when I asked the participants to describe what they believed to be their faculty roles at RRCC, the participants described teaching, advising and mentoring students, as well as serving the campus through committee work. Of all those roles, teaching was the most important for all five participants; this explains why connecting assessment work to teaching was essential to facilitating their engagement in assessment.

Participants described experiences in which they learning about assessment and its connection to their roles as faculty members. Shortly after beginning to teach at RRCC, each participant enrolled in workshops in the College's Center for Teaching and Learning, and these workshops were designed to support their learning about teaching as a fundamental function of their role. For all participants, it seemed that developing a deeper understanding of teaching and learning was necessary before they could engage in learning about assessment and understanding how they could use assessment as a tool to improve their own teaching and their students' learning.

Each participant explained that their engagement in assessment work became more personally valuable as they made the connections between assessment and teaching. Brittany discussed making these connections as a new faculty member at RRCC when she participated in a workshop on classroom assessment techniques:

> We learned a very effective way to use classroom assessment techniques, and then we were asked to just use it once through the semester and report on it. So that's how it all kind of started on a very small scale, and that's when you started to understand the connections of it as a faculty member.

Brittany described the use of these techniques as giving her the tools "to be able to talk the talk and realizing what I was already doing; it [assessment] is a formal, justifiable process for determining quality or learning outcomes for the students."

For Liz, learning about assessment helped her to identify opportunities to make changes in curriculum, such as identifying areas where there were gaps in curriculum. She explained,

> Really, the types of assessments that we do, we already were doing, just through having students write essays, we just looked at them in different ways, and, of course, incorporating essays in classes maybe that wouldn't have normally have had essays, just looking at writing across the curriculum too.

Liz also discussed her adept ability to make curricular changes quickly, based on her assessment of students' learning in particular course section. Liz described her ability to quickly assess students' learning and make adjustments to assignments as one way she has felt strong ownership of improving students' learning. She explained,

> So, I think, maybe even smaller than the course-level, when I'm able to personally in my own section of the course create the assignment, see what individual students' and this class as a whole's strengths and weaknesses are, and then turn around and make a specific assignment. Like my students just finished up their poetry essay and I said, "Gosh! I'm seeing a lot of run-ons; I shouldn't be seeing so many run-ons at this level." So we have this software attached to one of the books that the students use [in the course]; they are able to go in and practice on a run-on assignment. You [the student] gets credit once they complete this. So I guess that's one very tangible way that I can see that I have ownership over improving students' learning.

The more participants learned about assessment and learned how to use assessment to make improvements to their teaching and their students' learning, the more engaged and committed they became as users of assessment and eventually also leaders of assessment. They also grew more confident in supporting and mentoring fellow faculty in the use of assessment findings to improve teaching and learning, whether that meant changes in their teaching or changes in curriculum. These findings support literature that states that faculty involvement in and ownership of assessment is necessary for improving student learning (Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Kuh,

et al. 2014), and faculty's central role in curriculum development must also be central to the assessment process (Evans, 2010).

Discussion

The findings for Research Sub-Question 1 illuminate the unintentional paths of community college faculty members to participate in assessment and eventually serve as faculty leaders on the general education assessment committee. These findings parallel literature suggesting community college faculty rarely enter their roles with formal preparation for teaching in a community college (Twombly & Townsend, 2008), let alone training for learning outcomes assessment. This pattern is also supported by Eddy (2010) who also found a "lack of intentional planning for a career as a community college faculty member" (p. 17). Whereas participants in this study did not enter their roles as faculty and as champions of assessment with formal preparation, they did articulate the importance of experiencing connections between their primary role of teaching and assessment.

The lack of preparation of community college faculty prior to teaching led all of the faculty to engage in faculty development workshops that provided preparatory training for new faculty to engage in teaching and learning, specifically those introductory workshops on assessment. Faculty development programs that support faculty members' learning about assessment, therefore, may be important vehicles for preparing community college faculty to fulfill their roles as instructors. These programs will be discussed further in the findings for Research Sub-Question 3, which describes meaningful support for faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

Research Sub-Question 2

      How do community college faculty champions describe the phenomenon of their engagement in learning outcomes assessment? Participants in this study described their engagement in championing assessment as essential to facilitating faculty participation because their engagement creates and sustains a focus on the improvement of teaching and learning. They felt strongly about their leadership of a faculty-driven process of assessment, and their roles as chair and faculty leads on the general education assessment committee illustrated the faculty-driven nature of assessment work at RRCC. Participants also described feeling a sense of pride and deep commitment to their leadership roles as chair and faculty leads because of their long-term engagement in assessment work. The faculty champions also asserted that their roles as leaders provided a consistency and continuity that other faculty valued so that they, in turn, could improve their own teaching and their students' learning.

      Participants described the essential role of faculty as leaders in learning outcomes assessment as one that creates meaning for them and their work. Whereas the participants described not being fully prepared when they took on their roles as leaders for assessment work, they learned about assessment from other faculty leads on the general education assessment committee. As their experience grew, their enthusiasm and willingness to engage and lead also increased. They each insisted that their work as faculty leads of the committee was essential in engaging other faculty and focusing on assessment for their own and others' teaching and learning improvement. In part, they attributed their continued leadership to the support they received from the college. To illustrate this point, Brittany described the relationship between the administration at RRCC and the faculty leads as dissimilar to other community colleges. She explained that the administration of other colleges "usually takes the lead in getting a solution"

to challenges affecting teaching and learning, but that the situation is different at RRCC where "we [the faculty] are the ones that they come to when they need a solution." Knowing that their problem-solving about assessment matters to the institution contributed to the faculty feeling as though their leadership of assessment was valued by both the RRCC administration and their faculty peers. However, despite the supportive administration, not all faculty were excited to engage in the assessment work at RRCC.

Speaking to this concern, Liz said that the most important thing that she could do was to listen to them talk about their challenges; this helped her to understand faculty colleagues' resistance or lack of participation in assessment. She would often meet with individual faculty colleagues in the English department to discuss their concerns about participating in assessment. Liz learned that sometimes their lack of participation was due to technical barriers, such as not being familiar with the survey tool that was used to collect assessment data. Sometimes, the faculty members told Liz that they didn't see the assessment data as useful to their own teaching. Liz believed that the faculty members' perception of the usefulness of assessment data was mainly because they spent so much time discussing and debating the construction of the rubric, that there was little to no time at the end of the assessment cycle to discuss how results could be useful for faculty in their efforts to improve teaching and learning in their own classrooms. Liz asserted that a faculty member such as herself is best positioned to provide this kind of support to their colleagues. By listening and discussing colleagues' concerns and challenges, Liz noted that faculty leaders are able to understand and think about the best ways to gain their participation by, for example, explaining ways she has used assessment data to make changes in her own teaching. I believe Liz was suggesting that faculty members have a level of credibility with one another when it comes to discussing assessment as it relates to teaching, and that the support they

provide to fellow faculty is more valuable than support from other colleagues (staff, administrators) who do not teach. To illustrate this point, Sean described the importance of peer support by referring to the faculty leads on the general education assessment committee as a "really close community." When I asked him to discuss what has been important to sustain his engagement as a faculty champion, he said:

> The first thing that comes to mind is that sense of peer support and I am thinking in terms of my peers on the gen. ed. assessment committee. We are a very close group and we are in constant communication with each other whether it's directly related to things that the committee is trying to do or just things that come up in our own classrooms, or in our own assessments where we come up against things and it's like, "Ah, this isn't working. What should I do?" And, we, as a faculty group, I think those of us who truly have ownership of this assessment thing that we do, we are okay sharing that with each other because we know that it's collegial, we are going to step up and offer solutions and chances are, the issues we are having - it's something that somebody else had and they have some possible solutions that we could try. So we just have a really close community.

Paul discussed situations in which he worked with individual faculty peers to help them see how the process of assessment provides valuable information to help their students and peer faculty. He believed that this kind of mentoring conversation between faculty is essential to an assessment process that faculty find meaningful. When it came to resistance or simply the lack of faculty involvement, James discussed his go-to strategies for making time to talk with his colleagues and ask questions to get to the root of their lack of participation in assessment and offer support to make their involvement easier and more meaningful. James and Liz both stated that their support as peer faculty members was much more likely to be welcomed and valued by their peers than a "top-down mandate" from the administration. Peer support was a strong theme in my conversations with all five participants. This finding serves as further evidence of the importance of faculty-to-faculty support found in my previous study of faculty members' perceptions of learning outcomes assessment (Hackman, 2014).

The importance of faculty leadership of assessment became an even stronger part of participants' experience when they began to question whether their leadership role may change in response to some recent decisions by RRCC administration to explore changing aspects of the college's assessment approach and utilizing the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a standardized assessment tool. To this end, Paul mentioned in our second interview, that changes proposed by or made by administration were leading to some skepticism regarding the state of faculty leadership in assessment at RRCC. As Paul reflected on his role as a leader of assessment at the college, he discussed the essential role of faculty leadership to facilitate what he described as a healthy process and the shift that may be occurring to lessen the role of faculty which will lead RRCC to lose faculty leadership in assessment:

> I perceived gen. ed. assessment at RRCC as faculty-driven. Like there was no doubt about it. Even if they had come from Higher Learning Commission (HLC) saying we should do it, we still drove the machine. I think I missed a few years back there were maybe the administration had to get the ball rolling, but as far as I'm concerned, it's faculty-driven. Really to now see it may be shifting, I think I sort of see those three levels of who is driving the bus? Is the administration driving the bus? Is our faculty driving the bus? Is IR driving the bus? And like, what a huge part of that seems to play in the whole scheme of this whole thing. I think the healthiest and most positive we have felt about this is when it really did feel that it was a very faculty-happening, faculty-driven thing, and as it's either in its early stages, so like when the administration is saying 'you have to,' or now that it maybe feels like, again, the administration and IR are taking it over, we're feeling that same push back, not by ourselves personally, but by our fellow faculty, like, 'Wait a minute! What are they going to do? If they are going to do that, I'm not a part of it anymore, screw that." So I just think that concept of like, "Who is driving the bus?" That has a huge effect on an institution's ability to either get assessment going if they are not doing it, or it could run the bus right off the road if there is not the right person behind the steering wheel.

This excerpt from my interview with Paul illustrates the passion and personal connection that he, and possibly the other faculty participants, felt toward leading assessment work. These results also suggest that the value they feel for their own role as leaders is influenced by how their faculty peers see the work, in particular their perception of the work being faculty-driven. Paul's

vignette also illustrates the fragility of the relationship between faculty and administration, when faculty sense their leadership is being minimized in assessment work. I explore this tension further in Research Sub-Question 3 below, where I discuss the participants' descriptions of meaningful support for their engagement in assessment.

Faculty champions of assessment feel pride in their leadership role, which strengthens their commitment. Each participant discussed their experiences as leaders in assessment as having a sort of multiplier effect. That is to say that the more experience they gained as leaders of assessment, the more committed they became to their roles and the stronger they felt about continuing to lead assessment work at RRCC. This happened because, under their leadership, the faculty champions contributed to growth in the number of faculty who were familiar with assessment language, and they helped to increase the number of faculty who participated in assessment work. They also contributed to this growth by working with faculty one-on-one and by guiding their faculty peers through steps of the assessment process, including choosing learning activities to assess, gathering evidence of student learning data, and then analyzing to what extent students attained student learning outcomes. All five participants were very proud of the work they did to facilitate greater levels of engagement in assessment among their faculty colleagues.

I asked each of the participants to tell me the feeling that portrays their experiences as leaders of assessment, and each of them said they felt pride. They reflected on their accomplishments individually and as a committee, and said they felt great satisfaction with how far they'd come in their time serving as a lead on the general education assessment committee. James said,

It's also nice that you've talked to Paul and to Sean; they present to campuses all the time about how we do gen. ed. assessment and they, apparently, after their workshops are over are bombarded with questions and people wanting more information about how we do that. So, to see that excitement is really kind of fun.

