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Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students

Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

OF PART-TIME COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

RHONDA M. GABOVITCH

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
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ABSTRACT

INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

OF PART-TIME COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

June 2014

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Community college graduation rates are low for the entering cohort of degree- or certificate-seeking students who attend full-time. After six years, 4 out of 10 students fail to earn a credential or continue to be enrolled. Graduation rates are even lower for students who enroll consistently on a part-time basis. Approximately 3 out of 4 of these students fail to earn a credential within six years. Much of the blame for the failure of part-time students is attributed to their demographic characteristics, lack of motivation, and poor educational preparation for college. Some of these characteristics result in their marginalization in higher education. High failure rates cause problems at the student, institutional, state, and national levels. Of particular interest to this study are factors that have been documented to promote persistence. These include the extent to which part-time students are engaged in their academic and social environment and the extent to

which students develop a sense of belonging within the classroom, clubs or organizations, program or department, or the institution as a whole.

Qualitative research methods were used in this dissertation to design and conduct a multiple case study at two community colleges in New England. The purpose of the study was to learn about the supports and impediments to student success. The two case studies are based on interviews or focus groups with 84 administrators, faculty, current students, and former students. In addition, documents were reviewed at both institutions. Five key findings resulted from this study. COMMUNICATION was the central and all-embracing issue that affected the success of part-time community college students. Campuses operated without distinctions being made between full-time and part-time students. Student engagement and sense of belonging were most likely to take place in the classroom. Administrators acknowledged the importance of faculty professional development opportunities, and faculty indicated that they would benefit from a greater understanding of student experiences and the barriers that confront most part-time students. Communication problems between academic offices and student affairs were apparent. Programmatic recommendations are provided for community college presidents and vice-presidents, and areas for future research are discussed.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Hyman Kitover, who passed away just before I started this doctoral program. He would get very teary-eyed when he spoke about his children and their educational accomplishments. This accomplishment would have made him extremely proud. I wish you were here, Dad, to share this joy with us. I know you have been watching over me and giving me the strength to complete this project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My classmates at UMass Boston have provided me with much-needed encouragement throughout this process. I will always cherish the wonderful friendships that grew out of this experience. Each and every student in Cohort 2005 contributed so much and helped me to stay on track.

Student participants provided deeply personal accounts of the obstacles they faced in trying to earn a college degree and also clearly identified institutional barriers they encountered. Faculty and staff who participated in the study provided frank assessments of the conditions at their institutions that they felt helped or hindered student progress.

I thank my sister Ellen Gornstein and her husband Mark who hosted countless holiday meals, as did their children, Jamie and Kevin Tighe and Eric and Natalie Gornstein, so that I could have the extra time I needed to study, write papers, and complete my research. They were always cheering me on and telling me not to give up.

Last, but not least, I thank my husband Steven, our son Dan, and our daughter Lindsey, who provided encouragement to me for several years while I attended classes and then completed this dissertation. They were my most ardent supporters—and helpers. I also thank my mother, Dorothy Kitover, who patiently awaited the completion of this project, and quite regularly asked, "Are you done yet?"

And yes, I must thank my two Pomeranians—Pumpkin and the late Ricky, who were by my side through most of this journey. When I needed a break, they were there to play and provide a little comic relief. I am grateful for all the love and support that I have received.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Community colleges in the United States attract millions of students who, because of external commitments that include family, work, military, and community responsibilities, can only attend college on a part-time basis (Cross, 1981; Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006; Fairchild, 2003). In fall 2011, 21.6 million undergraduate, credit-seeking students were enrolled in public and private institutions of higher education in the United States. Thirty-three percent, or roughly 7.1 million of these students, were enrolled in community colleges, with 60% of those students attending college on a part-time basis (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2012). Despite their significant representation among students attending college in the United States (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009), national data have demonstrated that within 6 years of entering a community college, only 12% of part-time students had earned an associate's degree or certificate, 13% were still enrolled, and the remaining 75% had neither earned a degree or certificate nor were they enrolled in college (Berkner, He, Cataldi, & Knepper, 2002).

Because the high percentage of part-time students at community colleges is unparalleled in other higher education segments, and because the greatest demand for the 12 million expected jobs in the coming decade will be for employees who possess

certificates or associate's degrees (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006), finding ways to improve educational success rates must become a priority.

"Educational success" can be defined in different ways for different students. For some, reaching a personal goal such as mastering a new subject is considered educational success. For others, acquiring a new set of skills to prepare for entry into the workforce constitutes educational success. And for others, it means completing a degree or certificate or transferring to a four-year institution. For the purposes of this study, educational success is measured by student retention, completion, and transfer to a four-year institution. These three measures serve as indicators that students are making or have made progress toward earning college degrees. It will naturally take longer for part-time students to reach their goals because of their reduced course loads. Some part-time students "swirl" between institutions, making it difficult to track their progress (Borden, 2004). Other part-time students stop in and out of college without earning credits in the semesters in which they were enrolled. There is no question that part-time enrollment constitutes a risk factor for completion (Horn, Premo, & Malizio, 1995; Stratton, O'Toole, & Wetzel, 2007).

The 1996/01 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01), a national survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tracked a sample of more than 9,000 community college students over a 6-year period. These students attended college either full-time, part-time, or had mixed enrollment (i.e., a combination of full- and part-time attendance) during the study period that began in academic year 1995–1996 and ended in 2001. Twenty-six percent of the participants

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always attended full-time, 22% always attended part-time, and 52% attended full- or part-time at some point during the six-year period.[1] The study measured the retention, graduation, and transfer rates of these students (Berkner et al., 2002).

At the end of the study period, of all first-time freshmen who had attended community colleges consistently on a full-time basis, 19.9% had transferred and earned bachelor's degrees, 19.4% earned associate's degrees, and 6.3% earned certificates (Berkner et al., 2002). Of those who had not yet earned a degree but were still enrolled in college, 8.3% had transferred to four-year institutions and 2.7% were enrolled at less-than-four-year institutions, which are defined as two-year and less-than-two-year institutions (A. D'Amico, personal communication, October 22, 2012). The remaining 43.5% of students had not earned a credential nor were they enrolled at any institution in 2001 (Berkner et al., 2002).

Certain students had mixed enrollment patterns during the 6-year study period. That is, they sometimes attended full-time and at other times attended part-time. Among these students, 9.8% earned bachelor's degrees, 20% earned associate's degrees, and 11.1% earned certificates by the end of the six-year period (Berkner et al., 2002). Of those who had not earned a degree but were still enrolled in college, 10.9% were enrolled at four-year institutions and 11.7% were enrolled at less-than-four-year institutions. The remaining 36.4% of students had not earned a credential nor were they enrolled at any institution in 2001.

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[1] It should be noted that this attendance pattern is based on attendance over a 6-year period. When measured during an academic year, the proportions change. For example, rates calculated in 2008 demonstrate that 26.3% of students attended exclusively full-time, 60% attended exclusively part-time, and 13.7% had mixed full-time and part-time enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Success rates for students who always attended part-time were particularly disheartening. At the end of the BPS:96/01 6-year study period, of all first-time freshmen who had enrolled consistently on a part-time basis, not one had transferred and earned a bachelor's degree, 1.4% had earned associate's degrees, and 10.4% had earned certificates. Of those who had not yet earned a degree but were still enrolled, 2.4% had transferred and were enrolled at four-year institutions, and 10.4% were enrolled at less-than-four-year institutions. The remaining 75.5% of students had not earned a credential nor were they enrolled anywhere in 2001. Thus, at the end of the study period, 63.6% of students with mixed attendance experienced a positive outcome of degree attainment or persistence compared to 56.5% of the students who always attended full-time and only 24.5% of students who always attended part-time (Berkner et al., 2002).

A recent study examined success rates among students enrolled at community colleges throughout the state of California (Moore & Shulock, 2007). This study, like the BPS:96/01 study (Berkner et al., 2002), showed that students who were enrolled full-time had higher completion rates than those who enrolled part-time. The study also showed that when older students fluctuated between full- and part-time enrollment because they were dealing with personal issues, their chances of completing college were not adversely affected. This study also examined success rates for students who were continuously enrolled versus those who stopped out at any time. Students who were continuously enrolled were more successful than those who stopped out of school. Particularly interesting findings from this study included the positive correlation between continuous enrollment and completion of traditional college age (17–24) part-time students. The

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correlation between continuous enrollment and completion for older community college students was not significant (Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009).

Evidence from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a national survey that is "specifically designed to assess the extent to which students are engaged in empirically derived good educational practices"—such as those identified in Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education"—demonstrated that the majority of students who enrolled in credit-bearing courses planned to earn a credential or prepare for transfer.

When comparing full-time to part-time community college students, 51.2% of full-time students indicated that completing a certificate program was a primary or secondary goal. This compares to 47.8% of part-time students. Eighty-five percent of full-time students listed obtaining an associate's degree as a primary or secondary goal compared to 77.2% of part-time students. Seventy-nine percent of full-time students reported transferring to a four-year institution as a primary or secondary goal in comparison to 68.9% of part-time students (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009e, 2009f). Seventy percent of full-time students indicated that their primary or secondary goal was to obtain or update job-related skills compared to 68.6% of part-time students. In the area of self-improvement and personal enjoyment, 73.9% of full-time students indicated that goal was a primary or secondary reason for attending college versus 74.3% of part-time students. These data confirm that many similarities exist between part-time and full-time students with regard to college aspirations.

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However, as noted earlier, a great disparity exists in the success rates of these two populations of community college students.

These low success rates are problematic at many levels—student, institutional, state, and national. First, for students, beginning a college education but not attaining a degree or certificate negates a major personal goal. The wide gap between aspirations and success may lead to students' feelings of failure and unfulfilled educational and professional plans. Time and financial resources spent taking courses do not receive the same investment return for the student who does not earn a degree or certificate.

Second, low success rates at the institutional level are problematic for at least three reasons. First, low success rates are an indication that community colleges are not meeting their mission, which for most community colleges is to prepare students to graduate from certificate or associate degree programs, and/or to transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions. The low success rates, described above, demonstrate failure on the part of community colleges to achieve this mission-specific goal. Second, low graduation and transfer rates among part-time students are a measure of poor institutional performance. Some higher education policy researchers have argued that low performance should trigger the need for an institutional assessment (Allen, 1993; Walleri, 1981). Third, low success rates result in financial problems for institutions. Low enrollment is accompanied by a decline in tuition revenue, causing community colleges to allocate additional resources to recruit new students to replace those who have left (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Tierney, 1992; Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

Low success rates also represent a problem at the state level. When success rates are low, the benefits of the state's investment in higher education are not fully realized, and the employment demands for an educated workforce are not addressed (de la Isla, 2009). The impact of low success rates at the state level are felt in the local and regional economy.

Finally, poor success rates are a problem at the state and national level because low success rates translate into an insufficient number of graduates for jobs in the emerging workforce. The result is an unskilled workforce that cannot compete in the global economy. For the federal government, low success rates are an indicator of an inefficient use of vast sums of tax dollars provided in federal student financial aid grants and a poor rate of return on this investment.

Understanding the root causes of low success rates presents many challenges for educators and policymakers. Low success rates can be attributable to individual failure or to institutional failure. Addressing individual failure is difficult because failure may stem from personal impediments that part-time students face. Institutions often find it difficult to address these problems because there is little that they can do to help students deal with the stresses associated with work, family, and community responsibilities (Cross, 1981; Fairchild, 2003). Addressing institutional failure is also difficult; however, most community colleges attempt to identify problem areas and devise strategies to alter institutional conditions to promote educational success among all students (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2006, 2009d).

Problem Statement

The blame for the failure of part-time community college students to attain educational success is most often placed on students and is attributed to their demographic characteristics, lack of motivation, and poor educational preparation for college (Tierney, 1992; Zamani, 2000). Little attention is paid to the impact of institutional conditions on the success or failure of part-time community college students. Institutional conditions include the "resources, educational policies, programs and practices, and structural features" (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006, p. 8) that exist in academic institutions. Institutional conditions that enhance student success are characterized by high levels of student-faculty interaction, peer support, and active and collaborative learning strategies. The combination of these conditions and others create engaging campus environments (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005).

The problem that the study addresses is that two-thirds of this nation's community college students attend college on a part-time basis (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2009) and three-quarters of these students fail to earn a certificate or degree or transfer to a four-year institution, even after attending college for 6 years (Berkner et al., 2002). Individual, institutional, and taxpayer resources are being invested in higher education for millions of part-time community college students, but this investment is not realized because the vast majority of these students fail to succeed in college.

This study addresses two major gaps in the literature regarding part-time students, especially those attending community colleges. The first gap is the lack of literature on

institutional conditions that improve educational outcomes of part-time students. One major aspect of this problem is the issue of part-time faculty teaching part-time students. Jaeger and Eagan (2009) noted that interactions between faculty and students, especially out-of-class experiences, were important for student success. Yet their recent study showed that when students took most of their courses with adjunct faculty, the students had less contact with part-time faculty members than they would have had if they had taken courses with full-time faculty members. They interacted less frequently with faculty, a condition that has been associated with diminished academic integration. Lack of integration has been associated with poor educational outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The second gap relates to the lack of appropriate retention theories for part-time students. While a great deal of research has been conducted on the theories related to student departure (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993), involvement (Astin, 1984), and student effort (Pace, 1982), much of this research has taken place at four-year, private, residential institutions. The nature of the part-time student's experience at the community college is very different. The residential component is lacking, and part-time community college students often straddle two worlds. They are trying to focus on school but, at the same time, are devoting time and energy to external responsibilities that involve family, work, community, and sometimes military obligations.

Other theories, such as those related to sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; D. W. Johnson et al., 2007; Tierney, 1993) and student engagement (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2005; McClenney, 2007), appear to have greater relevance for part-time students and may help to explain what institutions need to do to foster environments that

encourage students to succeed. The theory of sense of belonging focuses on whether students feel as though they are included as members of the college community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Student engagement theory directs attention to two components: the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and what institutions do to encourage students to participate in these activities, including curriculum, college resources, and student support services (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2012). Finally, the concept of intersectionality, based on feminist sociological theory, allows an examination of how gender, race, social class, and other forms of identity interact with one another to contribute to feelings of oppression and inequality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to identify and examine institutional conditions that promote the success of part-time community college students and those that impede their opportunities to succeed.

The research is designed to investigate topics related to community college effectiveness in meeting part-time student needs; the personal and institutional impediments they face; academic experiences; and the relationships that part-time students form with administrators, faculty, and/or fellow students on campus. It examines the ways and the extent to which part-time community college students develop a sense of belonging to the institution, become engaged in the college community, and, in some cases, experience marginalization.

The central question for this research study is: In what ways do institutional conditions at community colleges shape the educational success of part-time community college students? Sub-questions include:

1. How do community college administrators describe institutional policies, programs, practices, and resources that are used to promote the success of part-time students on their campuses?

2. In what ways, if any, do community college faculty structure courses and academic programs to address the needs of part-time learners? What types of pedagogical practices (e.g., advising), if any, do faculty employ to address the needs of part-time students in their classes?

3. What student characteristics are relevant to the success of part-time students or impede their efforts to succeed?

4. How do part-time students describe the institutional conditions that have contributed to or detracted from their ability to achieve educational success?

5. In what ways, if any, do part-time students develop a sense of belonging and/or become engaged in their institutions?

Significance of the Study

A study of the ways in which institutional conditions at community colleges shape the success of part-time community college students can benefit decisions made by administrators, faculty, and policymakers. This study was designed to contribute to the literature on policies and practices related to institutional conditions that foster the success of part-time community college students.

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Current economic conditions have led to an influx of students seeking a college education that is affordable and allows them to work and attend school on a part-time basis. Yet despite this growth, part-time students continue to fail in getting through the educational pipeline and earn degrees or certificates or transfer to four-year institutions. This study examines the experiences of part-time community college students, a population that has received little attention in the literature (Kember & Leung, 2004). The findings from this study will provide community college administrators, staff, and faculty with a greater understanding of the challenges part-time students face, and will identify institutional programs and services that will better meet the needs of this population.

This study has the potential to contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of research on college student retention. Most research on persistence and student success has focused on the experiences of full-time students attending four-year, residential institutions. Theories advanced by Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), Astin (1984), and Pace (1982) have demonstrated that student integration, involvement, and effort have a positive effect on persistence and graduation rates. These theories, however, appear to have limited applicability to part-time students who are likely to be older than traditional-age students, commute to campus, have multiple external responsibilities, and face numerous impediments. This study will give greater attention to the theoretical literature on students' sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; D. W. Johnson et al., 2007; Kember, Lee, & Li, 2001; Kember & Leung, 2004; Schuetz, 2008b) and student engagement (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005, 2006, 2007b). New research on approaches to working with marginalized populations will also be

examined and particular attention given to intersectionality, which is a framework originally described by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her work on violence against women of color, and which is used to understand multiple identities and student identity development (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009).

    This study offers a unique perspective on problems associated with part-time student enrollment and will contribute to the knowledge on administrators' perceptions of how well their colleges are meeting students' needs, faculty perceptions on how effective they are in teaching part-time students, and students' perceptions of their experiences in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, and in the overall college environment. An understanding of how these three pieces fit together will provide practitioners with information that may help them to discern possible disconnects and show them where attention should be focused to more effectively address the needs of part-time community college students. Understanding how and whether students develop a sense of belonging to or membership in the multiple compartments of the community college, and/or how and to what extent students become engaged in the environment through effective educational practices, will provide new insights into the experiences of part-time community college students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review analyzes and synthesizes four bodies of literature. The first

section of the literature review explores the sociodemographic characteristics, educational

backgrounds, and motivations of part-time community college students. While much is

known about traditional-aged, full-time students who attend four-year institutions, little

information exists on part-time students who attend community colleges. Even less is

known about why this group of students has such great difficulty completing a

community college education and/or transferring to a four-year institution. In this small

body of literature, different conclusions are reached on whether and how these factors

influence the educational outcomes of part-time community college students.

Section two reviews the personal barriers—situational and dispositional—that

part-time students are likely to encounter and that may prevent students from achieving

their educational goals. This section also examines institutional barriers that can impede

student progress (Cross, 1981). Institutional barriers, such as those that result from

campus organizational problems, can discourage students from persisting from one term

to the next. When students are faced with organizational difficulties, such as limited

course offerings or lack of cohesiveness in the curriculum, they may experience

marginalization and be unable to complete their programs in a timely manner. Some community colleges have provided great flexibility in course scheduling; however, the end result can be a lack of cohesion in academic programs due to the fact that part-time students take courses to fit their schedules, rather than in the sequence in which they should be taken (McCormick, 2003).

Section three focuses on supports that may assist part-time community college students in reaching their educational goals. Supports include: (a) academic and student services, (b) developmental education, (c) out-of-class opportunities, (d) learning communities, and (e) engaging classrooms. These supports are meant to encourage student participation in college activities.

The final section of this review analyzes the literature on student integration (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993), involvement (Astin, 1984), student effort (Pace, 1982), sense of belonging (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; D. W. Johnson et al., 2007; Tierney, 1993), and student engagement (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2005), and assesses the applicability of these models to part-time community college students. Prior research on student engagement has focused on traditional-aged students enrolled full-time at four-year institutions but has not explained the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. This section also presents an analysis of the literature on intersectionality, a theory that holds that multiple axes of identity such as gender, race, and social class intersect with one another to contribute to oppression and inequality in certain segments of society (Crenshaw, 1989; Jones & Abes, 2013).

Sociodemographic, Educational, and Motivational Characteristics

Sociodemographic Characteristics

There is great debate in the literature about the factors that are responsible for student attrition. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has identified part-time attendance as one of seven risk factors that negatively affects persistence and degree attainment. The other risk factors include: (a) delaying enrollment after high school graduation, (b) being financially independent (from parents), (c) having dependents, (d) working full-time, (e) being a single parent, and (f) failing to graduate from high school. All risk factors are interrelated, and it is common for students to possess multiple risk factors. Nearly one-third of all students enrolled at community colleges possess four or more risk factors (Horn et al., 1995). Among these students, the most prevalent risk factors are: (a) part-time enrollment status, (b) delayed enrollment, and (c) financial independence. Alone, or in combination with one another, these risk factors are associated with poor educational outcomes. Students who attend college part-time are less likely to attend college on a continuous basis, with gaps in enrollment leading to lower levels of persistence (Milam, 2009).

In studying issues related to the attrition of nontraditional students, such as those who attend part-time, certain categories of variables need to be reviewed. These include sociodemographic variables such as (a) age, (b) gender, (c) race/ethnicity, (d) socioeconomic status, (e) employment status, (f) educational characteristics, and (g) motivational characteristics; academic variables such as (a) student effort and (b) major; environmental variables such as (a) finances, (b) emotional support, and

(c) external responsibilities; and social variables such as (a) student involvement with peers and (b) student involvement with faculty (Metzner & Bean, 1987).

The first part of this literature review examines sociodemographic variables. An examination of these variables is necessary to gain an understanding of the characteristics of students who attend college part-time. Alone or in combination, these variables can influence part-time students' college experiences and affect their educational outcomes (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Dial-Driver, 1990; Feldman, 1993; Glover & Murrell, 1998; Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Mohammadi, 1994; Voorhees, 1987).

Age. Current data reveal that adults aged 25 and older constitute 40% of all students in higher education (Aslanian Group, 2006; Paulson & Boeke, 2006), and that 52% of these adults are enrolled in undergraduate credit courses at community colleges (Knapp et al., 2009). More than three-quarters (77%) of all students who attend community colleges full-time are aged 24 or younger, while only 48% of students who attend part-time are in this age group. Part-time students typically enroll in early adulthood (ages 25–29) or as they approach middle age (ages 40–49) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008a). Decisions not to enroll at an early age result from higher priority life issues such as work or family (Hyde, 1980), lack of academic preparation, insufficient financial resources, and/or military obligations (Horn, Cataldi, Sikora, & Carroll, 2005).

Three institutional studies examined the effect of age on retention of part-time students. The first study examined the first-to-second-term retention of 796 students at Indiana Vocational Technical College. Findings from this study showed that older, part-

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time students were more likely to leave college before completing a degree or certificate than were younger, full-time students (Brooks-Leonard, 1991). The second study, which examined fall-to-fall retention among 1,623 students enrolled at Niagara County Community College in New York, also found that part-time students aged 20–24 and 40–44 were less likely to complete programs (Feldman, 1993). A third study, conducted at Patrick Henry Community College in Virginia, included 3,843 students and similarly found that retention rates were lower for part-time students between the ages of 23 to 35 and 45 to 50 than they were for younger students (Mohammadi, 1994).