When I asked James whether talking with me about his experiences had an impact on his thinking about his own engagement, he said:

Well, like I said, I'm already a fan, and so, I'm a cheerleader for it to begin with. So it just kind of empowers me a little bit to be able to talk with somebody who is interested in it was well and how it works and things like that.

I asked Liz to describe how she felt discussing her experiences and she said she felt proud because, especially after reflecting on our conversations, she recognized the importance of the knowledge she has gained as a faculty champion. She said:

Well, it makes me feel important in some way, I guess. Not that I didn't feel like the work that our committee is important, but I don't really see myself as someone who knows that much as any kind of expert on the topic [of assessment]. But having you ask questions about it, I think, "Well, maybe I do know about this topic."

Both Paul and Sean talked about their roles as leaders using the phrase "carrying the torch." When I think of someone carrying a torch, I think of concepts of honor and leadership. So, when Sean said "it's not something I can just easily lay down, not even pass, but I feel like it's something that I have to continue to do and carry that torch," I heard in his voice a strong sense of pride and honor that he sees himself as a leader of assessment work.

Faculty champions of assessment have a steady commitment to leading assessment, which provides continuity, consistency, and ownership. Especially given the length of time each of the participants had served on the general education assessment committee, which ranged from 7 to 9 years (see again, Table 1), participants experienced the strong and consistent leadership of long-term faculty leads on the committee. However, in the second round of interviews that took place nine months following the first set of interviews, the participants

expressed concern about the changing direction of RRCC administration in terms of the process

they had worked hard to establish and grow, and to which they built faculty buy-in. Speaking to

this concern, Liz expressed a strong desire for consistency, and she expressed concern about the

future of the faculty role in assessment at RRCC.

> I would say the need for consistency for it [assessment] to carry on over more than just three or four years. We shifted direction three or four years ago and people had kind of like, gotten accustomed to, how we were doing it back then, you know, the process that we followed pretty consistently for eight to ten years. So, we shifted gears which was hard on everyone and now we are just going to give it up apparently after three or four years. So that what I would say, that's one thing I would add to the list – the need to do the same thing in the same way over a longer period of time; to not make so many changes so often.

Liz was concerned about consistency of the assessment processes over time, possibly because

she was concerned about keeping faculty engaged in a process they understood how to carry out

and found valuable and meaningful. James also reflected on the changes being proposed by the

administration during our second interview, reflecting on the general education assessment

committee's successful work over the last several years, saying "Hey, if it's not broke, don't fix

it!" James said the faculty on the committee were not in favor of the administration's interest in

using a standardized assessment tool. He argued that the assessment process designed and

supported by the general education assessment committee chair and faculty leaders was a much

better approach to assessing students' learning than using a standardized tool. When I asked the

participants why they thought the administration was interested in such a drastic change of

process and direction, the only reason that surfaced was an assumption that the administration

wanted to be able to compare student learning outcome data on a larger scale outside the

institution. Not knowing for sure because administration had not told them, they supposed that

participating in the use of the standardized assessment tool would allow the administration to

compare institutional data with other community colleges, and that may be administration's

priority. These potential drastic changes, understandably, caused concern among participants.

When change is imposed on these processes without knowledge or input from those who are

expected to engage in the change, it can make the use of assessment results to improve teaching

and learning much more complicated. As articulated by Cain and Hutchings (2015), "finding

ways to bring all those into the conversation who belong there is a prerequisite for assessment

that makes a long-term difference in higher education's effectiveness" (p. 116).

These potential changes threatened faculty's ownership of the assessment process, of

which participants each described a strong sense of ownership. Considering the length of service

by each of the faculty leads on the general education assessment committee, it is understandable

that they would feel a strong sense of ownership and commitment to assessment work at RRCC.

Paul discussed his sense of ownership of his specific focus area in assessment as being

widespread amongst each of the faculty on the general education assessment committee.

> So I would say that the six leads plus the chair, we have owned the process. Owned the
> development and the ongoing logistics of the committee, and so in that way, we faculty
> have owned it with certainly support and mentoring from the administration but it really
> felt as though we, the faculty, owned that thing. I think the healthiest and most positive
> we have felt about this is when it really did feel that it is a very faculty-happening,
> faculty-driven kind of thing. That has a huge effect on an institution's ability to either get
> assessment going if they are not doing it, or it could run the bus right off the road if there
> is not the right person behind the steering wheel.

In my follow up interviews, because faculty ownership was such a strong theme among my

conversations with the faculty, participants were asked to reflect more deeply on what it meant to

them to have ownership of the assessment process. I asked them to describe ownership and

define "faculty ownership" in particular. Their responses shed light on more specific details

regarding what type of experience contributed to a feeling of ownership.

Liz discussed faculty ownership in terms of the freedom she felt to make choices about assessment.

> Well, I would say it's when a faculty member is able to determine how to go about the assessment, choose which assignment makes the most sense for it; the rubric as well - determine what rubric works well for figuring out whether the students are writing well, and then once the results come in, being able to see with some clarity because of the numbers.

Liz explained that making these choices ensured that she would garner useful information that she could use in making changes to curriculum or in her teaching. This sense of freedom also empowered Liz and gave her a feeling of ownership as she worked with other faculty in understanding and using assessment in their own courses. Liz described her process of gathering students' writing samples and rubric scores from 27 different faculty members, and then providing them a summary of the aggregate assessment data from all sections, but also providing section-level data for the faculty to identify areas for improvement. Sometimes faculty would find these data pointed to a particular area where scores were low on the rubric, such as critical thinking. Liz would guide faculty through this initial analysis: "So then it became that we need to have a conversation about this sample of 15 students and how they can improve in critical thinking on a writing assessment."

Similarly, James discussed the importance of faculty freedom to make choices about assessment in their courses. James spoke passionately about the close connection between the general education assessment and what faculty are teaching in class each day. He explained, "We want them [faculty peers] to assess, we want them to use what they think is important in their class and use that to assess general education, and I think that's a big part of faculty ownership."

James drew a clear distinction between using externally developed surveys or tools for assessment of student learning rather than tools created by faculty. He argued, fervently, that national standardized assessment tools did not support faculty engagement nor ownership, and he insisted that faculty should be encouraged and supported in using faculty-developed, course-embedded assessment tools.

> That's faculty ownership. We don't create a generalized test: have a student sit down at a computer and take an hour-long test just by simply clicking on answer A, B, or C. We embed them. They [the faculty] assess an actual assignment that they have created for that specific class. That's faculty ownership.

James described the importance of faculty choosing the tools and assessments in order to facilitate ownership, saying, "we want them to use what they think is important in their class and use that to assess general education and I think that's a big part of faculty ownership." James' argument for faculty-developed, classroom-embedded assessment demonstrates his understanding of assessment as a useful and valuable tool for teaching. This statement also suggests that James believes that valuing classroom-embedded assessment, as part of an institution's overall assessment process, simultaneously values the role that faculty members play in assessment.

In discussing faculty ownership, Brittany outlined the actions and behaviors that demonstrate her ownership of assessment.

> Well, in the classroom, I talk about it, I use the tools, I analyze it, I interpret it, I provide the results, I share the results with my students, I share it with faculty when the opportunity presents itself. It's talked about, it's open. There isn't a lot of confusion from what I can tell and what it means to do assessment in our courses. So, I feel like that's owning it; it's becoming a behavior - not even a forced behavior, it's a natural behavior from what I'm seeing and what I do.

Brittany shared concern about the potential outcomes that would result when faculty do not have ownership of assessment.

If you didn't own it you wouldn't talk about the results; you wouldn't share them. You would just do the assessment, enter the scores; you wouldn't share the results with the students; you wouldn't modify your teaching style; you wouldn't change assignments - you wouldn't do all of that if you didn't own it.

These statements lent further evidence to the strong sense of ownership that the faculty leaders experienced in leading assessment at RRCC up to the point when the administration interjected a standardized assessment approach. Having years of service as leads on the general education assessment committee, the faculty champions referenced their strong connection between assessment and their roles in the classroom as faculty members and their role as advocates for assessment with their peers.

Discussion

These findings described the essential role of faculty in leading assessment from their lived experiences, and they endorsed the importance of faculty leadership in assessment, reinforcing the literature (Banta, 1999; Evans, 2010; Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry & Kinzie, 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999). Participants shed light on what, in their experience, was most meaningful to engaging them in assessment as well as sustaining their leadership. The results suggest that being empowered as champions of assessment helped them engage with their faculty peers because they could make connections to teaching and learning that faculty find valuable and meaningful. The fact that participants felt pride and a strong sense of ownership in their leadership roles in assessment became clear through their descriptions of their commitment to the work. They also felt strongly that their leadership provided a consistent and steady approach to assessment that supported their success in engaging faculty in assessment work, again, largely due to the long tenure of the faculty leads on the committee.

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Research Sub-Question 3

How do community college faculty champions describe meaningful faculty support for engagement in learning outcomes assessment? The faculty champions had much to say about the ways they had been supported in learning about assessment and the importance of that support to serving in their leadership roles. They also offered important critique of these support systems, especially the ways that a lack of consistent and reliable support complicates their ability to be effective leaders. The following themes are presented in response to the final Research Sub-Question that describes meaningful support for faculty in learning outcomes assessment.

Support for learning is crucial to faculty leaders in assessment. As educators, the participants valued learning and they saw learning as essential to their professional roles and improvement as instructors. As noted earlier, each participant discussed their experience of taking courses in the College's Center for Teaching and Learning as one of their earliest and most influential experiences in assessment. These experiences were influential in that they introduced faculty to assessment practice as a tool to helping them better understand their students' learning. These experiences were also crucial to their learning about teaching as demonstrated earlier, in Research Sub-Question 1, as the participants discussed at length their lack of preparation for both their roles as faculty and then their roles as faculty leaders of assessment. The participants described several learning experiences that have been formative in their engagement as leaders of assessment work. For example, Paul described his first experience in one of the faculty workshops on CATs:

So the way it was brought was in a very cool way. I mean, my CATs class, like the teacher had little cat ears on and stuff like that, and I was like, "Oh we are going to be okay," but it definitely was a learning curve for someone like myself that was like, "Whose learning needs? What is that thing? What are you talking about? Who does what?" I liked it. It made sense to me, and it certainly made me go, "Okay. These are things I can plant my feet in as an educator in these classrooms," as opposed to "I'm just doing what seems I can make sense, and if the kids were pissed that's not good and I should do something else.

Paul's reflection on his experience in the CATs class may suggest that when faculty members are supported by administration to learn about assessment as a useful tool for learning, they may embrace and value it in their teaching and in their larger role as a faculty members. Also, speaking to this point, James discussed the value of learning about CATs when he learned about teaching in his early days at the college:

I love it, and I still use it today…it's what ten years now? Clearest and muddiest point, that's the one I use and it's simple. That's what we have to understand that class assessment does not have to be difficult, does not have to be time consuming, it does not have to be overwhelming – that quick tell me the clearest point that we talked about today, in this concept, tell me the muddiest point, what are you still unsure about? That's all you have to do. It's valuable, like I said, I use it all the time.

This finding suggests that faculty engagement in assessment may be driven and then supported by a strong focus on teaching and learning. This theme differs from literature that suggests a primary driver for community colleges to engage in assessment, from the perspective of community college administrators and institutional researchers, is external accreditation requirements (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Whereas external influences did emerge as a theme in my first round of interviews as I began exploring participants' experiences in assessment, in the second interview I asked that participants pick from a list of about 20 themes the ones that have been most important to their engagement in their experience as champions of assessment work; none chose "external influences". In fact, when I asked the participants which theme in the list seemed least significant in their experiences, four of the five participants

mentioned "external influences" as one of the least relevant to their experiences. External influences included things such as accreditation processes, students' commitments outside of their coursework, and organizations outside of the college that were part of faculty members' experiences in assessment. Among those, it was the regional accreditor that was most often mentioned in the theme "external influences." This theme may have been one of the least relevant because it was one of the least meaningful parts of the participants' experiences.