A recent pilot project involving six states participating in the Achieving the Dream Project, a national initiative aimed at helping to improve the educational outcomes of community college students, likewise found that older students, aged 23 to 45, were less likely than younger students, aged 18 to 22, to achieve successful outcomes—defined in this study as earning an associate's degree or certificate, transferring to a four-year institution without earning an award, or still being enrolled at the community college in their sixth year (Goldberger & Choitz, 2008). While Goldberger and Choitz's report did not specify that the majority of older students in the study attended part-time, another Achieving the Dream report did state that only 31% of study participants aged 23 and older attended full-time (Achieving the Dream, 2007). Finally, data from the BPS:96/01 study (Berkner et al., 2002), showed that "the first-to-second year 'retention' rate (a) is very high and (b) declines in a more-or-less direct relationship to the *age* of the student at the point of entry to the postsecondary system" (Adelman, 2005, p. 157).

While the aforementioned studies demonstrated that age was negatively correlated with the retention of part-time community college students, another study has failed to confirm this relationship. In a study of predictors of retention that examined four years' worth of data involving 9,200 students enrolled at an urban Texas public community college, a multivariate analysis showed that as age increased, fall-to-spring retention dropped. In the multivariate analysis, though, age proved to be a weak predictor of retention (Fike & Fike, 2008).

Other scholarly research has demonstrated that age alone is not the reason for high attrition rates (Bers & Smith, 1991; Deil-Amen, 2005; Jacobs & King, 2002). For example, age in conjunction with gender can lead to low retention rates. A study funded by the American Association of University Women showed that women (18%), more often than men (3%), cited age (i.e., being older than 22) as an impediment to enrolling in college (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1999).

Age when coupled with family and work responsibilities was also found to result in high attrition rates. Studies have shown that students over age 25, attending school part-time, and working full-time were less likely to persist than others (Bers & Smith, 1991; Deil-Amen, 2005). In a study conducted of women over the age of 25, age combined with life events led to low retention rates (Jacobs & King, 2002).

Gender. For many years, the number of men enrolling in college exceeded the number of women. More recently, this pattern has shifted. In fall 2011, women constituted 57% of all students attending community colleges. In that same semester,

62% of women attended community colleges part-time, compared to 58% of men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

In examining the relationship between gender and enrollment status, one study demonstrated that women persisted at higher rates than men regardless of whether they attended full-time or part-time (Voorhees, 1987). Another study indicated that associate's degree or certificate attainment and persistence rates were higher for women who attended full-time than they were for men, and were higher for women enrolled full-time versus part-time. However, persistence was lower for women who attended part-time but who had the characteristics of full-time students. These students typically were of college age, were dependent on their parents for financial support for college, and had earned high school diplomas (Chen & Carroll, 2007). The nature of the research design of each study might account for the different findings. The former study examined 369 students at a suburban community college, while the latter study examined more than 101,000 students who were part of a national sample. In addition, in the former study, enrollment status was a dichotomous variable with values of full-time and part-time. In the latter study, enrollment status was defined differently; the variable consisted of three values: full-time, part-time students who had the characteristics of full-time students, and other part-time students.

While most research studies have found that women graduate at higher rates than men, one study that examined the relationship between student characteristics and institutional characteristics to graduation rate arrived at a surprising finding. Community colleges with higher proportions of women enrolled had lower graduation rates. When

the variable part-time status was introduced into the model used in this study, the graduation rate for males was not affected; however, the combination of attending part-time and being female negatively affected graduation rates, particularly if the institution had a female population over 50% (Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2005).

Race/ethnicity. The role of race/ethnicity in part-time community college attendance is important to examine as students of various racial/ethnic groups choose to attend community colleges and often do so on a part-time basis (Schmidt, 2003). Forty-six percent of Blacks and an equivalent percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders attend community colleges. Fifty-five percent of all Native Americans and an equal proportion of Hispanic or Latino students attend community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008). While the percentages of Hispanic or Latino students and Native Americans attending community colleges are identical, the actual number of Hispanic or Latino students is larger. Specifically, of the 7.1 million students who attended public, two-year institutions in fall 2011, 15% were Hispanic or Latino, and 1.0% were Native American (Knapp et al., 2012). Ibarra (2001) noted that Latinos were especially attracted to community colleges because of the high context academic culture, including "collaboration, inclusiveness, community involvement, an orientation to students (people), comprehensive/systemic thinking, and so on" (p. 231).

Fry (2002) argued that it is important to pay special attention to the Hispanic/Latino population due to their growth in the U.S. population and to the fact that large numbers of Hispanics/Latinos will be entering the workforce as the baby boomer

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generation retires. In his monograph entitled *Latinos in Higher Education: Many Enroll,*

Too Few Graduate, Fry examined the demographics of the workforce and concluded that

during the first quarter of the twenty-first century, baby boomers would retire and

account for a decrease in 5 million workers, while the number of Latinos of working age

would increase by 18 million.

Fry (2002) noted that the proportion of Latinos who actually graduated from

college was quite low and suggested that these low rates were a result of part-time

enrollment, concentration in community colleges, and a tendency to delay enrollment.

Fry attributed the reasons for part-time status to economic factors such as lower tuition,

part-time degree programs, convenient scheduling of classes, and availability of job

training opportunities. The literature has also shown that Hispanic or Latino students are

more likely than White students to attend college on a part-time basis because of their

commitment to support themselves and/or their families (Branch-Brioso, 2009; Fry,

2002; McGlynn, 2004; Schmidt, 2003).

Socioeconomic status. The National Center for Education Statistics (2009b)

glossary defines socioeconomic status (SES) as "a measure of an individual or family's

relative economic and social ranking." This measure is calculated based on parents'

educational and occupational levels and family income. In cases where students are

financially dependent upon their parents, family income is used to determine SES. In

cases where students are financially independent, which would be the case for many older

students, the student's own income is used to determine SES. The literature has shown

that students from low-SES backgrounds are overrepresented at community colleges

(Brint & Karabel, 1989), and those with low SES are more likely to attend part-time (Hearn, 1992).

The relationship between SES and degree attainment has been heavily debated in the literature. Some researchers have examined the diversion and democratization effects of community colleges and believe that the presence of community colleges has led to social stratification within the higher education system. The literature has demonstrated the existence of a three-tiered structure of education, consisting of universities, state colleges, and community colleges. Attendance at these institutions appears to be related to family income: students with the lowest family incomes tend to be enrolled at community colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1987). Studies have shown that low-SES students, who begin their education at community colleges, have a reduced likelihood of ever earning a baccalaureate degree (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1987; McIntosh & Rouse, 2009), and that those with higher SES are more likely to transfer to four-year institutions (Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006).

Little is known about the effects of SES on the educational outcomes of specific segments of the community college population, such as older and/or part-time students. One study that addressed these subpopulations found that older students, who were typically enrolled part-time, had children, tended to be enrolled in vocational programs, had lower educational aspirations, and were far less likely than other students to transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions. This study pointed out that precollege academic traits such as academic preparation coming out of high school and future educational plans, external work and family demands such as having children, and experiences in

college such as college major, were important factors in mediating or explaining SES differences in college transfer. The authors pointed out that more research was needed to fully explain how and why some of these variables reduced the likelihood of transfer (Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006). While several researchers have used SES as a predictor of retention, graduation, and transfer, other scholars have noted the declining importance of SES as a predictor of retention and have found academic ability to be a stronger predictor of student success (Baker & Velez, 1996).

Employment status. Most students are likely to be employed while attending community colleges. According to Chen and Carroll (2007), 83% of students enrolled exclusively part-time were employed, and more than half of them (53%) were employed full-time. Results from the 2008 administration of the CCSSE survey indicated that 65% of part-time students worked more than 20 hours per week (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008). In most academic settings, students are expected to spend two to three hours of class preparation for every hour they spend in class. Part-time students who enroll in two courses should be devoting a minimum of 12 hours to study (Young, 2002). In 2008, the American Association of Community Colleges indicated that 50% of part-time students were employed full-time, and 33% of part-time students were employed part-time (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008). Results from these three sources indicated that community college students, whether attending full-time or part-time, were combining many hours of work with school.

The USDOE identified a group of students who defined themselves as "employees who study" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, p. 1). Nearly

three-quarters (73%) of "employees who study" were students at community colleges. These students were typically older, part-time students. They saw themselves primarily as employees and secondarily as students. Using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study First Follow-up 1996–98 (BPS:96/98), this study found that the group of students who described themselves as "employees who study" had lower persistence rates over a 3-year period than two other categories of students: "students who work" and "nonworking students" (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). "Employees who study" had trouble persisting beyond the certificate. They were twice as likely (53.8%) as "students who work" (27.4 %) and "nonworking students" (26.7%) to have withdrawn by the end of the 3-year study period without having earned a degree or certificate; however, 19.8% of "employees who study" did earn a degree or certificate in the 3-year timeframe, which was similar to the rate for nonworking students (18.6%) and higher than the rate for "students who work" (13.7%).

Educational Characteristics

Little information is available on the educational characteristics of those who attend community colleges part-time; however, one report produced by NCES examined the academic characteristics of all part-time undergraduates, regardless of whether they were enrolled in two- or four-year schools. This study found that students who always attended part-time were less likely to have earned a high school diploma and more likely to need developmental courses in college (Chen & Carroll, 2007). These results mirrored an earlier NCES report that created a profile of part-time undergraduates in higher education (McCormick, Geis, Vergun, & Carroll, 1995). In the 1995 NCES report, which

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combined two- and four-year schools, students who had attended part-time were more likely to have earned a GED than a high school diploma and had been less successful in high school. Part-time students were often first-generation students who came from families that did not have experience navigating the higher education system. Open-admissions policies at community colleges have enabled students who have academic deficiencies to enroll in college because they can take developmental courses at the community college to prepare for college-level courses.

Motivational Characteristics

This section of the literature review closes with a review of motivational characteristics of part-time community college students. Early research demonstrated that enrollment status had only a minimal relationship with motivation (Governanti & Clowes, 1982). Current research from the 2008 CCSSE demonstrated that enrollment is related to students' reasons for attending particular community colleges. The 2008 CCSSE sample, which consisted of approximately 343,000 students, demonstrated that part-time and full-time students had similar motivations for attending community colleges. Their primary reasons were to complete certificate programs or to obtain associate's degrees. The one instance where part-time and full-time students differed was in the area of changing careers, where nearly half (49.9%) of part-time respondents indicated that their primary or secondary goal in choosing a particular community college was to change careers, compared to only 39.2% of full-time respondents (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009e, 2009f).

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In summary, an analysis of sociodemographic, educational, and motivational variables provides useful information about the characteristics of this large segment of the higher education population. While many researchers have included these variables in their studies, the research findings are, at times, contradictory. What is true in nearly all studies, though, is that part-time community college attendance has been identified as a risk factor for completion. Institutional and national studies have demonstrated that part-time students are far more likely than full-time students to leave college before earning a degree or a certificate (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006; Feldman, 1993; Mohammadi, 1994; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). As Hearn (1992) stated, "To the extent one attends full-time rather than part-time, and sooner rather than later, academic progress will be accelerated and the cumulative returns to postsecondary attendance will tend to be greater" (p. 659).