To illustrate this, Brittany explained that she thought that the regional accreditor was always an important part of their assessment work, but that the accreditor wasn't very relevant to her experience in leading assessment work. She seemed to point to a disconnect between assessment for the purpose of compliance and assessment as a tool to improve teaching and learning. Similarly, when James first looked at the list of themes, he questioned: "How can external influences affect general education [assessment]?" As we talked more, James extended his thinking about external influences and considered his students' home lives; he suggested that their learning about general education could impact their experience in the classroom. James acknowledged the influence of these experiences for students, but did not feel a strong connection between things like accreditation and his leadership of assessment work

Institutional Research (IR) offices need to be responsive and support faculty leaders' work in assessment. A consistent theme in the literature is the push and pull between assessment work being framed as compliance work versus for the improvement of teaching and learning (see, for example, Ewell, 2002; Hutchings, 2010). This theme emerged in the present study, as evidenced by participants' relationship with institutional research (IR) staff members. Participants indicated there was a disconnect between the faculty leads and IR; participants believed IR was not concerned with how faculty would use the data gathered in general

education assessment. The disconnect between the faculty leads on the general education

assessment committee and the IR staff was evident to Sean.

> I would say, right now, our biggest barrier is our IR person. I think how he was supposed to be helping our committee and helping the faculty was outlined in one way, but I'm just not sure that he got the same outline. There is some disconnect there, and I don't know what it is, and I had even sat down with him and he is a nice guy, and he evidently knows what he is doing, I would hope, or he wouldn't still be here, but, I don't know. It's really frustrating because there is a definite disconnect as far as what we think he is supposed to be helping us with and what he is actually doing…

> Participants indicated that the support of IR was very important but that their support was

inconsistent and unreliable, and this represented a change from my earlier study. To illustrate

this, tension, Liz explained:

> We realized we were going to have a lot more faculty members reporting, and we have an institutional research person on campus who then became responsible for figuring out how faculty members plugged their data into a central system, and then he was supposed to figure out what kind of information we would want back so that he could sort the numbers and pull together charts and things, but we kept asking and asking, and we thought we were fairly specific about our needs and we just felt like he was busy with other things.

This was a shift from Liz's early recollections of working with the IR staff member on the

general education assessment committee. She explained:

> Yes, and our institutional research employee attended a lot of the meetings where we were trying to figure out what's with the rubrics, and he was very helpful with helping us trying to figure out things like, "Should we have a 0 to 4 range or a 1 to 5 range?" So, he helped explain a lot of that. He was great up front. I don't know what he got busy with, but he got busy.

> In my previous study (Hackman, 2014), I found that faculty leaders of assessment

experienced high levels of support from their campus' IR, and in this study, faculty participants

said that consistent and reliable support from IR was critical to their success and engagement in

their leadership role in assessment. The participants knew it was necessary because they had

experienced consistent but also inconsistent support. Findings from the current study also

indicate the fragility of that relationship in that these faculty had seen a shift from feeling strongly supported by administration in the first round of interviews to questioning the administration's support for their leadership in assessment during the second round of interviews.

IR offices and staff can provide support for faculty in their assessment work (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011); however, participants noted that IR support is useful, but it can also be challenging. Participants discussed the value of IR's expertise in collecting and disseminating data, but the responsiveness of IR staff and the timeliness of the delivery of data sometimes complicates the faculty work with or on or in assessment. To this point, Liz expressed frustration when she described having to wait on IR to send her data to analyze and discuss assessment data with faculty. She said:

> that [IR delay] was such a hindrance. I kept thinking we were going to get the
> information over the summer and I would have time to look at it and think about it, and I
> ended up getting it maybe a week and a half before the report was due. If I had had it
> earlier I would have had all kinds of questions. I would have wanted a conversation, but
> there wasn't time. I just took what I had and wrote the report because it had to be done.

Liz went on to explain that over time, the faculty lead's role in collecting and entering data was moved to IR due to the committee's decision to expand the data collection to a much larger population of students. Whereas she maintained that the decision was justified, she questioned IR's ability to get data back to the faculty in a timely manner noting, "we couldn't do anything until we heard from him." Liz, as an *Analyst* of assessment data, valued the experience of interpreting and analyzing the data herself and the delay in obtaining the data from IR shortened, and in some cases eliminated, her ability to spend time studying and analyzing the data.

Paul also reflected on the change in process and IR's expanding role in assessment. He explained,

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It also may be taken out of our hands a little bit. We felt and continue to feel the sense that now, you know, there was something about being able to see those numbers come in and watch the process and be in a little more of a dialogue scenario with the faculty. Where now they just dump it into the data machine and apart from us going in to look at the data, and code the data and create an annual report and report back to the faculty. We've lost maybe a little of a personalized quality that we had and I think that's an element that we are sort of thinking about right now and discussing, and I don't know if "wrestling" is the right word, but maybe wrestling with, "Ok, now that we've got that big machine with all those cool widgets, is it doing what we want it to do or is it kind of doing it but we're losing our personal edge and how do we make that better and everything.

In this passage, Paul articulates the need to "balance the mechanicalness" of the process with regard to the role of IR and the role of the faculty leads. Paul's quote above speaks to the personal nature of the faculty leadership role in working with other faculty who are engaging in assessment work, as he described having a dialogue with faculty peers about their assessment data. It also reinforces the findings from Research Sub-Question 1, which described faculty leadership in assessment as essential. As the faculty participants described their experiences in this study, much of what they described started from an assumption that their roles in assessment are to lead the process by engaging their fellow faculty members. When the participants experienced unreliable support or unresponsiveness from IR staff, they questioned whether their roles as leaders of assessment were valued and recognized by IR staff – the colleagues participants believed were there to support their work. Sean spoke to this disconnect that he experienced in working with IR:

So, sometimes it's technical issues, sometimes its personnel surrounding the technical issues. I would say, right now, our biggest barrier is our IR person. I think how he was supposed to be helping our committee and helping the faculty was outlined in one way, but I'm not sure that he got the same outline. There is some disconnect there and I don't know what it is, and I had even sat down with him and he is a nice guy, and he evidently knows what he is doing, I would hope, or he wouldn't still be here, but I don't know. It's really frustrating because there is a definite disconnect as far as what we think he is supposed to be helping us with and what he is actually doing.

The participants looked to IR as an important resource for their work in assessment. However, when they found IR to be unresponsive they felt as though IR complicated their leadership work in assessment. The participants did have great respect for the technical and analytical capabilities of the IR staff, but that was not as important as providing faculty with timely and meaningful feedback that was often delayed due to IRs lack of responsiveness.

Administrators' support is key to empowering and recognizing faculty champions' roles in assessment. The consistent support of administration was a strong theme among participants in this study. In my initial interviews, faculty indicated they felt empowered by administration and entrusted in their leadership of assessment. They explained the importance of administration recognizing their leadership role by ensuring their support. When it came to recognizing faculty's work in assessment, Liz indicated simply being given release or reassigned time, or a stipend for her work was an indication that administration valued her role. This type of recognition and support was valued by the participants, and I believe this became even more evident during the second round of interviews when the participants began to question administration's support for their work in assessment.

Faculty feel empowered. The faculty champions described many ways that the feeling of empowerment manifested in their experiences and attributed that feeling to their support of each other, which was encouraged by administration. For example, they discussed working together to design the entire process for their institution-wide general education assessment work. They each discussed their leadership role in designing rubrics that would be used in each of the major general education areas to be assessed. James described the rubric creation and endorsement as a "committee decision, and usually it was the lead faculty member in that area." Then, James said the faculty lead would solicit input from the IR staff member who participated on the general

education assessment committee. Paul also said that he's felt empowered by the administration, saying, "I mean it was like we all sort of felt very empowered, yes, but also sort of like entrusted with this really important thing." When describing her experience of feeling empowered as a leader, Brittany described the importance of administration supporting faculty as leaders in a partnership. Brittany said "it's more of a partnership, a cross-functional partnership and that's the secret I think to making it work." Brittany reflected on her previous work in the corporate sector, and said her experience at RRCC has been less "top down." She said,

> If you just did an organization chart of gen. ed. assessment at our college, everyone would be on the same level participating in problem-solving, figuring out, and improving, instead of having different levels handing down directives or instructions on how to do it or whatever. That's not what it looks like at our college. So, I do believe that has a lot to do with our success – always focus on that.

Fragility of administrative support. Whereas each participant described a very collegial, collaborative relationship between administration and faculty in the first round of interviews, by the second round there was a clear shift that indicated the relationship is more fragile than previously presented. Four of the five participants indicated a concern about their relationship with administration.

When asked what, in her experience, is one of the most important themes from the first round of interviews, Liz said, "Administrative support. Last year when we turned in our reports of analysis in the fall, I think I've mentioned to you before, we struggled with getting access to the raw data in order to do really good analysis, and I felt like we really didn't get much feedback from the administrators that we shared our reports with." Liz explained her frustration, considering the time and thoughtful work she had provided.

So, I thought, Gosh! Are they even reading it? Because I put hours into it and I really care about how it turned out and I felt like I had some interesting things to say, but there was no follow-up discussion about it; an email response I got was usually pretty short, it said, "Oh it looks like you put a lot of work in" or something along that line. This year because we had kind of a strained relationship with the lead administrator on the committee, I didn't really get a response at all at first. Then around December or January when they did write me back and they said, "I looked back at your report" and she did address a few things that she saw in there, but I didn't know if that was an attempt at reconciliation in some way or if she read it and she really saw that this is something that she should be addressed or followed up long term because we're still pretty early in the process and this is something I'll need to continue to look at over several years and I don't feel like that's something they want us to do so much.

Liz also described her previous experiences discussing the results of assessment work with the dean and academic VP. She talked about how much she enjoyed the relaxed conversation with her supervisors and discussing what she and other faculty had learned in their assessment work from the previous year. She said she found the conversations validating to her work, and when those conversations don't appear to be a priority for the administration, Liz felt like her work was not as valued as it had been previously.

Liz's observation was reflected in the interviews of all five participants in that when administration showed support of the faculty's work in leading assessment, they felt valued and more committed to their leadership role. Unfortunately, by the end of the second round of interviews I noticed a dramatic shift among four of the participants' outlook on the future of their roles in assessment. Demonstrating this point, when I asked Liz to predict what her future role as a leader of assessment would be, she answered very honestly, "it's probably all going to end." Sean described his frustration with the shift in administrative support, saying:

It just seems that a group of faculty have been so involved in the assessment process for so long that there is a sense that these decisions were being made without much input from that group and it's disconcerting and it's disheartening and it makes it hard to continue to have a strong positive feeling for it being useful work and valuable work whenever you have a sense that the work that's been done isn't valued enough to ask for your input.

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This quote illustrates the importance of administrative support for the faculty champions and the disappointment they felt when they perceived the support was lessening or changing.

During the second round of interviews, I asked participants to describe examples in their own experience where their roles as faculty leads in assessment were ever, or could ever be, marginalized. Participants each described ways that their roles could be marginalized, especially if they no longer served as educators and mentors of their faculty colleagues and no longer used assessment results to make improvements to teaching and learning in their own classroom. Brittany, for example, stated:

> If you take away the efforts that have been made collectively by the committee which consists of faculty, administration, IT, IR, and if you took away the efforts that we've made to inform and educate the faculty how to use assessment tools, I think it would feel like doing something to [minimize] it because they are told they have to, they just don't know why.

Brittany went on to explain the important educative role that faculty champions of assessment play and her concern that if that role went away, the assessment process itself would lose integrity and value with other faculty. Brittany discussed the importance of talking with faculty to understand how meaningful and authentic an institution's assessment process is. She stated that in her experience, an institution can put up a good face for their assessment program through the college website, but when you talk to faculty in the institution sometimes "they don't know that they are even doing that – they are just doing it. They don't know why – they are just told to do it but they can't talk about it."

James also expressed concern about the administration looking into using the CLA to replace classroom-embedded assessment tools that have successfully engaged faculty in assessment. His concern was for the drastic departure from their current process; the CLA would be administered outside of class to cohorts of students at two different points during their

education at RRCC. James noted, "I don't know much about the CLA. It seems to me it takes the faculty right out of it. I think it takes the faculty right out of the equation." In James' determination, the faculty was largely responsible for the college's progress toward the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning.

Liz also noted that assessment work marginalized faculty engagement and the faculty role "when it feels forced" by administration. Clarifying this point, she added that the faculty's role is marginalized when administration doesn't engage in conversation with the faculty leads to ask them about what they've learned in their assessment work. While Liz notes that when these kinds of meetings have happened in the past, she's found them quite helpful, especially those with her Dean. However, she expressed frustration that meetings sometimes don't get scheduled or get canceled without any follow-up. Paul also expressed frustration as he described his perception of administration's steps to minimize faculty leadership in the assessment process by using the CLA tool at the beginning and end of a students' time at RRCC. He explained:

> It's like, well, that's pretty much taking all of our faculty that not just five minutes ago were talking about all embracing it, they are all on board, and they are ready to be successful, and that to me seems really ridiculous, and again, it feels very marginalizing. I think, probably even if it is, again I'm projecting things they may not even be true. Even if they say, "No, no, no, we are going to do this assessment tool in the front and the back, but of course, we want you to be assessing all throughout the time the students are there." There is going to be a whole bunch of people going, "Why?" So, I just feel like that process, by being built by faculty, used by faculty, is what makes us not feel marginalized, but if you reverse that and you take it out of the hands of faculty, then, yeah, we feel like we are sort of on the outside watching it happen.

Each of these examples of ways the faculty role has been, or could be, marginalized in assessment work suggest that the participants in this study feel strongly about the roles they play in assessment, as discussed in their profiles in Chapter 4. Brittany, for example, discussed her role as a *Teacher* when she talked about "educating faculty [on] how to use assessment tools." James' concern about using the CLA instead of faculty-developed classroom-embedded

assessment tools demonstrates the importance he assigns to his role as an *Implementer*. Liz's experience with fewer opportunities to discuss her data with administration demonstrates the importance she assigns to her role as an *Analyst*. These examples elucidate the importance of these roles in the participants' experience and the individual value they place on these unique roles in assessment. Each of the examples participants shared regarding marginalizing the faculty role in assessment were examples of the roles they identified as important to their experiences as faculty leaders. This is especially evident for the roles of *Teacher*, *Implementer*, and *Analyst*, as discussed above.

However, the participants did not see their roles as independent of the support from other areas of the college, namely the administration. Participants asserted that it was important to have the consistent support from administration. When I studied the perspectives of faculty leaders at RRCC in assessment in 2014, strong support from administration was one of the key themes that emerged from my results. In the current study, when asked what in his experience had complicated his engagement in assessment, Sean replied that administration has an effect on him, but the example was one of a detrimental impact rather than positive. He noted that his vice president could make things difficult for him in terms of his role with assessment, explaining,

> It's not so much that she asks us to do the impossible, but she hears so much more from being on HLC, and going to stuff, and she'll hear something and her reaction is to immediately come back and begin to develop how that's going to happen without a lot of conversation or input, and then the next thing we hear is, "Oh yes. Here is what we're going to be doing now," and my reaction always is, "Well, first off, where did that come from, and secondly, can you explain to us why we are doing it that way now?" That doesn't always happen, and I'm not saying that it has to always happen, but if you want faculty to be a part of something, I think, being a part of the conversation is an important thing.

Administrative support consistently emerged as an important theme, as supported by the examples of strong support from the first round of interviews, and strengthened by the

participants' uncertainty of administrative support in the second round. Four of the five

participants indicated questioned the consistency of support from administration for their

assessment work. The strong administrative support that had previously seemed reliable and

vital was now being questioned. As evidenced by the quote from Sean above, these faculty

champions sought to be part of decision making in assessment early and often, but when they

noticed that the administration's support was less predictable, they became frustrated and

questioned where they stood as faculty leaders of assessment.

Discussion

The findings for Research Sub-Question 3 illustrate the important roles of faculty, IR,

and administration in leadership of learning outcomes assessment. The value of faculty

development support also was a strong theme among participants. By supporting faculty

learning about assessment, faculty champions more readily saw a connection between

assessment and their own roles in teaching. After participating in these learning experiences and

seeing the value of assessment for teaching, the participants became more engaged in assessment

as they used tools like CATs and identified ways they could make improvements in their

teaching. The participants each discussed their experiences of using assessment in their own

teaching leading to feeling that assessment was useful because it gave them meaningful feedback

on students' learning. . This finding provides further evidence that faculty attitudes about

assessment influence their involvement in assessment as asserted by Fontenot (2012).

Importantly, the external pressures of accreditors were not cited as relevant to faculty

champions' experiences in leading assessment work. Whereas the participants acknowledged the

importance of complying with accreditation requirements, these reporting obligations did not

emerge as important when the faculty leaders were asked to discuss what was important to

facilitate their engagement and leadership in assessment. However, since faculty largely see accreditation as an administrative function and not a faculty driven function (Gold, Rhoades, Smith, & Kuh, 2011; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Paloma & Banta, 1999), they may not link the two. But as the literature notes, this is not how extant studies depict faculty relative to accreditation. In the literature, faculty are seen as doing assessment because it is force-fit on them because of accreditation.

This study reveals a tenuous relationship between faculty leaders and IR offices. Whereas the faculty champions indicate they value the resources and expertise that IR offices provide, they experienced unstable support from IR. The disconnect that participants experienced with IR is also reflected in the national study of IR, again, with accreditation identified as a top driver for faculty in doing assessment work (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). As stated previously, faculty did not identify accreditation as a motivator for their work as champions of assessment. This study illuminates a fundamental misalignment between faculty leaders and IR, when it comes to identifying motivators for engaging in assessment (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

Finally, this study also reveals the fragility of the relationship between faculty champions in assessment and administrators. As demonstrated in the participants' experiences, faculty members experienced both empowerment and marginalization as leaders in their assessment work. Faculty champions described many experiences of being supported by administration through monetary recognition and deference to faculty in creating processes and designing solutions for assessment work. Whereas the support from administration was a strong and pervasive theme throughout this study and in my previous study of faculty perceptions of assessment (Hackman, 2014), the shift to diminished support was a great concern to the

participants. The concern for a consistent and reliable direction for, and support of, assessment

work was important to sustain faculty leadership and engagement, and the leadership of

assessment that had been successful in promoting assessment work as meaningful to peer faculty.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

I begin this chapter by summarizing the findings of this study and situating them in the extant literature on faculty engagement in assessment. With the backdrop of literature, it suggests how the findings and conclusions inform the design and implementation of learning outcomes assessment processes by community colleges, culminating with a description of the "essence" of the experience as faculty champions of assessment. I then discuss the implications of the findings using an organizational leadership theory that emerged as relevant and meaningful in my interpretation of participant experiences in championing assessment. I next share recommendations for community college administrators and faculty regarding faculty engagement in the design, implementation, and support of a community college's assessment process. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a brief personal statement regarding the value of this study to me and my own professional practice.

Faculty Roles in Assessment and Accountability

As discussed in the literature, much of the impetus behind assessment work has been driven by the call for accountability (Ewell, 2002). Results of this study show that assessment work that is focused on accountability may not be a useful way to supporting faculty engagement. This finding is best illustrated by my second interviews with the participants during which I asked them which factors in their experience were least important to their engagement in assessment work, using peer support as an example of an internal influence and accreditation as an example of an external influence. Overwhelmingly, the participants called out "external influences" as being least important to their engagement in assessment. The participants acknowledged that external influences, such as accreditation, were not entirely unimportant, but

they were not important relative to factors such as peer support, which have been essential to their engagement. The engagement of faculty champions in assessment was supported by examples of experiences that they viewed as having a direct connection to teaching and learning, such as their experiences in learning about Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). In contrast, though relevant to assessment, the faculty seemed to see accreditation as representative of external, reporting functions carried out by administration and less important to faculty responsibilities (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

Ewell and Jankowski (2015) argue that it is possible for assessment work to simultaneously serve the purposes of accountability and improvement. Whereas this may be true, it is important to recognize that faculty participants in this study did not make an explicit connection between their roles in assessment and accountability work, such as accreditation. However, three participants did describe a part of their roles as *Leader* and *Analyst*, which may be useful in supporting accountability work. For example, the roles of *Leader* and *Analyst* included work that was institutionally valuable in an accreditation process, such as the work of reporting, organizing, and analyzing data for program review processes. Program review involves the collection and analysis of evidence of student learning, as well as recommendations for action, serving both an accountability function and improvement function (Ewell & Ikenberry, 2015). From this perspective, program review "encompasses the complete assessment cycle, from gathering evidence to action-oriented improvement" (Ewell & Ikenberry, 2015, p. 143), and this linkage between assessment and program review, which is evident in results of this study, may represent assessment work that serves the purposes of both accountability and improvement.

As another example, in the role of *Leader*, participants described experiences in which they led the processes of organizing plans and reporting results for learning outcomes assessment. Also, in the role of *Analyst*, participants described creating curriculum maps that served as evidence of the alignment and distribution of learning outcomes, as well as evidence of students' attainment of those outcomes. These examples of assessment work may be valuable in an institution's accreditation reporting, as they are all examples of work that is focused on both improvement and accountability. Whereas the participants described each of the faculty roles in assessment (identified in Chapter 4) as being meaningful in their efforts to improve teaching and learning, the work of the *Leader* and *Analyst* suggest that there are ways that faculty champions support both accountability and improvement of teaching and learning relative to assessment, despite the participants' assertions that these roles contributed more to support their own engagement in assessment as faculty, rather than to their college's accreditation processes. When it comes to the design of assessment work, Ewell and Jankowski note that, "institutions that begin with improvement in mind get information that can simultaneously serve accreditation, while those that begin with accreditation in mind do not usually get information that is useful for improvement" (Ewell & Jankowski, 2015, p. 158).

Improving Teaching and Learning

Whereas scholars have suggested that assessment work may be appropriately framed as scholarly work (Angelo, 2002; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010), as a way of strengthening the connection between assessment work and the improvement of teaching and learning, scholarship did not emerge as a theme in this study, and this finding is consistent with a finding in my previous study of faculty perceptions of assessment (Hackman, 2014). However, whereas scholarship did not emerge as an important aspect of faculty champions' roles, this study did

identify the improvement of teaching and learning as an important part of participants' experiences, especially as it related to their roles as *Implementers* and *Teachers*. These two roles had the closest connection to the classroom and to participants' primary role of teaching, and this finding aligns with research reported in the literature.

Hughes (2007) argues that assessment work designed to improve teaching and learning should be recognized as scholarship and fits well with an action research model in which faculty members pose questions about students' learning, gather data, and then make informed changes to their teaching to improve students' learning. Participants discussed examples of ways they study students' learning, especially with their use of CATs, though they do not consider this faculty scholarship. In participants' descriptions of their experiences using CATs as *Implementers*, they discussed the process of posing questions about their students' learning, gathering data, and then using that data to make changes to their teaching to improve students' learning. However, participants did not recognize that their study of students' learning was a form of scholarship, including representing an approach to action research that is described in the literature (Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010). Whereas Hutchings (2010) argues that faculty engagement in assessment may be enhanced by "reframing the work of assessment as scholarship", it must be rewarded to ensure that it is formally recognized as a legitimate aspect of the faculty role. Hutchings asserts,

> Creating a place (and incentives) for greater faculty involvement in assessment means seeing such work not simply as service or as good campus citizenship but as an important intellectual enterprise – a form of scholarship reflecting faculty's professional judgment about the nature of deep understanding of their field and about how such understanding is developed. (2010, p. 15)

Therefore, if assessment work is to be recognized as scholarship by community colleges, more work is needed by community college administrators to support and recognize faculty

engagement in assessment as scholarship. Whereas participants shared that their experiences in implementing tools such as CATs in their own teaching have been valuable to them as teachers, it was not clear that those efforts were also considered valuable to the institution by being recognized or rewarded by the college administration. This omission may have repercussions that are detrimental for community colleges as organizations and for the faculty who work in these settings.