More recent research has examined other causes of low retention. Rather than attributing low retention to student characteristics, such research has demonstrated that older, part-time students may not be engaging in classroom or in co-curricular activities because they lack a sense of belonging or membership to one or more parts of the institution (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Age appears to be related these students' ability to develop peer and faculty relationships, both of which have been shown to lead to increased retention (Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh et al., 2005; McClenney, 2006; McClenney, Marti, & Adkins, 2007).

Barriers Facing Part-time Community College Students

This section of the literature review describes three different types of barriers that students face in achieving their goals. These barriers are examined using a typology developed by Cross (1981) in her work on adult learners. They are identified as (a) situational, (b) dispositional, and (c) institutional barriers. The first type of barrier—situational—results from life circumstances, such as family, work, and financial issues that work either alone or in combination with one another. The second type of barrier—dispositional—is intrapersonal and focuses on attitudes and perceptions that students hold about themselves as learners. Students may lack confidence and clear goals. They may perceive themselves as unable to handle multiple demands on their time and the stress that is associated with their various roles. Situational and dispositional barriers combined constitute personal barriers that students face. The third type of barrier—institutional—limits student participation in activities and may "subconsciously" (p. 104) be imposed by institutional leaders through the policies and practices that they put in place.

This typology can reasonably be applied to the part-time community college population because the majority of part-time community college students are adult learners (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008; Voorhees, 1987). Hyde (1980) noted that even some younger part-time students, by virtue of their life experiences—such as living on their own, assuming significant work responsibilities, or having children—would be considered to have adult characteristics and would face many of the same impediments that older students face.

Personal Barriers

Situational barriers. Situational barriers result from one's life circumstances at a given point in time (Cross, 1981). The more commonly identified situational barriers are family and job responsibilities, lack of time and money, civic commitments (Fairchild, 2003), transportation, and lack of affordable and convenient day care (Cross, 1981; Grossman & Gooden, 2002). Many impediments have multiple components. For example, barriers related to family can involve the responsibility of taking care of young children as well as aging parents. Part-time students who are young adults are often torn by having to make decisions between spending time with their children or doing homework. Older part-time students may have to take care not only of their children who may be teenagers but also their aging parents who may have medical, financial, or housing issues (Kazis & Liebowitz, 2003). Jacobs and King (2002) conducted a study of 10,847 women aged 25 to 44 attending all segments of higher education using data from the National Survey of Family Growth and found that marriage was an impediment for some women and not for others. Some women experienced resentment from their husbands who did not want them to pursue an education, while others were able to draw on their husband's income and savings in order to attend college.

Financial concerns are also categorized as situational barriers, and they are multifaceted. For example, students may be concerned about lost wages when taking time off to attend school, and they similarly may have concerns about the availability of financial aid. Part-time students often believe that they are not eligible for financial aid. The truth is that eligible, part-time students can receive Pell Grants, but the amount will

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be less than it would be if they were full-time students (The College Board, 2009). The Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (Section 491 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended 1987) issued a report that highlighted the fact that millions of community college students, including part-time students, may be eligible for need-based federal financial aid, but they do not apply. Using data from the 2008 CCSSE survey, the report cited that 39% of students indicated they did not think they were eligible for financial aid; 35% indicated they had enough money to pay for college; and 6% did not apply because they found the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form too cumbersome to complete.

Under regulations that began in 2009–2010, working students are eligible to receive full Pell Grants. This legislation has also raised the maximum Pell Grant to $5,550 in 2012–2013 (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2012). This type of assistance might allow students who previously could only attend part-time to reduce their work hours and attend college full-time—a condition that is linked to greater persistence and completion. This would eliminate the vicious cycle of students working long hours in order to pay for school (Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended, 1987).

Many researchers have examined how the lack of financial aid has posed a barrier to students wishing to complete a certificate or an associate's degree program. Goldrick-Rab (2007) reported on a number of studies that showed that students who received financial aid were more likely to persist in community colleges. Bettinger (2004) conducted a study of students enrolled in Ohio public universities and noted that students

who received Pell Grants were less likely to withdraw from college during the first two years than students who did not receive Pell Grants. In addition, Dowd and Coury's (2006) research indicated that the type of aid students receive is important. When community college students take loans, they are more likely to withdraw; however, if they receive scholarships at the beginning of their education, they are more likely to persist.

Other situational barriers exist that may particularly affect older students who are likely to attend part-time and who, due to possible interruptions in their higher education careers, need to brush up on their academic skills (Spellman, 2007). This may require that they take developmental courses before enrolling in college-level courses. Other adult students may have experienced academic challenges in high school and need to take developmental courses at the community college in preparation for college-level courses (Oudenhoven, 2002).

Dispositional barriers. Barriers that result from attitudes and perceptions that people hold about themselves as learners are considered dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981). As mentioned, they include problems with self-confidence, clarity of goals, time management, and role conflict. Dispositional barriers are often beyond a student's ability to change. These barriers may affect men and women differently, but the literature addresses only how these barriers affect women. The topic of role strain has been discussed in relation to the stress that many women feel when they take on the added role of student (Mohney & Anderson, 1988). Based upon research conducted by various role theorists, Home (1998) described three types of role strain that can occur among adult

women attending college: role conflict, role overload, and role contagion. Home noted that these forms of role strain are particularly common among single mothers. Role conflict occurs among women who must deal with incompatible demands in their lives such as wanting to attend class but having to stay home with a sick child. Role overload occurs among women who have complex family responsibilities and do not have the time to devote to all the demands required of them. Role contagion involves thinking about one role while acting out another responsibility. Home's study, based on 443 undergraduate students enrolled at the university level, demonstrated that single mothers and women with young children were at greater risk of role overload than were other women. The findings from this study are applicable to part-time community college students because, like their university counterparts, community college students who attend school part-time are likely to have multiple family responsibilities that are difficult to meet.

In a study conducted in Australia of 118 married and single mothers who interrupted their course work, the primary reasons cited were family responsibilities (73%), work responsibilities (53%), and financial difficulties (36%). Only 10% left school because of poor academic performance (Scott, Burns, & Cooney, 1993). Another study showed that students do not necessarily leave school because they are performing poorly. In fact, many leave in good academic standing (Brooks-Leonard, 1991). Students who suffer from role strain often "stop out"—leave for one or more semesters—and may eventually drop out of school. Persisting in school cannot always remain their highest

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priority because of the many role conflicts they endure (L. Johnson, Schwartz, & Bower, 2000; Mohney & Anderson, 1988).

Institutional Barriers

While a significant amount of research has been conducted and has led to an enhanced understanding of how institutional conditions promote or hinder success at four-year institutions (Bailey et al., 2005; Kuh et al., 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007), this information is lacking about two-year institutions (Bailey, Badway, & Gumport, 2002; Bailey et al., 2005). Even less is known about how institutional conditions affect the success of subpopulations, most notably part-time students who, as noted, comprise the bulk of the community college population.

Certain barriers are "subconsciously erected" (Cross, 1981, p. 104) by institutional policymakers. Cross categorized five different types of institutional impediments that adults encounter: (a) course scheduling problems, (b) location and associated transportation problems, (c) uninteresting or irrelevant offerings, (d) organizational problems, and (e) inadequate information about how to navigate the college environment.

Additional impediments that students encounter are related to part-time status. First, institutional barriers for part-time students are erected in the ways that classes are structured. Studies have shown that the college environment is not inviting for older, part-time students (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1999; Fairchild, 2003). The American Association of University Women study pointed out that older, part-time students lacked peer relationships, and noted that, while diversity

in the classroom brought about the opportunity to share ideas and knowledge, older, part-time students still found their classroom experiences isolating (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1999). Fairchild (2003) has also shown that older students were likely to lack the social supports needed to help them get through college.

While many problems associated with poor success rates can be identified, one of the largest problems that community colleges face is a heavy reliance on adjunct faculty. Budget shortfalls result in an institution's inability to hire full-time faculty. As stated, two-thirds of students attend community colleges part-time. Recent data have demonstrated that approximately two-thirds of faculty members who teach at community colleges are adjunct faculty (Cataldi, Fahimi, Bradburn, & Zimbler, 2005; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). As CCSSE pointed out, part-time students are apt to be taught by part-time faculty. This is due to the fact that part-time faculty are more likely to teach evenings and weekends when part-time students often attend classes. Part-time students and part-time faculty spend little time on campus beyond that which is spent in the classroom. Adjunct faculty members often come to campus only to teach one course per semester and may be less available than full-time faculty members to meet with students outside of class (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009d).

Jaeger and Eagan (2009) noted that interactions between faculty and students, especially out-of-class experiences, are important for educational success. Yet a recent study showed that students exposed to greater numbers of part-time instructors have

fewer interactions with full-time faculty and, as a result, experience less integration in the campus environment. While full-time faculty are important to the experience of part-time students, declining state appropriations to public higher education institutions have resulted in community colleges hiring many part-time faculty, who are paid less than full-time instructors and receive fewer employment benefits (Jacoby, 2006; Rossi, 2009). Part-time faculty can be hired on short notice and can be employed on a semester-by-semester basis. While some part-time faculty have practical experience based on the full-time jobs they hold, they have been criticized for having too little teaching experience (Rossi, 2009). Other part-time faculty piece together positions at multiple institutions and have been described as "frazzled" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 2). The impact on part-time students is that they are taught by faculty who may know little about that particular institution's policies and practices.

Ehrenberg and Zhang (2005) and Jacoby (2006) noted that large numbers of part-time faculty teaching large numbers of part-time students leads to lowered degree completion rates. In addition, McClenney, director of the CCSSE, found that both part-time faculty and part-time students lacked engagement with their college (Schmidt, 2008). Part-time faculty seldom have dedicated office space, which makes it difficult for them to meet with students (Fairchild, 2003). They are unlikely to have advising or other faculty responsibilities that would connect them to students and other faculty. These circumstances, alone or in combination, leave little time for faculty–student interaction out of the classroom. However, as noted, these forms of interaction have been demonstrated to be critical to retention (Community College Faculty Survey of Student

Engagement, 2007; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005, 2006, 2007a).

Part-time students encounter a host of other institutional impediments that can hinder their success. These additional impediments include the limited availability of critical services such as orientation, advisement, and placement testing (Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, 2007). Typically, orientation programs are offered at times that are inconvenient for part-time students, such as during the day when many part-time students work or have family responsibilities that require their time. Students who do not take part in orientation sessions do not learn how to navigate the college environment. They fail to become acquainted with critical services such as tutoring and counseling that might help them if they are not doing well. Without the knowledge that these services exist, students are likely to encounter problems that can lead to withdrawal.

Similar problems occur when part-time students do not meet with advisors. The issue of advising is especially difficult for part-time students. Students who attend at night or on the weekend may not be able to meet with advisors because their advisors are available only from 9 to 5 during the week. Students may also obtain inaccurate advice from advisors who may not be up-to-date on program requirements. When students change majors, they may not understand which of the courses they have taken will and will not apply to their new major (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003).