The Essence of Community College Faculty Members' Experiences as Champions of Assessment

In offering up the voices of community college faculty members, the qualitative study adds a new dimension to the literature on the ways community college faculty engage and lead learning outcomes assessment. Through my interviews with the participants, I identified several roles that were important to them as leaders in assessment (see Table 2). The findings clarify the critical roles that faculty play in learning outcomes assessment, including the leadership role that is also consistent with results reported by Banta, 1999; Evans, 2010; Gold, Rhoades, Smith & Kuh, 2011; Hughes, 2007; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh & Ewell, 2010; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Palomba & Banta, 1999).

The findings also suggest that faculty engagement in assessment is about much more than mere participation; rather, this study depicts faculty engagement more like a cast of actors with specialized roles that contribute to a college learning outcomes assessment process. It was evident throughout my conversations with the participants, as their roles and responsibilities emerged and took shape in my narrative, that they felt strongly about supporting assessment at RRCC. In my second interview with the faculty champions, one of my last questions asked each

of the participants how they felt discussing their leadership of assessment with me, and their

responses both surprised and gratified me. Each participant described the pride they felt in

sharing their roles with me, reflecting on what made their roles satisfying and rewarding. As

Paul responded, "I'm proud of what we're doing." Brittany also said she felt proud to discuss

her role, adding, "Anytime you are on a committee like this, you would like to think you made

headway and you made improvements that will be carried on in the future and that is something

to be proud of." Participants also stated that my invitation to share their experience with

assessment made them feel more confident in their expertise and even more committed to their

roles in championing assessment.

While these aspects of the faculty experience are gratifying to hear, there are aspects to

the narrative that need further consideration. Over time, changes to the assessment process

occurred that shifted faculty champions' experiences in assessment, and though less positive,

these aspects of the faculty role are also informative of the ways in which faculty champions

demonstrate their engagement with assessment. I am referring here to the time when the faculty

began to feel that their leadership roles were threatened by changes made by college

administrators to the learning outcomes assessment process, and these changes brought on

feelings of frustration and discouragement. The emotions that faculty champions exhibited when

describing changes that their administration made to assessment without obtaining their input

were deeply felt and readily visible. Their heartfelt description of this change signaled to me that

they were not merely proud of themselves, due the sense of purpose that they felt as leaders

among peer faculty in one their college's highest priorities, but because they believed their roles

were essential to an assessment process that sustained their engagement in improved teaching

and learning. This essence of the faculty champion experience with assessment, including a

passionate commitment to their various roles in supporting assessment work, also signified the importance of administrative support so that faculty can feel truly empowered as leaders in these roles. With the support of administration, faculty work in assessment matters and when this support shifts or is removed, the sense of importance that the faculty feel for this work seems to diminish.

The essence of the faculty champions' experience as illustrated by roles is depicted using a visual model (see Figure 3), showing the overlap between participants' roles in assessment, their universal experience of the roles of *Leader, Learner,* and *Implementer*, and the foundational support that administration provides for these roles.
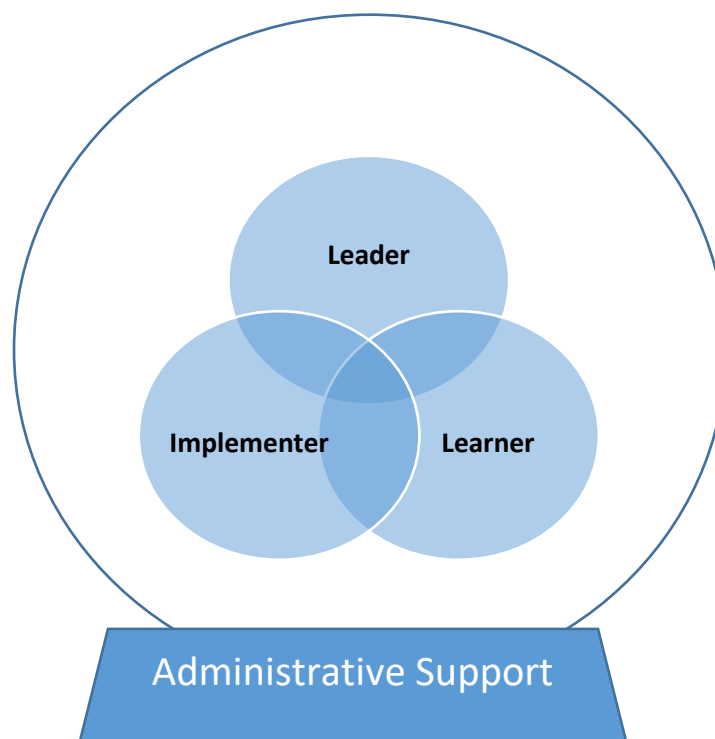

Figure 2. Visual model of the essence of community college faculty members' experiences as champions of assessment.

Whereas the roles of *Analyst*, *Teacher*, *Advocate*, *Partner* were central to some participants' experiences as champions of assessment, they were not universally experienced by all participants and therefore not part of the essence of faculty members' experiences as champions of assessment. As faculty champions, they are committed to taking ownership of the teaching and learning process. They see assessment work as embedded and essential to their roles as instructors, and recognize the value of not just 'doing' assessment, but using what they learn in assessment to improve their own teaching and the learning experience for their students. Indeed, they see assessment as inextricably tied to teaching, and as essential to their commitment to improve teaching and learning.

Implications

This study elucidates the experiences of five faculty champions of assessment. My narrative of their experiences provides a rich description of what community college faculty experience as champions of assessment and how they experience their roles in assessment. These experiences are informed by a larger culture and context within a particular community college setting, making it important for me to consider implications that are relevant to this setting and other community college contexts to which learning outcomes assessment is critically important to accountability but also the improvement of student learning outcomes. Whereas culture and context varies across community colleges, I recognize that the results of my study of five participants' experiences may be better understood through the lenses of organizational leadership theories. Therefore, I have chosen to conclude my dissertation by analyzing the findings of this study by using a well-recognized meta-theory of organizational leadership.

Whereas my literature review in Chapter 2 was completed prior to data collection in this study, the review was designed to demonstrate the existence of the problem of faculty

engagement in championing learning outcomes assessment and the need to study this problem (Creswell, 2013). Because qualitative research design is necessarily emergent as researchers seek the best ways to learn about and understand the problem being studied (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998), I did not consider my literature exhaustive of all of the potential theories and constructs that might emerge to inform the interpretation of my findings. Likewise, because literature reviews associated with qualitative research often need to be emergent to support sense-making, I chose to continuing searching and using the literature to identify ways to understand the findings of this study pertaining to the essence of the experience of faculty champions of assessment (Suter, 2012).

Consistent with qualitative methodology, the design of this study was emergent in that I, as the researcher, allowed the data and my analysis of them to inform my interviews with participants as the study progressed (Creswell, 2013). During my analysis of the qualitative interview data, I noticed the emergence of the faculty roles in assessment as distinct leadership roles and realized that I had not reviewed the literature on organizational leadership theory as part of my initial review of literature reported in Chapter 2. To be candid, I realize now that I did not initially associate championing assessment as a leadership role in the way that seems evident to me now. However, my analysis led me to consider more deeply how to describe and interpret these roles and as I reflected on the participants' description of their experiences, I noticed that they associated their work as champions of assessment with leadership. Therefore, I determined that organizational leadership theory could provide a means of sense-making that could describe the experience of faculty as champions of assessment.

After considering various theories of organizational leadership, I determined that the Four-Frame Model for Leadership by Bolman and Deal (2013) would provide a meaningful way

to interpret the findings of this study, beginning by describing the Four-Frame Model and then discussing how and why the Four-Frame Model illuminates and deepens understanding of faculty leadership in assessment. After reflecting on the interview data, I conclude with a discussion of the relationship between faculty roles in assessment and the Four-Frame Model of Leadership.

Four-Frame Model of Leadership

Organizational leadership theories provide a diversity of approaches to understanding behaviors within organizations and frameworks for navigating work within an organization. One particular approach that is useful in the current study is the four-frame model for understanding leadership of organizations by Bolman and Deal (2013) (see Table 4, as pictured in Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 19). The four-frame model uses lenses to understand organizational behavior that are focused on structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions of leadership.

In the structural frame, Bolman and Deal describe organizations as factories in which roles and goals are well defined and resources are strategically distributed, relying on hierarchies and top-down directives led by upper management. In contrast, the focus of the human resource frame is on interpersonal relationships, representing organizations that behave more like family than businesses. There is great attention to "fit" between the needs of the organization and the needs of individuals within the family-like organization, and leadership is seen as empowerment and the distribution of resources to support the growth and development of individuals within the organization. In the political frame, organizations are more volatile, and likened to a jungle. Power, conflict and competition are central to how organizations led by leaders using the political frame work where overcoming chaos requires coalition building. Finally, the symbolic

frame is characterized as a temple or theater where ritual and ceremony are critical elements to

the organization's culture. Leaders work to create meaning through performance, and they

motivate others to follow along to their inspirational stories (for a summary of the four frames,

see Table 4 below).

Table 4

Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model

Exhibit 1.1 Overview of the Four-Frame Model.				
	Frame			
	Structural	**Human Resource**	**Political**	**Symbolic**
Metaphor for organization	Factory or Machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theater
Central concepts	Roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy and political savvy	Inspiration
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning

Source: (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 19)

Bolman and Deal (2013) argue that leaders should strive for multi-frame thinking in

order to be most effective in their leadership roles. However, because organizational culture

varies depending on the situation and context, leaders may find that one frame is more useful than others in navigating the issues at hand. This observation is meaningful to me as well, as I analyze my interview data and consider results relative to faculty champions' leadership of assessment. As I reflected on my data, I considered each of the four frames in an attempt to describe how best to understand the phenomenon of faculty leadership in assessment at RRCC and then identify implications for this study.

Looking back at the faculty roles in assessment, looking specifically at roles that I identified in Chapter 4, I reflected on the alignment between these roles and Bolman and Deal's Four Frames. I noticed that the dominant work in each of the faculty roles and the words participants used to describe their roles in assessment reflected the central concept of one of the four frames, more than the other three frames. I looked for intersections between participants' descriptions of their roles in assessment and also their descriptions of how those roles manifested in their organization. For example, the roles of *Learner*, *Leader*, *Partner*, and *Teacher* all focused on the supporting faculty's needs and skill development in assessment and the familial collaboration between faculty colleagues in partnering to do assessment work. In my analysis, these roles reflected the dominance of the human resource frame, which is focused on needs, skills, and relationships as well as the empowerment of employees in an organization.

Whereas the human resource frame emerged as the dominant frame in the faculty roles in assessment, identified in this study, I also found evidence that other frames were at work in participants' experiences championing learning outcomes assessment. The roles of *Analyst* and *Implementer* reflected aspects of the structural frame because these roles were very focused on the task at hand (i.e., the work of doing assessment). As *Analysts,* participants described using tools and technology to gather and analyze assessment data and outcomes, and as *Implementers*,

they focused on their use of assessment tools in their own teaching and classrooms. The focus on doing the work of assessment most closely aligned with the structural frame, whose central focus is on roles and tasks designed to work towards achieving defined goals.

Finally, I suggest that the role of *Advocate* reflected both the symbolic and political frames. The symbolic frame was evident in participants' descriptions of their advocacy in assessment when they used phrases such as "carry the torch" and "witnessing [my] faith." Also, participants who demonstrated the role of *Advocate*, described their work as seeking to inspire others to see the value of assessment in their own teaching and learning. For example, the presentation given by Paul and Sean at the state assessment conference represented an example of the *Advocate's* performance role, reflecting the symbolic frame as they shared their stories of assessment work that they had done with RRCC faculty. The role of the *Advocate* also reflected the political frame as the participants described the importance of advocating with their administration about the importance of their roles as empowered leaders in assessment work. When participants began to sense a conflict between the faculty leads and the administration, the *Advocate* role became important to participants as they advocated for continued strong faculty leadership in assessment work. Table 5 illustrates the faculty roles in assessment (see, again, Table 2) and their alignment with the Four Frames of Bolman and Deal.