Students are apt to browse through the institution's course schedule to find courses that meet at times that are convenient for them. In some situations, students enroll

in courses for which they are not academically prepared, often needing developmental coursework as prerequisites or corequisites for those courses. Part-time students need to meet with advisors to make sure they are following an appropriate track and enrolling in a coherent curriculum, one in which courses are taken in the appropriate order. They must adhere to the catalog guidelines to ensure that the courses they are taking will lead to a certificate or degree or prepare them for transfer (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a). Lack of cohesion can lead to personal frustration and subsequent attrition for many students.

Placement testing is a major issue for part-time students. At many institutions, unless part-time students register for courses in English, math, or reading for which placement testing is usually mandatory, students can circumvent the entire testing process and register for college-level courses for which they might not be prepared (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a). It is common for part-time students enrolled in evening or weekend courses to enroll in introductory-level courses in psychology, sociology, history, or speech that have no prerequisites. Unfortunately, the reading level required for such courses may prove challenging for some part-time students. As part of the intake process, part-time students should take placement tests to ensure that they are prepared for the courses that they will take at the community college.

To summarize, part-time community college students face numerous barriers to education. Some of these barriers are situational and are related to pre-entry attributes such as family background, skills, abilities, and previous academic performance (Tinto, 1993). Others are dispositional and are related to attitudes and perceptions that students

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hold about their own learning (Cross, 1981; Home, 1998; L. Johnson et al., 2000; Mohney & Anderson, 1988; Scott et al., 1993). Still others are institutional and are imposed by those who create policies and develop practices at community colleges (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2008; Cross, 1981; Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003). Institutions have limited control over the characteristics that students bring with them to college; however, they do have control over the types of environments that they can offer to improve retention and boost graduation rates. Accordingly, the next section discusses the ways in which community college efforts promote the advancement of part-time students.

Supporting Student Degree Completion, Certificate Attainment, and Transfer

There is no doubt that part-time students encounter a host of impediments in completing their education. Community colleges have, however, attempted to create environments that foster student success. Many programs that have been developed, though, are geared toward full-time students. The most popular programs or services to increase student success are: (a) academic and student support services (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Kuh et al., 2006), (b) developmental education courses and programs (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006), (c) out-of-class opportunities (Kuh et al., 2006), (d) learning communities (Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 1997), and (e) engaging classrooms (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Freire, 1993; Laanan, 2003; Tinto, 1997). Part-time students could benefit from many of these services and activities. It is up to community colleges to ensure that such services and activities are made available at times and at places where part-time students can access them. The next sections highlight the

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literature on community college practices that have been found to facilitate student success and explain the ways in which those practices can benefit part-time students.

Institutional Supports

  Academic and student support services. Part-time students can benefit from academic and student support services. As noted, many part-time students suffer from role strain (Home, 1998). Having access to support services can help them cope with the many problems they may encounter. Access to these services is particularly important for students who attend school at night or on the weekend. Adult support groups are helpful as well because they can bring people with similar issues together and help them to cope with the problems that they face. Kezar (2006) noted that commuter institutions such as community colleges needed a multitude of support services because of the vulnerable populations they served. Adult women were considered among the most vulnerable and in need of opportunities that would foster student success. Kezar pointed out that higher costs were associated with providing support services on commuter campuses and institutions that served unique populations because programs and services needed to be offered during the day, in the evening, and on the weekend. With the proliferation of satellite locations, support services would need to be offered off-site at additional cost to institutions. Satellite campuses are likely to have more part-time than full-time students. Funding for support services is based on the full-time equivalent of students, which, at most institutions, is determined by a term's total semester credit count divided by 15 credits, which is a normal full-time load. The provision of support services, however, is based on student headcount, which is a much larger number.

Developmental education. The need for developmental education may be seen as an impediment at the student level because of the extra time and cost involved in taking the required courses prior to enrolling in college-level courses (McAtee & Benshoff, 2006). However, it is important to recognize that community colleges, as open-access institutions, help students advance to college-level courses by offering an array of developmental education courses that students take in preparation for these courses. A larger proportion of students at community colleges than at four-year institutions require developmental courses. Recent estimates indicate that 63% of community college students require at least one developmental course (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Developmental education is especially important for part-time students, many of whom have been away from school for some time and need to brush up on their skills; those who did not earn a high school diploma; and those who might not have done well in high school. Approximately 40% of the population needing developmental education courses consists of adult students. A study conducted at a community college in Maryland, which was consistent with other studies, showed that students who required one developmental course earned the same GPA as students who did not require any developmental courses, although it took, on average, two semesters longer for these students to graduate (Kolajo, 2004).

Out-of-class opportunities. It is important for community colleges to recognize the experiences that part-time students bring to the classroom and to create opportunities that allow them to utilize their prior experiences through internships, cooperative education experiences, service learning, and civic engagement activities. Astin (1993),

for example, demonstrated that internship experiences led to higher grades. He also found that activities such as peer tutoring increased student involvement and promoted the tutor's own learning. It appears that students are likely to experience benefits in cognitive development through combining schoolwork with workforce-related activities. These activities require that students acquire job skills, and it is likely that these skills will be useful for future employment (Kuh et al., 2006). While a great deal of research has been conducted on out-of-class experiences among traditional-aged, full-time college students at four-year, residential institutions, little information exists on how these experiences affect women, minorities, older students, or part-time students. Community colleges, especially, need to address the ways in which they can provide appropriate out-of-class opportunities to take advantage of the wealth of experience that many part-time students bring to their campuses, while at the same time providing opportunities for students to increase their own learning (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

Learning communities. Learning communities represent another way that community colleges can address retention and graduation issues among part-time students. One definition that can generally be applied to learning communities is that they consist of "groups of people engaged in intellectual interaction for the purpose of learning" (Cross, 1998, p. 4). According to Cross, learning communities have the potential to address some of the criticisms of the classroom environment being an isolated one for part-time students. Tinto and Russo (1994) conducted a study at Seattle Central Community College that examined programs that functioned much like learning communities. These programs were focused around a central theme, and in each a group

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of students took the same courses and related to one another as a cohort. The authors

contrasted their study with one conducted by Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (1991),

in which a select group of residential institutions worked within environments where

students exhibited high levels of involvement. Tinto and Russo (1994) found that,

although these high levels of involvement did not exist among students in the urban

community college, they did find that the collaborative learning strategy offered at the

programs at Seattle Central Community College provided a positive learning

environment for these students. While Tinto and Russo did not specifically state that part-

time students were involved in the coordinated study programs, they did refer to the

external obligations faced by community college students that made them different from

those in the study conducted by Kuh et al. (1991). It is, thus, reasonable to draw the

conclusion that the findings from the Tinto and Russo study would have been applicable

to part-time students. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that Cross has indicated that

learning communities could be effective at community colleges that enroll large numbers

of part-time students.

Engaging classrooms. For many part-time community college students, the

classroom represents one of the few places on campus where engagement is likely to

occur (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Tinto, 1997).

Engagement in the classroom involves active learning strategies that promote interactions

and discussions between students and faculty and foster peer relationships. Engagement

also involves having students work with one another on projects during class. It involves

building academic advising and study skills into the classroom environment (Community

College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009d). As Tinto (1997) pointed out, many classrooms are less than engaging. Freire (1993) described the "banking" concept of education, in which teachers deposit information and students receive and store this information without having the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills to process the material.

The CCSSE examines engagement both in and out of the classroom. One item on the survey attempts to measure the extent to which students are asked to memorize information and then repeat it back to their instructors. The survey item is stated as follows: "How much has your coursework emphasized . . . memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so that you can repeat them in pretty much the same form?" A total of 342,140 students from 585 community colleges responded in the following way: 25.1% indicated "very much," 38.7% indicated "quite a bit," 28.9% indicated "some," and 7.3% indicated "very little" (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009b).

Several other questions regarding mental activities were included on the survey. These included "analyzing basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory; synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways; making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods; applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations; and using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill" (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009b). The item on memorization yielded the greatest percentage of responses in the "very much" category, indicating that this form of learning is prevalent in coursework at

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the community college. However, research has demonstrated that older students, many of whom are attending part-time, prefer active approaches to classroom learning and seek to relate their learning to work and personal experiences (Laanan, 2003). Freire (1993) advocated moving from the banking concept of education to a "problem-posing" strategy in which all students could consciously engage in dialogue (p. 68). This is especially important for part-time students who desire higher levels of communication in the classroom.

While the supports discussed above suggest ways to improve degree completion, certificate attainment, and transfer, it is important to recognize that significant costs are associated with providing many of these services and teaching modalities. For example, expanding academic and student support services for students who attend part-time and at commuter institutions would involve additional expenditures. Services would need to be provided at night and on weekends at all satellite locations (Kezar, 2006). Current budget constraints at many community colleges are problematic in this regard, and the result is that students who do not attend during "normal" college business hours do not receive the same level of services as those who do attend during regular hours. Similarly, added costs are incurred through offering courses in developmental education (Boylan, 1999), and through learning communities, where class sizes are reduced and faculty require training for coordinating activities (Bloom & Sommo, 2005; Minkler, 2002).

Some of these issues were addressed in a recent article that stated that, while community colleges needed to more effectively meet the needs and expectations of nontraditional students, which would include part-time students, an infusion of financial

resources, such as increased staff, higher allocations for instructional expenses, more grant aid, and more endowment assets devoted to students, was necessary to make a difference in the educational outcomes of these students (Milam, 2009). Milam argued that transformation in practice and policy was needed, but this would require an infusion of new dollars.

In summary, many services and instructional strategies facilitate degree completion, certificate attainment, and transfer to baccalaureate institutions for part-time students at community colleges. Due to the nature of part-time students' attendance, to maximize effectiveness, services must be provided at times and locations that are convenient. While benefits accrue from participating in developmental education and learning communities and having access to academic and student support services, the costs associated with offering these programs must be carefully considered. Other supports, such as out-of-class opportunities and engaging classrooms, can occur through the redesign of courses and programs. The supports discussed in this section have the potential to expose part-time students to opportunities that allow them to share their prior knowledge and experience with their classmates and become more involved in college.

Theoretical Models of Student Departure and Persistence and the Role of Sense of Belonging, Engagement, and Intersectionality

Given the sociodemographic characteristics, enrollment patterns and impediments that part-time community college students face, one would not expect these students to become integrated or involved in the college environment in the same way that full-time students do (Astin, 1999). The deficiencies in existing models for understanding college

student retention, coupled with the extremely low graduation and transfer rates of part-time community college students, point to a disconnection between the literature on impediments, the theories that have been developed to address retention, and the institutional practices that are needed to address the problem of attrition. It is important to examine existing theories and to turn to new theories that may provide more useful models for understanding the retention, degree completion, and transfer issues of part-time community college students.

Over the course of the past 40 years, several models have been developed to explain why students leave college. These reasons are complex and are linked to sociodemographic, institutional, academic, and social factors. Some of the student sociodemographic characteristics that have been identified as predictors of student departure for community college students include: (a) part-time enrollment status (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Chen & Carroll, 2007; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Feldman, 1993; Marti, 2008; Mohammadi, 1994; Voorhees, 1987; Walleri, 1981), (b) poor academic preparation for college (Ashby, 2003; Chen & Carroll, 2007; Hoachlander, Sikora, Horn, & Carroll, 2003; McCormick et al., 1995), (c) unclear educational goals (Brooks-Leonard, 1991; Hoachlander et al., 2003; Mohammadi, 1994), and (d) low socioeconomic status (Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Walleri, 1981).

The aforementioned factors have led to the development of theories that have been tested by many researchers and scholars; however, the most widely cited scholars on college student departure (Astin, 1975; Pace, 1982; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) based their research on studies conducted at four-year, residential institutions. These theories do not

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adequately describe student departure among nontraditional populations such as older students, commuters, or part-time students.

Regardless of their limitations, it is important to understand how these theories have been used in the past to study traditional college populations and why other models of student departure need to be considered when examining the departure process among part-time community college students. The next section of this literature review begins with an examination of Tinto's interactionalist theory (1975, 1987, 1993), Astin's (1984) theory of involvement, and Pace's (1982) concept of student effort. It then describes Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student attrition, and concludes with a description of the concepts of sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; D. W. Johnson et al., 2007; Schuetz, 2008b), student engagement (Kuh, 2001; McClenney et al., 2007; Schuetz, 2008b), and intersectionality (Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011; Torres et al., 2009). While a lack of empirical research tying student engagement to increased persistence and retention among community college students was noted by Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004b), more recent research conducted through CCSSE lends support to the notion that high levels of student engagement lead to favorable outcomes such as increased persistence and retention for community college students (McClenney & Marti, 2006).

Tinto's Interactionalist Theory

Tinto's interactionalist theory (1975, 1987, 1993), which was based on the experiences of traditional-aged students at four-year, residential institutions, described two forms of integration that were necessary for student persistence: academic integration

and social integration. According to Tinto (1975), academic integration is measured by how well a student performs in school and the extent to which a student experiences intellectual growth in college. Social integration is measured by the extent to which peer associations are formed and the extent to which a student is involved in extracurricular activities and interactions with faculty and staff at the college.

Tinto's (1975) theory, which is sociological in nature, seeks to explain why students leave college. His theory is rooted in Durkheim's (1951) work on suicide, which states that suicide was more likely to occur among individuals who are not well integrated in society. It is also based on Spady's (1970) application of suicide theory to college dropout behavior. Spady argued that students would be more likely to leave college when their values were in conflict with those around them.

Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) interactionalist theory was validated by many studies that included full-time students at residential campuses. In fact, over the years, this theory attained almost paradigmatic status (Braxton et al., 2004b; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Metz, 2005). However, Tinto's theory has also been widely criticized because it did not adequately describe nontraditional populations such as adult learners, commuters, or part-time students (Braxton et al., 1997; Dowd & Coury, 2006; Ouimet, 2003; Tierney, 1992), nor did it address the experiences of students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Tinto's theory is based on the premise that students must assimilate into the cultural environment of the institution and disassociate themselves from their ethnic groups in order to be successful. If they do not succeed, they, rather than the institution, are viewed as failures (Tierney, 1992, 1999). Further, distinction among students is lacking in these

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studies, as is the role of the institution in helping students achieve their academic goals

(Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) provided

conceptual criticisms of Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) interactionalist theory, documented

19 studies that failed to establish a relationship between persistence and academic

integration, and found that social integration was a more reliable determinant of

persistence.

Tinto (1993) refuted the many arguments that were directed at his previous work

by expanding his theory to include the experiences of marginalized populations such as

adults, minority students, graduate students, and community college students. In

describing the problems that these learners faced, Tinto noted that, in order for these

students to integrate successfully into the academic and social environments of

postsecondary institutions, they had to separate from their past associations with friends

and family. He postulated that the demands of work outside of the school environment

limited students' time for study and interactions with faculty and students. Critics,

however, have argued that marginalized students actually need to maintain ties with their

families and other support networks in order to be successful in college (Kuh & Love,

2000; Rendón et al., 2000; Tierney, 1999).

In describing the challenges that community college students face, Tinto (1987)

stated that, because a majority of these students attend college primarily part-time and

spend so little time on campus, the college classroom is often the only connection that

students have to the institution. Tinto's (1997) article, entitled "Classrooms as

Communities," represented one of the first attempts to examine integration at the

community college level, and stated that the "classroom is the crossroads where the social and the academic meet" (p. 599).

There is still considerable debate about the extent to which academic and social integration matter for community college students. With regard to academic integration, several researchers have demonstrated a positive relationship with student persistence (Nora, Attinasi, & Matonak, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004), while others have failed to establish this relationship (Baker & Velez, 1996; Voorhees, 1987). With regard to social integration, research has demonstrated that while this form of integration is highly predictive of persistence at four-year-institutions (Strauss & Volkwein, 2004), it has little effect on persistence at two-year-institutions, presumably because the social systems of community colleges are weaker than those of residential, four-year institutions. Community colleges lack many of the features that are present at residential institutions such as dining halls, dormitories, and college organizations that would promote social integration (Halpin, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983).

Astin's Theory of Involvement

Building on Tinto's (1975) theory, Astin (1984) developed a theory of involvement in the college setting. Astin defined involvement as the "quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience" (p. 298) as well as the extent to which institutions provide opportunities for student development. According to this theory, students learn through their involvement in the academic and social environments of their institutions. Involvement takes place in the

classroom, in student activities, with peers, and through contact with faculty members. Astin's theory of involvement (1984) places responsibility for involvement on the student and the institution. Astin recognized that involvement would be minimal at community colleges, where the majority of faculty and students are part-time. He noted, especially, that living at home and attending college part-time would adversely affect retention.

The theory of involvement, tested at four-year institutions, has been criticized for its assumption that all students will actively seek to become involved in the campus environment. While institutions have created programs and social activities to encourage student involvement, they have not gone out of their way to encourage student participation. This is a problem, particularly, for nontraditional students who may not feel very comfortable in the college environment due to the fact that they may be first-generation students, older students, commuters, or part-time students. In other words, involvement theory does not address the fact that certain groups of students, particularly these nontraditional students, are likely to "slip through the cracks." Those who may benefit the most from becoming involved are missed by the institution (Rendón et al., 2000).

Pace's Concept of Quality of Student Effort

Pace (1982) developed the concept of quality of student effort in which he argued that learning and development require an investment of student time and effort. According to Pace, "if students expect to benefit from what this college or university has to offer, they have to take the initiative" (p. 3). While he acknowledged that colleges have a responsibility to provide the institutional conditions necessary for students to succeed,

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he also believed that students have to avail themselves of the facilities, services, and opportunities that the college has to offer.

To measure the quality of student effort, Pace (1984) developed a survey known as the College Student Experiences Questionnaire. The survey, created in 1979, has undergone revisions and remains in use today (Gonyea, Kish, Kuh, Muthiah, & Thomas, 2003). One purpose of the survey is to gauge the level of engaged learning among students. Research conducted by Kuh (1999) showed that, due to changes in technology, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much time students are engaged in learning. More importantly, previous participants in this survey have included traditional-aged, full-time college populations. Only recently has information on community college student effort been gathered via the CCSSE. Student effort is measured according to how often students prepare two or more draft assignments before turning them in, how often they work on papers or projects that integrate information from various sources, how often they come to class unprepared, and how often they use peer or other tutoring services, skills labs, and computer labs. Student effort is also measured by having students report the number of books read for personal enjoyment or enrichment and hours spent preparing for class (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2010). With the exception of reading books for one's own for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment, part-time community college students represented in the 2008 CCSSE had lower mean scores on all student effort survey items. It should be noted, however, that some items on the survey are based on number of hours of student effort, and because part-time students take fewer courses, these figures may be misleading.

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Tinto's interactionalist theory (1975, 1987, 1993), Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement, and Pace's (1982) concept of quality of student effort were developed to describe student involvement in learning and in the general college environment. These related theories and concepts postulate that positive student learning outcomes occur because of what students do when they are in college. Much debate has ensued regarding the applicability of these theories and models to older, commuting, and part-time students (Braxton et al., 1997; Dowd & Coury, 2006; Ouimet, 2003; Tierney, 1992), many of whom attend community colleges and have overlapping characteristics that render these models inappropriate for populations with such diverse characteristics (Braxton et al., 1997; Dowd & Coury, 2006; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Ouimet, 2003; Rendón et al., 2000; Tierney, 1992, 1999). Regardless, the work of Astin, Pace, and Tinto are important to research on community college students because their work has provided the foundation for new models that are used to explain student persistence among marginalized populations.

Models of Attrition Among Nontraditional Students

The aforementioned theories and concepts have been widely tested in the study of college student retention at four-year institutions (Astin, 1984; Pace, 1982; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993). With the acknowledgement that college student populations have grown increasingly diverse, Bean and Metzner (1985) developed a conceptual model of nontraditional, undergraduate student attrition based on Bean's (1980) earlier model of dropout behavior. This conceptual model was tested at a major Midwestern university in 1977. The authors defined "traditional" undergraduates as those who typically lived on

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campus, ranged in age from 18 to 24, and attended college full-time. By default, students who did not meet these criteria were considered "nontraditional." This model postulated that nontraditional students, most notably older, part-time, and commuter students, experienced fewer out-of-class interactions with peers or faculty, participated in class-related activities that were similar to traditional students, and were involved in more interactions with friends and family not connected to the institution. The model acknowledged the less significant role that social integration played in student attrition. According to the authors, the reasons that nontraditional students leave higher education are linked to environmental variables, such as family responsibilities, rather than to lack of social integration. The authors cautioned, however, that the most important variables related to attrition were likely to be different for subgroups such as older and part-time students. For older, part-time students, social integration may take place in settings outside of school. For younger, part-time students, social integration in the college setting may be more important as younger students' outside connections may be more limited (Baker & Velez, 1996; Jacobs & King, 2002).

Baker and Velez (1996), also drawing on Bean's (1980) study, examined the degree to which external factors play a role in students' lives. They found that while social and academic integration among traditional students involved joining groups and clubs and interacting with faculty on an informal basis, this type of integration was not likely to occur for part-time students. Part-time students were more likely to have high levels of contact with family members or with members of their community, many of whom were not college students.

Theories to Be Used in this Study

Students' Sense of Belonging

A number of researchers (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; D. W. Johnson et al., 2007; Tierney, 1993) have argued that new methods are needed to conceptualize the ways in which students feel they are a part of an institution. Some of this literature builds on Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Perceived Cohesion Scale that measured cohesion relative to the following two dimensions: (a) sense of belonging and (b) feelings of morale.

The first dimension, sense of belonging, has both cognitive and affective components. With regard to the cognitive component, individuals judge their sense of belonging according to the knowledge they gain through membership in a group. With regard to the affective component, individuals judge their sense of belonging according to the feelings or attitudes they have toward the group. A sense of belonging "captures the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 327). This feeling of inclusion is especially important for students who historically have been marginalized and always have had to adapt to the dominant culture of the institutions they attended. It differs from academic and social integration as originally defined by Tinto (1993), which places the responsibility for collegiate success on the student. Sense of belonging, an alternative conceptualization, places the responsibility for success jointly on the student and the institution (D. W. Johnson et al., 2007).

The second dimension of Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Perceived Cohesion Scale, morale, is assessed according to how enthusiastic and happy one is about his/her

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environment and whether one feels that he/she is attending one of the best institutions. The constructs of sense of belonging and morale are highly correlated, but they are not identical. An individual can experience a strong sense of belonging to a group, yet can exhibit low morale due to circumstances that exist in a given setting.