Table 5

Faculty Roles' in Assessment Alignment with the Four Frames

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote	Bolman & Deal Frame
Learner	Participates in professional development activities related to assessment; pursues opportunities to expand knowledge of assessment.	That CATs class got that dialogue going in my head. So, then at different in-services we would have, or different faculty classes, we have these things called EDTRs – Educational Development in Teaching Resource kind of things. - *Paul*	Human Resource
Implementer	Uses assessment in his/her own teaching and learning processes; makes changes to pedagogy or curriculum in response to assessment findings	Well, in the classroom, I talk about it, I use the tools, I analyze it, I interpret it, I provide the results, I share the results with my students; I share it with faculty when the opportunity presents itself. – *Brittany*	Structural
Leader	Provides leadership for assessment efforts; coordinates reporting; empowered to support faculty colleagues' participation in assessment	So I would say that the six leads plus the chair, we have owned the process. Owned the development and the ongoing logistics of the committee and so in that we, we faculty have owned it certainly with support and mentoring from the administration but it really felt as though we, the faculty, owned that thing. –*Paul*	Human Resource
Analyst	Analyzes and translates assessment data for faculty peers; creates maps of curriculum to ensure alignment between course, program, and/or institutional outcomes	Personally, I guess, I just like to analyze things in general, even if I'm reading the simplest little fiction novel I try to analyze things. So I guess it's just in my nature to do so. –*Liz*	Structural

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote	Bolman & Deal Frame
Partner	Collaborates with another faculty member to coordinate assessment work across multiple discipline areas; may collaborate on the development of assessment tools	I'm a huge partner with critical thinking because obviously, my program requires a heavy amount of critical thinking. So, when they generated that rubric and asked me to be a partner; that was two leads ago. I love that rubric. It helped me do my job because it was a perfect fit for so many different assignments in so many of my classes. -*Brittany*	Human Resource
Teacher	Teaches other faculty on what assessment is and ways to do it; develops rubrics and other tools to ease the involvement of other faculty (adjuncts and full-time); listener, supporter, and mentor of other faculty who want/need to do assessment in their courses/programs	I like it when a new faculty member will call me – or not necessarily even a new faculty member but a faculty member who has not necessarily participated in gen. ed. assessment, and they say, "I would like to participate in gen. ed., I just don't know where to start. I have no idea where to start." We'll sit in their office and I'll ask them, "What are some assignments that you already do in your classes?" And we figure it out. And you can kind of see the light bulb go off above their head and they never thought about, "I can use this assignment to assess both oral presentations and maybe even critical thinking." –*James*	Human Resource

Role	Definition	Exemplar Quote	Bolman & Deal Frame
Advocate	Advocates for assessment as a valuable tool for faculty; shares assessment work outside of the institution; advocates for faculty leadership in assessment	I just feel like at this point it's not something I feel like I can just easily lay down, not even pass, but I feel like it's something that I have to continue to do and to carry that torch. In my conversations with other faculty who don't really have a sense that they have that same ownership of assessment, to share with them some of these [tools] and reading about it I was like, "Wow! It's almost like going and witnessing your faith kind of thing." It's like, "This is what has happened and this is what I've been able to see and these are the positive things that can come if you really truly get this thing called assessment." -*Sean*	Symbolic

Political |

Implications of the Four-Frame Model

According to Cain and Hutchings (2015), "When considering and promoting faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment, culture, climate, context, and language all matter deeply" (p. 101). Therefore, I contend that frames may be a meaningful way to understand faculty champion roles and to provide recommendations for faculty engagement, which will be discussed later in this chapter. As illustrated in Table 5 above, and in the preceding narrative description of faculty roles in assessment and their alignment with the Four Frames of Bolman & Deal (2013), participants in this study overwhelmingly identified their roles in assessment with the central concepts of the human resource frame. That is, participants described the importance of their relationships with each other and with the administration, and they also described the

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importance of feeling empowered as leaders and being supported by their administration in a way that was meaningful and valuable to help them sustain their engagement in the assessment work. These elements suggest a strong alignment with the human resource frame (see again Table 4), which I explain in greater depth below. As such, I argue that the human resource frame offers a meaningful lens to understand the experiences and perceptions of the assessment work of faculty leaders of assessment (note: emphasis in bold is mine).

> The human resource frame is built on the following assumptions:
>
> a) Organizations exist to **serve human needs** rather than the converse; b) People and organizations **need each other**. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities; c) When the **fit** between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization – or both become victims, and d) A good fit benefits both. Individuals find **meaningful and satisfying work**, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 117)

Human service and fit. Participants described their roles as faculty champions as a service to their faculty colleagues and their students, not so much as a service to the organization (RRCC) in support of the organization's goals. The faculty leaders' focus on service to each other was evident in their description of their roles as *Teachers* (teaching and mentoring peers in their use of assessment) and as *Partners* (collaborating with peers in the design and use of assessment). This study also illuminated the importance of the fit between the faculty leads and their community college in the early years of the design and implementation of assessment. Whereas the first round of interviews revealed that the participants felt empowered, entrusted, and valued by the administration as leaders of assessment, the second round of interviews conducted about 9 months after the first set of interviews, revealed a potential divergence of fit between the needs of the organization and the needs of the faculty champions, which contributed

to participants questioning their future interest and engagement in assessment work, as well as support for their roles in assessment.

In Chapter 5, the fragility of administrative support emerged as participants discussed support for their engagement in assessment. It became clear that participants perceived a mismatch of "fit" between their individual need to be meaningfully involved in the assessment process, and their perception that the administration no longer valued their leadership in assessment. This led to feelings of neglect that were articulated in the second round of interviews, to the extent that some pondered withdrawing or actually did withdraw from their assessment roles. As Jeff stated, the college's decision to use of the standardized CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment) tool in order to provide administration with comparable data with peer institutions "takes the faculty right out of the equation." This improved "fit" between the college and its external peers was perceived to divide faculty leaders of assessment from the college administration. As Paul stated, "I wouldn't feel like I'm a part of that [use of the standardized tool]. I would feel like it's just being done and I don't really need to worry about it." The potential mismatch of fit between the needs of the faculty and the needs of the college illuminates the central challenge of the human resource frame, as identified by Bolman and Deal (2013), which is the alignment between organizational needs and human needs. A misalignment between these needs may lead the faculty participants to disengage from key roles they have played in assessment work that are associated with the human resource frame: *Leader*, *Learner*, *Partner*, and *Teacher*. Anticipating that these roles may not be valued and supported by RRCC administration, the faculty may retreat from them and ultimately disengage from their leadership of assessment altogether.

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Whereas this study did not examine the perspectives of the college administration, nor the organization overall, in the first round of interviews the participants described feeling as though their faculty leadership roles were valued by the administration, and that the administration thought they were needed to ensure the institution's success in assessment work. As discussed in Chapter 5, Brittany described the administration as being reliant on the talent and expertise of the faculty when it came to decision making for assessment work. She believed that the administration valued and respected her knowledge and cooperation, and she continued to engage in the work partly because she believed the work was important to the college, as was communicated to her through the administration. These relationship dynamics reflect the importance of focusing on the human needs within the organization, filling the gap between the needs of the college and of the faculty leaders in assessment. Bolman and Deal (2013) describe the dual benefit when organization and employee needs match by saying, "When individuals find satisfaction and meaning in work, organizations profit from the effective use of their talent and energy" (p. 159).

Meaningful work. In describing their roles and support for their work in assessment, participants described the types of experiences that made their work in assessment meaningful. In Chapter 4, I detailed the assessment work that participants engaged in as part of each of their faculty roles, including describing how they made meaningful contributions to participants' experiences in these roles.   Following are examples of participants' descriptions of their roles as *Learners*, *Implementers*, *Leaders*, and *Analysts*, which all contributed to meaningful experiences in assessment.

Learning about assessment through the CTL workshops (*Learner*) and using tools such as CATs (*Implementer*) facilitated participants' description of assessment work as meaningful

because these experiences were closely connected with the participants' primary role of teaching. Each of the participants engaged in the CTL workshops and described ways they regularly utilize assessment in their classrooms, which they find meaningful as faculty members. The participants described their roles as *Leaders* as essential to an assessment process that is meaningful to faculty; they also insisted on the continuity and consistency of faculty leadership of assessment, which they felt was valued by the institution. The faculty-driven nature of these participants' experiences in assessment, specifically through their *Implementer* role facilitated a focus on improvement of teaching and learning, which maintained the strong connection to their primary roles as instructors. Three of the participants described experiences in their roles as *Analysts* that also made their work in assessment meaningful. For example, Liz described her analysis of assessment data as an important part of what sustains her engagement in assessment. As illustrated by these examples, the faculty roles in assessment contributed to the participants' feeling as though their work was meaningful.

From the perspective of the participants, when the faculty leads felt empowered and valued as leaders in their roles, they felt satisfied individually and also felt that their work was satisfying institutional needs. Participants believed that when their needs fit well with the College's needs, both parties were successful. Paul described his recollection of the time when he felt as though both the faculty leads and institution were in sync, saying, "the healthiest and most positive we have felt about this is when it really did feel that it was a very faculty-happening, faculty-driven thing." As discussed in Chapter 5, this quote suggests that faculty felt that they were empowered as leaders and also that their leadership was valued by the administration. The meaningful work participants experienced in these roles, and the administration's support of faculty in these roles suggests that the human resource frame is

useful in understanding how participants' work contributes to the organization overall and the importance of the administration supporting their work as faculty champions.

Implications for Faculty Leadership in Assessment and the Human Resource Frame

The findings of this study reveal the importance of the relationships between the faculty leaders in assessment, their faculty colleagues, and the college administration. The participants described the importance of their roles as leaders as well as the support they receive from the administration, and from each other, to provide steady leadership of assessment work. Whereas the participants believed their leadership was critical to ensure assessment work was experienced as meaningful for faculty, they also believed that the administration played an important role in empowering them to be effective leaders. The salient challenge that emerged in this study is one identified by Bolman and Deal (2013) in the human resource frame: aligning organizational and human needs. During the course of this study, the faculty leaders became concerned about whether their need to be empowered as leaders of assessment would continue to be recognized and supported by the administration (representing the organization). This concern suggests that faculty leadership in assessment in this study was largely due to the central concepts of the human resource frame: aligning the needs of individuals and the organization, developing and supporting the skills of employees, nurturing relationships between faculty and between faculty and administration, and empowering faculty as leaders of assessment work.

Whereas this study revealed that the challenges and concerns associated with faculty engagement in assessment were largely related to support, skills, and empowerment, this is undoubtedly not the case in every context. Campuses have varied cultures, and campus contexts are known to influence how faculty engage in this work (Cain & Hutchings, 2015; Ikenberry &

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Kuh, 2015), making it important to understand campus context to understand how best to navigate a particular issue. For example, a symbolic culture may best support faculty engagement in assessment by hosting ceremonies or events that celebrate faculty's work in assessment through rich, inspiring stories.   Whereas in a structural culture, faculty engagement may best be supported through the development of explicit goals through formal programs; recognition would likely be earned by evidence of goal attainment. Utilizing the four-frame model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) may assist leaders in identifying the most promising approach to engaging faculty in assessment, rather than potentially wasting time and energy by trying approaches that may not meet the institution's predominant values and cultural norms.

Recommendations for Community College Administrators

Administrators should empower faculty as leaders in their roles supporting assessment. When I identified the human resource frame as the one most closely aligned with faculty assessment work in this study, I recognized the importance of aligning institutional resources with the needs of faculty leaders whose energy and talent is needed to ensure other faculty engage in the assessment process. Faculty leaders in assessment need to be supported and empowered to facilitate and sustain not only their engagement but also the engagement of others. This recommendation extends to all faculty, including those in contingent roles; given the growing numbers of adjunct faculty in community colleges (Twombly & Townsend, 2008), it is critical that administrators empower all faculty to engage in leading assessment work. Whereas the fit between the process of assessment serving both accountability needs and the needs to improve teaching and learning is a challenge, these findings demonstrate that supporting faculty's *Leader* and *Analyst* roles in assessment may facilitate that fit. Finally, supporting and empowering faculty's roles in assessment ensures that faculty leaders find their work in

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assessment meaningful, from which the college stands to benefit by having a faculty that is engaged in assessment work.