The Perceived Cohesion Scale was tested in two different settings (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). The first setting consisted of a small college in the Northeast recognized for its strong school spirit. The second setting consisted of a mid-sized city also located in the Northeast. The authors predicted that perceived cohesion would be significantly higher among a random sample of students at a high-spirited college than it would be among a random sample of residents of a mid-sized city (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). The study confirmed their hypothesis, and findings from this study demonstrated that the Perceived Cohesion Scale, rooted in macrosociology and social psychology, measured cohesion with high levels of reliability and validity. The instrument was deemed to have potential to be used as a tool to measure cohesion in a variety of settings.

According to Bollen and Hoyle (1990), college students experienced a sense of belonging when they felt as though they were being included as members of a community. This concept has been used to describe marginalized populations, including students from different racial/ethnic groups (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), and, as such, it has strong potential to be a useful construct for examining sense of belonging for part-time students as well.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) used the Perceived Cohesion Scale to examine the impact of marginality on student achievement and persistence. Hurtado and Carter's

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(1997) study, conducted at four-year institutions, involved high-achieving first- and second-year Latino college students. Their sample was drawn from the National Survey of Hispanic Students. Multiple waves of interviews were conducted, and the final sample consisted of 272 students who entered college in 1990. The authors examined the background characteristics and college experiences of these students as they entered their junior year. They concluded that, for marginalized students, the concept of "subjective sense of integration" provides a greater understanding of their adjustment to college life and the education outcomes that follow.

Rather than trying to measure integration based upon the extent to which students are involved in mainstream activities, a more comprehensive understanding of marginalized students' collegiate experiences is achieved by understanding their affiliations with various aspects of the institution, such as whether they feel a part of any particular group on campus or feel a part of the institution as a whole.

The construct of sense of belonging is useful for examining the experiences of part-time community college students because it measures the extent to which students see themselves as members of the campus community. For students who have been marginalized in higher education through the development and implementation of policies and practices that are geared toward accommodating full-time students, this concept draws upon the student's subjective sense of integration and the types of participation or membership that are most likely to lead to student success.

The concept of sense of belonging as opposed to integration is helpful for understanding the experiences of marginalized students because it can help to explore the

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types of affiliations that matter for part-time students. Part-time students' schedules make it difficult for participation in many mainstream activities. Their busy schedules and multiple outside commitments limit the extent to which they can be integrated into the campus community. Levels of integration are likely to be much lower for part-time students than for full-time students.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued that early college experiences could affect the extent to which students became involved in the campus community. They indicated that these experiences were the result of institutional intervention. They claimed that institutions must address the needs of the many populations of students that arrive at their doors and provide them with the chance to become members of the college community. Hurtado and Carter raised an important issue relating to diverse populations. Many college students who have multiple responsibilities do not have the opportunity to make a discrete separation between their student involvement and their responsibilities to their families and the community in which they live, work, and volunteer. Part-time students achieve a sense of belonging when they feel a need to be a part of some group or activity. For many, this will occur in the environment in which they spend most of their time when they are at school—the classroom. Within this setting, they have the opportunity to develop peer and faculty relationships.

Other provocative issues were raised by Hurtado and Carter (1997), such as whether a diminished sense of belonging always leads to attrition, whether it is important for students to have a sense of belonging to the total campus community, and whether being part of a small network contributes toward a sense of belonging.

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Hurtado and Carter (1997) pointed out in their study of Latino students that not all activities in college create a sense of belonging to the college community. They found that participation in religious and community-based organizations were related to a student's sense of belonging and that this was true because these organizations were linked to the communities in which they were involved before they started college. Many part-time students at community colleges live with their families and maintain their ties to the community while attending school. Sense of belonging is a concept that takes into account the levels to which marginalized students can and do develop a sense of membership to specific parts of the college and, possibly, through these affiliations to the institution as a whole.

D. W. Johnson et al. (2007) conducted a multi-institutional study of almost 3,000 students on residential campuses to examine students' sense of belonging. Students who lived on campus were more likely to have a stronger sense of belonging than students who did not live on campus. The authors found that sense of belonging differed by race. White students living on campus had a stronger sense of belonging than did students of other racial/ethnic groups. For African American students, the campus climate had a greater influence on their sense of belonging than where they lived. A study conducted of 4,210 community college students from nine diverse community colleges showed that part-time students who lacked a sense of belonging to the institution did not see the college environment as welcoming. Those who viewed the campus as welcoming achieved higher grades in general education than did full-time students (Glover & Murrell, 1998). Sense of belonging appears to matter for community college faculty as

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well. This was especially true for part-time faculty who found themselves at the bottom of the academic hierarchy (Weisman & Marr, 2002).

Formation of Information Networks

Karp, Hughes, and O'Gara (2008) explored Tinto's (1993) integration framework to determine its applicability at the community college level. Their findings suggested, contrary to other researchers, that Tinto's framework could be applied in this setting. In a study conducted of first-year students at two urban community colleges in the Northeast, the authors found that community college students developed attachments to their institutions, which led to increased persistence. What differentiated their findings from those of other researchers was that the same, rather than separate, factors led to both academic and social integration. Specifically, the authors found that information networks that were formed in the classroom led to both academic and social integration. The authors defined integration to mean experiencing a sense of belonging to the institution—that is, feeling comfortable in college and/or in the courses in which students were enrolled. They defined information networks as "social ties that facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge and procedures" (p. 8). This study shed new light on the relationship between integration and persistence and demonstrated that integration is, in fact, important for community college students.

As Karp et al. (2008) indicated, knowing familiar faces on campus was not sufficient for integration. What was important was the information that students were able to obtain from these individuals. The authors noted that these networks were difficult to establish because of the limited time that students, especially part-time students, spent

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on campus. Peer networks appeared to be one way that information was transmitted. Student success courses, which included campus tours, provided another way for students to meet people who were able to share information with them verbally. Tinto's (1975) definition of social integration referred to the extent to which the student is involved in extracurricular activities and interacts with faculty and staff at the institution. The definition of social integration used by Karp et al. (2008) is different from Tinto's definition, as they propose that social integration provides a means for students to learn what they need to know in order to succeed. It is especially important for part-time students, who are unlikely to have the time to become fully integrated into the college environment, to be able to find the information they need when they need it.

Student Engagement

Student engagement theory is important from a student perspective because it involves the time and effort that students should devote to educationally purposeful activities, and it is important from an institutional perspective because it involves the role that community colleges should play in encouraging student participation in activities both in and out of the classroom. These interactions involve many players at each institution. Senior officials who develop and implement policies, managers who oversee departments that work directly with students, and full- and part-time faculty who impart knowledge in the classroom are key players in providing information and opportunities for the types of engagement that part-time students need in order to succeed.

The theory of student engagement is particularly useful in studying the experiences of part-time community college students. These students arrive at the

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nation's community colleges with unique needs that emanate from their personal, educational, and motivational backgrounds. Institutions have little in place to address the needs of this population to ensure their success and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Silverman et al., 2009). Faculty and administrators need to acknowledge the needs of this population, yet institutions have ignored many of the issues that part-time students must confront (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Part-time students cannot be viewed with the same lens as full-time residential students. Part-time students must deal with transportation issues, work conflicts, and family responsibilities that provide many challenges to being successful in the college environment (Silverman et al., 2009).

Tinto's interactionalist theory (1975, 1987, 1993) postulated that students must become integrated both academically and socially in the college environment in order to be successful, and to do this Tinto proposed that students need to give up ties with their past associations. This is not possible for part-time students, many of whom continue to live at home and work in their communities. In fact, as Hurtado and Carter (1997) have shown, it is not even desirable. In their study of full-time Latino students, they found that maintaining family relationships and support were important for making a smooth transition to college. It is likely that this finding would also hold true for part-time community college students.

The theory of student engagement is also useful in examining the experiences of part-time and other marginalized students because it addresses student participation in educationally purposeful activities and institutional involvement in promoting participation in these activities, through both the curriculum and the provision of

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academic and student support services. More responsibility is placed on the institution to determine how, when, and where it must reach these students. The time that most part-time students spend on campus is spent in the classroom, and that is where engagement must occur (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009). The framework of student engagement takes into account the responsibility of both the student and the institution to promote educational success.

An analysis of the theories related to retention and student departure shows that there is considerable overlap in the variables that are associated with retention and attrition and in the concepts that are associated with sense of belonging and student engagement. These relationships are complex, and it is often difficult to determine cause and effect. For example, it appears from the literature that sense of belonging is seen as the antecedent of engagement (Stage & Hossler, 2000). Schuetz (2008b) also claimed that "campus social-cultural systems that support student experiences of belonging, competence, and autonomy should spontaneously inspire engagement—even for students who have survived great adversity" (p. 312).

Bensimon (2009), on the other hand, postulated that:

productive engagement is an important means by which students develop feelings about their peers, professors, and institutions that give them a sense of connectedness, affiliation, and belonging, while simultaneously offering rich opportunities for learning and development. For this to happen, students must invest time and effort in academic activities and practices. (pp. xxii–xxiii)

The needs of part-time students at community colleges are just beginning to be addressed. Silverman, Aliabadi, and Stiles (2009) acknowledged, as have repeated administrations of the CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement,

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2007a, 2008, 2009e), that for part-time community college students, engagement must occur in the classroom. The authors contend that institutions have done little to design events that are geared specifically for this population. Institutional policies and practices need to be designed to address the specific needs of this population. These policies and practices should focus on promoting a sense of belonging and engagement with the overall goal of improved retention for part-time students (Kuh et al., 2005; McClenney & Marti, 2006).

Schuetz (2008b) has proposed that self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), a theory of motivation, is an appropriate model for describing student engagement. This theory suggests that retention is likely to occur when certain basic needs, such as competence, autonomy, and feelings of belonging, are met. According to this theory, when students experience competence, they are able to do well in school and conduct work on an independent basis. Similarly, when students achieve autonomy, they can ask for the kind of help that will enable them to advance toward their goals.

Sense of belonging helps students to become engaged long enough to develop competence and autonomy. Schuetz (2008a) conducted a mixed-methods study at a single best practice community college in California in which she tested the relevance of this theory to student engagement. This institution was noted for its student retention and success figures that were higher than the state average. She conducted semistructured interviews with 30 students and examined CCSSE results from 1,148 students at the institution. The Community College Student Report, the CCSSE survey instrument

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(Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009), contains items that explore

student relationships with faculty, administrators and office personnel, and other students.

Schuetz (2008a) identified belonging, autonomy, and competence as latent, or

unobserved, variables that were associated with CCSSE survey items. Using structural

equation modeling, Schuetz found that competence and autonomy actually contributed

more to engagement than did sense of belonging, but sense of belonging was important

for retaining students long enough to develop both the competence and autonomy needed

to become engaged in educationally purposeful activities.

Finding ways to engage part-time students, who spend so little time on campus, is

a formidable challenge. Kuh et al. (2005) examined institutional conditions that led to

student engagement and, subsequently, to persistence and student success. Their

benchmarks mirror Chickering and Gamson's (1987) "Seven Principles for Good Practice

in Undergraduate Education," which lists educationally effective practices that influence

student learning. These principles, which are associated with student success and positive

institutional performance, state that:

> Good practice in undergraduate education (a) encourages contact between
> students and faculty, (b) develops reciprocity and cooperation among students,
> (c) encourages active learning, (d) gives prompt feedback, (e) emphasizes time on
> task, (f) communicates high expectations, and (g) respects diverse talents and
> ways of learning. (p. 3)

Kuh and a team of researchers developed the National Survey of Student

Engagement (NSSE) in 1998 (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007) and

created benchmarks that include (a) level of academic challenge, (b) active and

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collaborative learning, (c) student–faculty interaction, (d) enriching educational experiences, and (e) supportive campus environment (Kuh, 2003).