Administrators should commit to ensuring that the process for assessment work is designed to improve student learning. Whereas the extant literature depicts faculty as uninterested in assessment work, much of the impetus behind assessment work has been for the purpose of accountability (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). On the contrary, this study has shown that faculty leaders of assessment are engaged in assessment work when they are empowered, supported, and experience assessment as meaningful for improving teaching and learning. This recommendation is supported by Cain and Hutchings (2015) who assert, "assessment for the improvement of learning outcomes is inherently a faculty-centric process that relies on their expertise, values their professional disciplinary judgment, and supports their efforts to focus on student learning on both the small and large scales" (p. 98). Therefore, community college administrators should empower faculty leaders in assessment on their campuses and rely on their talent, energy, and commitment to improving teaching and learning on several levels, beginning with their own teaching and extending their expertise to other faculty.

Administrators should support and reward faculty development to support faculty's work in assessment. Faculty development support for assessment work continues to be a top priority among national surveys of chief academic officers (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). The findings of this study suggest that learning about assessment through faculty development is also an important part of faculty engagement. These learning experiences contributed much to participants' feeling engaged in meaningful work in assessment. Therefore, I recommend that administrators create support structures, formal systems, and rewards that recognize faculty's

work in assessment. According to Cain and Hutchings (2015), in the design of assessment programs, "structural support and faculty development, important anywhere, may be even more so" in institutions that rely heavily on contingent faculty (p. 102). Because community colleges rely so much on these faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Jacoby, 2006; Twombly & Townsend, 2008), supporting all faculty in participating in assessment activities elicits a particular challenge. If administrators wish to engage both full- and part-time faculty in assessment activities, as Cain and Hutchings recommend, they need to consider flexible methods of professional development, such as online or hybrid workshops and courses, which would be more accessible to part-time faculty whom often find it difficult to attend workshops in person.

Several models for supporting and rewarding faculty engagement in assessment already exist in community colleges throughout the country. For example, Valencia College, in Florida, identified seven "Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator" (see Figure 4) that guide their faculty through the development of a portfolio as part of their tenure process. Faculty members are expected to participate in professional development activities related to each of the competencies and are required to complete a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) project. Assessment is one of the seven competencies, but as one reads the details of each of the other six competencies it is clear that assessment is woven throughout nearly all of the seven areas (see Appendix C).
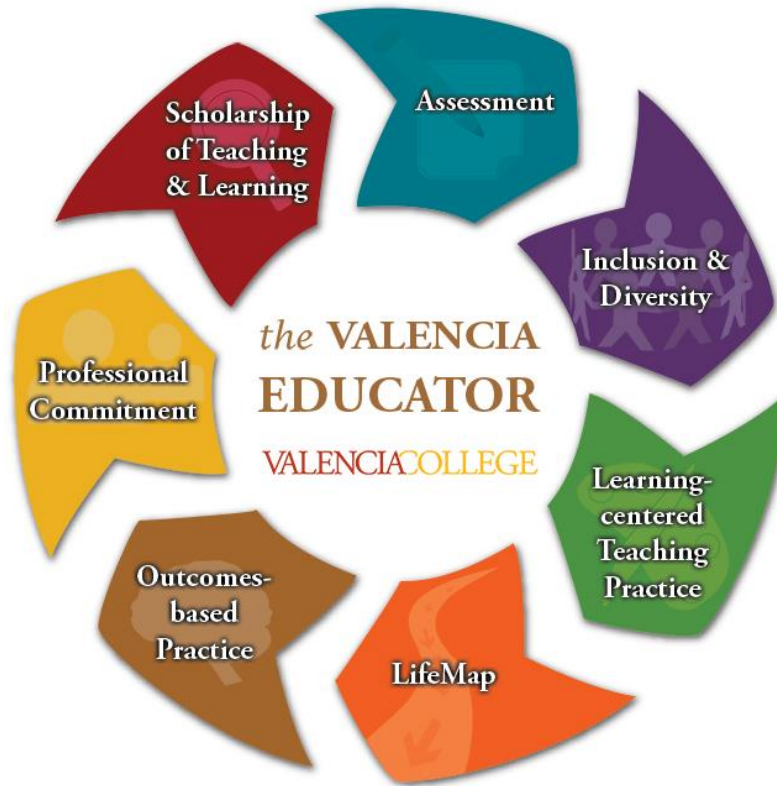
Figure 3. Valencia College Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator. (Valencia College, 2017a).

Another example is Durham Technical Community College in North Carolina where both full- and part-time faculty are rewarded for participation in SoTL projects. Full-time faculty can be awarded up to an 8 credit hour release from their teaching load to design and complete a SoTL project; part-time faculty can earn a stipend of $500 (Durham Technical Community College, 2017). These are just a couple examples of promising models that community college administrators can consider as they design their own structures and systems for both support of and recognition of faculty engagement in assessment. These examples align with Hutchings' (2010) recommendation to frame faculty work in assessment as scholarly in order to facilitate their engagement. This model for recognizing faculty work meets well with the findings of this

study, which suggest that faculty engagement is facilitated by a focus on teaching and learning and supported and recognized by administration.

Recommendations for Community College Faculty

Community college faculty should take ownership and leadership of assessment to ensure the process is meaningful and useful for teaching and learning. If assessment processes are to truly be useful for faculty in the improvement of teaching and learning, then faculty should take the lead on shaping the assessment process on their campus. Whereas administration and offices such as institutional research provide key support structures for faculty's work in assessment, findings from this study suggest that faculty champions become engaged in assessment when they feel empowered to work with their peers in the assessment process. This study found leading and ultimately owning assessment requires that faculty learn about assessment, use assessment in their own teaching and learning practice, teach and support their peers in the use of assessment, and advocate for assessment as an important tool in teaching and learning.

Community college faculty should share what they've learned from assessment and how it has impacted teaching and learning with their faculty peers. Participants stated that they became more committed to assessment as they used it and saw its connection to their teaching. Whereas participants discussed their use of assessment and shared with me what they learned and changed in their teaching, they did not have a systematic way of sharing lessons about change with a more public audience, such as faculty peers in other institutions. I believe that one promising strategy to make assessment work more visible is for faculty to engage in projects such as SoTL and action research, which requires faculty to share their results and impact with a broader audience than themselves. This is important because SoTL and action

research projects are specifically focused on the classroom and the impact on teaching and learning; more faculty engagement in this type of work would facilitate a more visible presence of faculty engagement in assessment for the purpose of improving teaching and learning. I believe that faculty engagement in SoTL and action research would converge the work in several of the faculty roles in assessment (identified in Chapter 4), which contributed to their engagement in assessment. Specifically, SoTL would leverage their experiences as *Implementers* (designing and using assessment in their own teaching), *Analysts* (studying assessment data and student learning outcomes), and *Teachers* (sharing with their peer faculty what they've learned using assessment in their teaching). As described on Valencia College's website describing faculty SoTL work: .

> Valencia educators will continuously examine the effectiveness of their teaching, counseling, librarianship and assessment methodologies in terms of student learning. They also will keep abreast of the current scholarship in the fields of teaching and learning.
> The faculty member will:
> - produce professional scholarly work (action research or traditional research) related to teaching and learning, that meets the Valencia Standards of Scholarship
> - build upon the work of others (consult experts, colleagues, self, students)
> - be open to constructive critique (by both colleagues and students)
> - make professional scholarly work public to college and broader audiences through Valencia's research repository and other means
> - collect evidence of the relationship of SoTL to improved teaching and learning
> - demonstrate use of current teaching and learning theory & practice
>
> (Valencia College, 2017b)

It is important to note, however, that community college faculty need support to participate in SoTL projects. With community college faculty members' roles focused primarily on teaching and carrying significant teaching responsibilities (Eddy, 2010), community college administrators should consider structures or rewards for participation in SoTL work, such as the model at Durham Technical and Community College.

Recommendations for Future Research

Creswell suggests that qualitative studies are quite useful in empowering individuals to "share their stories" and "hear their voices" (2013, p. 48). This qualitative study of faculty champions' experiences in assessment was useful in exploring and illuminating faculty roles in assessment by empowering the voices of faculty, which are not often heard in the extant literature. The findings suggest areas for future qualitative and quantitative research. A first step in future research of faculty experiences in assessment would be to repeat this study across multiple community colleges. It would be useful to study faculty experiences in assessment in other settings to confirm the faculty roles in assessment that were identified in this study as well as to see whether additional roles may be an important part of faculty leaders' experiences in assessment. This study could be replicated in different community college settings, which may reveal additional and different roles that faculty experience in assessment in a small, rural institution compared to a large, urban institution, for example.

The findings of this qualitative study of faculty champions' experiences in assessment also inform the development of a larger quantitative study of community college faculty and their roles in assessment. The faculty roles in assessment that emerged from the data can be further explored using a survey instrument, which could capture the extent to which faculty identify with these roles across many community colleges. According to Hutchings, Kinzie, and Kuh (2015) disciplinary identity matters when considering how to engage faculty in assessment work. A large-scale survey of community college faculty's roles in assessment could study whether there are differences in the roles faculty experience, depending on their disciplinary training. Such a study would also provide the opportunity to explore the relationship between the faculty members' roles in assessment and variables such as their employment status (full- or

part-time), teaching load, institutional type (comprehensive college, technical college, tribal college), and years of teaching experience.

Whereas this study did not seek to explore the perspectives of non-faculty champions in assessment, it would be useful to study the experiences of faculty who participate in assessment in various roles other than leaders of community college assessment work. A case study design may provide a fuller picture of the complexity of faculty leadership and engagement in assessment work relative to the larger organization, possibly using faculty classrooms where assessment is used to advance teaching and learning within the larger case study. A case study design might also include faculty who are not engaged in assessment to provide insights into how they use assessment in their teaching and learning practice, relative to faculty assessment users. Insights from others in the community college, especially campus administrators and institutional researchers may also provide useful perspectives to a study such as this one.

Closing

This study was equally important to me personally as it was to me professionally. The study provided a voice to community college faculty members whose voices are often marginalized in the landscape of higher education research. It was important to me to focus this study on community college faculty whose primary role is teaching, because I believe assessment is an important part of teaching. Much more research is needed to lift up the voices of faculty in the community college and understand their experiences in teaching and learning. As stated by Twombly and Townsend (2008), "It seems highly fitting that the institution that most prides itself on being a teaching institution should be the institution whose faculty members are most studied for their teaching approaches and student learning outcomes." The participants in

this study were proud to share their stories, and I am privileged to have illuminated their

experiences in the conversation about faculty roles in assessment.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Guide

Revised Interview Guide – April 2016

This interview guide is intended to illuminate community college faculty members' lived experiences as engaged faculty in learning outcomes assessment. This interview protocol consists of open-ended questions to aid the interactive conversational interview that will explore what faculty experience and how they experience engagement in learning outcomes assessment to describe the essence of faculty engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

After establishing rapport with interviewee, the following questions will guide the semi-structured interviews:

Interview One:

1. How did you come to be a faculty member in a community college?

2. Describe your role(s) as a faculty member.
   a. *If no mention of learning outcomes assessment, ask them to discuss their ideas about assessment being part of the role of faculty.*

3. Take a moment and reflect on when you first remember learning about learning outcomes assessment. Describe what you experienced at that time. Describe your initial understanding of learning outcomes assessment (purpose, value, etc.).

4. Describe your subsequent experiences in learning about learning outcomes assessment.

5. What were some of your thoughts or assumptions about learning outcomes assessment before becoming engaged?

6. How long have you been engaged in learning outcomes assessment?

7. What does it mean to you to be engaged in learning outcomes assessment as a community college faculty member?

8. Describe some factors that have supported your engagement in learning outcomes assessment.

9. What factors have complicated your engagement in assessment?

10. Have your thoughts or experiences changed over time? If so, how? If not, why not?

Interview Two:

During my first round of interviews with faculty engaged in learning outcomes assessment, I heard a wide range of experiences and thoughts about engagement in learning outcomes assessment and I would like to follow up on those today (*note: here I will briefly describe my process of analyzing data from the first interviews and how I identified themes*). The following themes emerged from our conversations, take look at them:

List all themes here:

Administrative support
Seeing the big picture – beyond the classroom
Change in perception
Diverse path to faculty
External influences
Faculty ownership
Faculty support
Improvement focused
Internal barriers
Lack of knowledge
Manageable work
Meaningful work
Peer support
Process evolution
Student connection
Student involvement
Teaching focused
Teamwork
Training
Useful work
Valuable work

1. What do you think about these themes? Do any of these themes reflect your experiences as a faculty member engaged in learning outcomes assessment?

2. Is there anything that surprises you? If so, explain why.

3. When you think about your experience as a faculty member engaged in learning outcomes assessment, do you notice anything missing from this list?

4. Does reading this list cause you to think of anything else about your experiences being engaged in learning outcomes assessment that we may not have discussed previously? Please describe.

5. Which of these themes seem least relevant to your experience as a faculty member engaged in learning outcomes assessment? How has your experience has been different?

6. Can you describe any experiences with these themes that have limited or compromised your engagement in learning outcomes assessment?

I'd like to ask some additional questions about the relationship between some of these themes.

1) How would you define faculty ownership?
   a. Tell me an experience you've had with assessment where you felt ownership.

2) In our previous conversation, you discussed examples of situations, people, tools, and processes that have served as barriers to your engagement in assessment work. What in your experience has helped to sustain your engagement when you come upon these barriers?

3) What is the relationship between your understanding of assessment and being "improvement focused"?

4) Does assessment work ever marginalize faculty engagement?

Wrap-Up:

We've spent time over these interview sessions talking a lot about your experiences being engaged in learning outcomes assessment. Over the last few weeks, have you thought of anything else that you like to discuss or say more about?

Can you describe how you've felt about discussing your engagement in learning outcomes assessment as part of these conversations?

Has discussing your experiences in learning outcomes assessment had any impact on your thinking about your engagement?

Do you have any advice for me as I continue this research project?

Appendix B

Sample Curriculum Maps

http://www.mccc.edu/aviation/images/curriculum_map.jpg

	Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes					
	PLO 1:	PLO 2:	PLO 3:	PLO 4:	PLO 5:	PLO 6:
	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to obtain the private and commercial certificates and instrument rating, including aeronautical technical skills and decision-making, while demonstrating safety as their primary focus	Analyze the effects of social, political, and economic world events on air transportation and how this may impact the aviation industry and careers in aviation	Describe the events in the development of aviation to the present day and evaluate the impact of these events on today's society	Demonstrate effective and correct written and verbal communication	Research and present information pertinent to their aviation discipline individually and in teams	Demonstrate an awareness of the ethical and professional issues associated with the aviation industry, including the importance of becoming a life-long learner in the aviation world
AVI 101, Aerospace Development			I,A	I,A	I,A	
AVI 102, Aviation Transportation		I, R	I,R,A	I,R,A	I,R,A	
AVI 105, Aviation Weather	I,R,M,A			I,R,A	I,R,A	
AVI 113, Flight I	I,R,A			I,R,A		I,R
AVI 114, Flight II	I,R,A			I,R,A		I,R
AVI 131, Commercial Pilot I	I,R,A			I	I	I
AVI 132, Commercial Pilot II	I,R,A			I	I	I
AVI 203, Aircraft Components	I,A			I,A	I,A	I,A
AVI 208, Aviation Seminar				M, A		R,A
AVI 213, Flight III	I,R,M,A			R,M,A		R,M
AVI 214, Flight IV	R,M,A			R,M,A		R,M
AVI 215, Aerodynamics	I,R			M, A		
AVI 231, Commercial Pilot III	I,R,A			I	I	I

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	Introductory Course	Research Methods	Advanced Content Course A	Laboratory / Practicum Course	Advanced Content Course B	Advanced Content Course C	Advanced Content Course D	Capstone Course
Content								
SLO 1: Disciplinary knowledge base (models and theories)	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 2: Disciplinary methods		Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 3: Disciplinary applications	Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
Critical Thinking								
SLO 4: Analysis and use of evidence		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 5: Evaluation, selection, and use of sources of information	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
Communication								
SLO 6: Written communication skills	Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
SLO 7: Oral communication skills		Introduced	Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed		
Integrity / Values								
SLO 8: Disciplinary ethical standards		Introduced		Reinforced	Reinforced			Mastery / Assessed
SLO 9: Academic integrity	Introduced	Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed
Project Management								
SLO 10: Interpersonal and team skills			Introduced		Reinforced		Reinforced	Mastery / Assessed
SLO 11: Self-regulation and metacognitive skills	Introduced			Reinforced	Reinforced	Reinforced		Mastery / Assessed

Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment   Sample Curriculum Map (Level of Skill)
http://uwf.edu/cutla/

http://oie.gsu.edu/assessment-and-review-academic-and-adminstrative/academic-assessment-and-review/assessment-manual/ensuring-learning-opportunities-2/

Sample Description of Teaching and Learning Competencies

Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator
Effective August 2016

Assessment

Valencia educators will develop student growth through consistent, timely formative and summative measures, and promote students' abilities to self-assess. Assessment practices will invite student feedback on the teaching and learning process as well as on student achievement.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

The faculty member will

- design and employ a variety of assessment measures and techniques, both formative and summative, to form a more complete picture of learning (e.g., classroom assessment techniques, authentic assessments, oral presentations, exams, student portfolios, journals, projects, etc.)
- design activities to help students refine their abilities to self-assess their learning
- employ formative feedback to assess the effectiveness of teaching, counseling, and librarianship practices
- employ formative feedback loops that assess student learning and inform students of their learning progress
- communicate assessment criteria to students and colleagues
- give timely feedback on learning activities and assessments
- evaluate effectiveness of assessment strategies and grading practices
- align formative and summative assessments with learning activities and outcomes

Inclusion and Diversity

Valencia educators will design learning opportunities that acknowledge, draw upon and are enriched by student diversity. Diversity has many dimensions, including sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability, cognitive style, skill level, age, religion, etc. An atmosphere of inclusion and understanding will be promoted in all learning environments.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

The faculty member will

- design and support learning experiences that address students' unique strengths and/or needs
- diversify the curricular and/or co-curricular activities to increase the presence of historically underrepresented groups

- use diverse perspectives to engage and deepen critical thinking
- create a learning atmosphere with respect, understanding, and appreciation of individual and group differences
- challenge students to identify and question their assumptions and consider how these affect, limit, and/or shape their viewpoints
- ensure accessibility of course content in alignment with federal law and Valencia standards

Learning-centered Teaching Practice

Valencia educators will implement diverse teaching and learning strategies that promote active learning and that foster both acquisition and application of knowledge and understanding.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

The faculty member will

- employ strategies that engage students to become more active learners (e.g., reference interviews, counseling inquiry, engaging lectures, classroom discussions, case studies, scenarios, role-play, problem-based learning, inquirybased learning, manipulatives, etc.)
- encourage students to challenge ideas and sources (e.g., debates, research critiques, reaction reports, etc.)
- use cooperative/collaborative learning strategies (e.g., peer to peer review, team projects, think/pair/share, etc.)
- incorporate concrete, real-life situations into learning activities
- invite student input on their educational experience (e.g., choice among assignment topics, classroom assessment techniques, etc.)
- employ methods that develop student understanding of discipline's thinking, practice, and procedures
- employ methods that increase the students' academic literacy within the discipline or field (e.g., reading, writing, numeracy, technology skills, information literacy, etc.)

LifeMap

Valencia educators will design learning opportunities that promote student life skills development while enhancing discipline learning. Through intentional inclusion of growthpromoting strategies, faculty will facilitate the students' gradual assumption of responsibility for making informed decisions and formulating and executing their educational, career, and life plans.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

The faculty member will

- establish student & faculty contact that contributes to students' academic, personal, and professional growth

- employ digital tools to aid student contact (e.g., Atlas, MyPortfolio, Blackboard, Ask-A-Librarian, email, etc.)
- seek out struggling students and identify options through dialog and appropriate referrals
- help students assume responsibility for making informed academic decisions (e.g., degree requirements, transfer options, financial aid, etc.)

- guide students in developing academic behaviors for college success (e.g., time management, study, test and note taking strategies, etc.)
- help students identify academic behaviors that can be adapted as life skills (e.g., library search skills, decision-making, communication skills, scientific understanding, etc.)

- assist students in clarifying and developing purpose (attention to life, career, education goals)

Outcomes-based Practice

The Essential Competency areas of Outcomes-based Practice and Assessment work hand in hand, but they are not the same thing. Outcomes-based Practice is the process of identifying what the learner should be able to do as a direct result of teaching/learning activities. Effective assessment helps us measure the level at which students achieve these desired outcomes. Creating appropriate outcomes is a different area for study and practice, crucial in establishing expectations for students.

Valencia educators will design and implement learning activities that intentionally lead students towards mastery in the Student Core Competencies (Think, Value, Communicate, and Act) as well as the related course and program outcomes.

The key question is "What will students be able to do as a result of the instruction?"

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

Tenure candidates demonstrating this competency must select at least one indicator that includes the student core competencies (Think, Value, Communicate, and Act).

The faculty member will

- create a new, or revised, learning outcome for a unit, course or program that meets the criteria for learning outcomes (this performance indicator must be used in conjunction with at least one other Outcomes-based Practice indicator for demonstration in faculty portfolios)
- align unit, course, and/or program outcomes with one or more student core competencies (Think, Value, Communicate & Act)

- collect evidence of progress toward student achievement of unit, course, or program learning outcomes
- sequence learning opportunities and assessments throughout units, courses, programs, and developmental advising to build student understanding and knowledge
- help students understand their growth in the acquisition of student core competencies (Think, Value, Communicate & Act) and program learning outcomes
- use evidence of student learning to review and improve units, courses, and programs (in classroom, counseling and library settings)
- ensure that unit, course, and program learning outcomes are current and relevant for future academic work and/or vocational and employment opportunities.

Professional Commitment

Valencia educators will stay current and continually improve their mastery of discipline/academic field, their excellence in pedagogy, and their active participation in the college's learning mission.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning
  The faculty member will
- stay current in discipline/academic field (e.g., professional organizations, conferences, journals, reading in the discipline, field work or clinical experience, etc.)
- contribute to discipline/academic field (e.g., publications, presentations at disciplinebased conference, poster sessions, writing articles, editing learning material, curriculum development, field work, sharing clinical experience, contributing to textbooks, sharing research with peers, etc.)
- participate in faculty development programs, resources or classes, whether Valencia-based or external university/college-based
- stay current with technological tools and/or platforms within discipline and at the college
- engage in ongoing discourse surrounding division, campus, and college work (e.g., meetings, ongoing committees, work teams, task forces, "Big Meetings," governing councils, etc.).
- collaborate with peers both in and out of discipline/academic field (e.g., develop educational materials to be shared; participate in peer observation of teaching, mentoring programs, or learning partners, etc.).
- engage in expanding and building institutional, programmatic and personal connections to the wider community (e.g., community involvement, service learning, civic engagement, board of [museums, hospital, etc.], partner K12 schools, student development leadership or activities, etc.).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Valencia educators will continuously examine the effectiveness of their teaching, counseling, librarianship and assessment methodologies in terms of student learning. They also will keep abreast of the current scholarship in the fields of teaching and learning.

Performance Indicators: Evidence of Learning

The faculty member will

- produce professional scholarly work (action research or traditional research) related to teaching and learning, that meets the Valencia Standards of Scholarship
- build upon the work of others (consult experts, colleagues, self, students)
- be open to constructive critique (by both colleagues and students)
- make professional scholarly work public to college and broader audiences through Valencia's research repository and other means
- collect evidence of the relationship of SoTL to improved teaching and learning
- demonstrate use of current teaching and learning theory & practice