Kuh et al. (2005) studied 20 four-year colleges and universities identified as "educationally effective" based upon their higher-than-predicted graduation rates as determined by Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) graduation rates, and their high benchmark scores on student engagement as measured by the NSSE. The 20 institutions in their study featured the following six conditions:

> (a) a "living" mission and "lived" educational philosophy, (b) an unshakable focus on student learning, (c) environments adapted for educational enrichment, (d) clearly marked pathways to student success, (e) an improvement-oriented ethos, and (e) shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 24)

Kuh et al. emphasized, as did Strauss and Volkwein (2002), that the conditions for success were both context and population specific. What may work at one type of institution may not work at another and, similarly, what might work with one population may not work with another.

In a review of Kuh et al.'s (2005) book *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter*, Bers (2006), a noted community college leader, reported that the findings of Kuh's team are relevant to community colleges, and suggested these practices should be observed at high-performing institutions in all sectors of higher education. Creating high-performing institutions requires faculty involvement. At community colleges, this is hard to do because of the large number of adjunct faculty. Bers also stated that the literature is devoid of discussion about the involvement of adjunct faculty in creating environments that lead to success for students.

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Engagement is the focus of the Center for Community College Student

Engagement, which has designed the CCSSE. The CCSSE has been administered

nationally since 2001 (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a). Data

from this survey make it possible to learn more about the specific experiences of part-

time community college students. The CCSSE, like the NSSE, provides benchmarks that

assess institutional practices that are correlated with learning and persistence. The

CCSSE's benchmarks cluster into five areas that measure student engagement among

community college students: (a) active and collaborative learning, (b) student effort,

(c) academic challenge, (d) student–faculty interaction, and (e) support for learners

(McClenney, 2006). Some of these survey items inquire about activities such as asking

questions in class, preparing two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in, analyzing

basic elements of a theory, using e-mail to communicate with a faculty member, and

using academic support services (Community College Survey of Student Engagement,

2008, 2009c).

CCSSE results have demonstrated that students and institutions experience

adverse consequences when a large percentage of the population attends part-time.

According to CCSSE, part-time students have less contact with faculty than full-time

students "even within the classroom setting" (Community College Survey of Student

Engagement, 2005, p. 13). The reason for this phenomenon is that large proportions of

part-time students attend class at night or on the weekend and are taught by adjunct

faculty. According to Kay McClenney, director of the Center for Community College

Student Engagement:

When they come to school, they have a job, work 40 or more hours a week, and have children to take care of and commitments in the community. Engagement won't happen in traditional ways. Colleges are challenged to be much more intentional to (educate) what we have, not what we had, what we thought we had, or what we wish we had. (Pekow, 2004, p. 2)

Evidence has shown that part-time students spend little time on campus beyond the time spent in the classroom (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a). As noted by McClenney (2007), the classroom environment may often be the only time and place where engagement can occur for part-time students. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement noted that "capture time—the time colleges have to engage students—is limited, so what colleges do to make the most of that time is critical" (University of Texas Austin Community College Leadership Program, 2002, p. 6).

Intersectionality

The framework of intersectionality has been applied to college teaching and advising. Dill and Zambrana (2009) posit that there are four tenets of intersectionality: (a) centering the experiences of people of color, (b) complicating identity, (c) unveiling power in interconnected structures of inequality, and (d) promoting social justice and social change. Of particular importance is the role that intersectionality can have in promoting practices that acknowledge marginalized populations and foster change that directly and positively impacts these populations (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011).

"Intersectionality" represents a theory that involves understanding how multiple aspects of one's identity—such as gender, race, social class (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011), ethnicity, age, family status, and attendance status—intersect and result in various

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forms of discrimination. Crenshaw (1989) provides an analogy to explain

intersectionality:

> Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and
> it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused
> by cars traveling from any number of directions, and sometimes, from all of them.
> Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her
> injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination (p. 149).

Crenshaw then explains how some individuals experience multiple levels of

discrimination:

> Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white
> women's experiences; sometimes they share very similar experiences with Black
> men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination—the combined effects of
> practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex. And
> sometimes, they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race
> and sex discrimination, but as Black women. (p. 149)

A student's part-time status may intersect with his or her biological, social, or

cultural characteristics and lead to multiple forms of discrimination in the college

environment. It is important for administrators and educators to understand the role

intersectionality plays in higher education, in both support services and the classroom.

Jones and Wijeyesinghe (2011) suggested that the framework for intersectionality

provides instructors with opportunities to address student's experiences, to examine

issues of discrimination and oppression, and to promote change to ensure that students

have equitable educational experiences.

In summary, the present study seeks to address the fact that three-quarters of part-

time community college students are disappearing from the rolls of community colleges

without earning a degree or certificate, without transferring, or without continuing their

enrollment at their initial institution. This is happening at great cost on both the state and national levels and is affecting the economy in terms of not being able to respond to workforce needs. This literature review has identified two gaps. First, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the institutional conditions that best promote success at all levels for part-time students. Little is known about the experiences that part-time students have with adjunct faculty. These two groups represent the largest segments of students and faculty on college campuses across the country and they represent segments that are likely to interact with one another on a large scale due to the times of day that part-time students attend classes and that adjunct faculty teach. Research has shown that engagement in the classroom plays an important role in student retention, but little is known regarding how and if this happens with these two large populations who themselves spend little on campus. This study seeks to address this issue in an attempt to learn more about the extent of interactions between these two populations. Second, there is gap in appropriate retention theories for part-time students. This study attempts to look at four relatively new theories: sense of belonging (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997), student engagement (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009d; Marti, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), formation of information networks (Karp et al., 2008) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011) in an effort to determine if these theories better explain why some students stay and why some students leave community colleges.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology that was used to investigate the ways in which institutional policies, programs, practices, and resources affect the educational success of part-time community college students. The part-time student's community college experience was viewed through a variety of perspectives including those of administrators, faculty, and current and former students. Demographic and behavioral characteristics of students, along with survey and interview/focus group data provided a multidimensional portrait of students who participated in the study. Survey data included the following three quantitative components: (a) two brief surveys containing demographic and college financing information, (b) Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Perceived Cohesion Scale, and (c) three questions from the CCSSE (2007b).

Through surveys and interviews, administrators and faculty offered an institutional perspective on part-time students' experiences in college. Document reviews provided an additional means for learning about whether the institutions designed and carried out specific plans to address the needs of part-time students.

The information gathered from all of these sources was focused on gaining an understanding of the institutional conditions that acted as supports or impediments to

student success. Every student experience presented an opportunity to learn more about information networks, to develop a sense of belonging, and to become engaged in the college environment. Many times students' age, family or work responsibilities, or cultural backgrounds marginalized their experience as college students, making it difficult for them to be successful in achieving a personal goal, earning a credential, transferring to another college, or gaining employment.

Rationale for Research Perspective and Strategy of Inquiry

Answers to the research questions required that a qualitative methodological approach be used in order to explore "how" and "why" certain phenomena occur (Yin, 2003). The strategy of inquiry for this study was the case study method, described by Creswell (2007) as follows: "A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of [a] 'system,' based on a diverse array of data collection materials, and the researcher situates this system or case within its larger 'context' or setting" (p. 244). This strategy of inquiry is commonly used in the social sciences such as psychology and sociology; professional fields such as social work; community planning, public administration, nursing, and public health; and education, business, and economics (Yin, 2003, 2009). The case study focuses on events or situations that are current (Yin, 2009).

The case study method involves the study of a "bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 244) where boundaries, such as time and place, and an interrelated set of parts form a whole, and frame the parameters of the research. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) advised that care must be taken to place boundaries on a case so that the research

questions are not driven by too many objectives. Baxter and Jack (2008) added that a case study is bounded and these boundaries include not only who will be included or excluded from the study, but also to what extent the case will be analyzed.

A multiple case study design was used for this study. While some multiple case studies involve several institutions, Yin (2003) argued that as few as two institutions could constitute a multiple case study. He asserted that findings from two studies would lead to higher levels of generalizability than would findings from only one case study. Yin (2009) provided an example of a "two-case case study" (p. 61) conducted by Chaskin (2001), that explored neighborhood community-building strategies. The study demonstrated that the strategies employed by two separate communities offered viable alternatives for building capacity in neighborhood communities.

Multiple case studies can be holistic or embedded. In a holistic design, each institution constitutes a unit of analysis. In an embedded design, which was the approach used in this study, each institution constitutes a case, and within each case, there are embedded units of analysis. In this study, the embedded units included administrators, faculty, and current and former students. The design called for data to be collected from surveys, interviews and/or focus groups, and a review of institutional documents. Yin (2003) noted that the case study must be comprehensive and include all of the units of analysis—in this case, the multiple groups of faculty, administrators, and students—at two specific community colleges. Merriam (2009) described a two-stage multiple case

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study process, in which the first stage involves a within-case analysis and the second a cross-case analysis.

Using Creswell's (2007) definition of a bounded system, this case study took place at two New England community colleges between 2010–2012. To ensure confidentiality, fictitious names were used to identify each college, with one institution identified as Acme Community College and the other as Hilo Community College.

This chapter describes the site selection process, the organization of the study, and the data collection methods used. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the study are also presented, and data analysis procedures are described. Measures of trustworthiness, including credibility, consistency or dependability, and confirmability, are discussed, and a brief summary of pilot testing is presented. The chapter concludes with the role of the researcher, limitations of the study, and definitions of terms used throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

<center>**Site Selection**</center>

Community colleges are fertile ground for a study of institutional conditions that promote educational success among part-time students. They are worthy of study because of their multiple missions, which include job training, preparing students for transfer, providing General Education Development (GED) test preparation, offering English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, and providing a wide array of noncredit workforce development and personal enrichment activities. Community colleges in New England mirror community colleges nationwide in that they serve large numbers of part-time

degree- and certificate-seeking students. When this dissertation proposal was written in fall 2009, 62% of credit students at Acme attended part-time and 56% of students at Hilo attended part-time. Nationally, in 2008, 61% of students who attended community colleges did so part-time (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010). The most current national data available demonstrate that in fall 2011, the portion of part-time students was 60% (Knapp et al., 2012).

Four factors were considered when choosing sites for the two community colleges: (a) size and setting, (b) attendance status of students as measured by the percent of students who attended part-time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009; The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2009b), (c) race/ethnicity (obtained through institutional reports and the IPEDS national database) and (d) performance measures, such as retention rates and transfer-out rates of part-time students and graduation rates of all first-time, full-time students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Two New England community colleges were selected for this study. A pilot study was conducted at a third community college, also located in New England. Lessons learned from the pilot are discussed later in this chapter.

Size and setting. According to The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, institutional size is a reflection of "institutional structure, complexity, culture, and finances" (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2009a). According to the Carnegie Foundation, the colleges were in the "large two-year" to "very large two-year" categories of institutions. Acme enrolled almost double the number of

students as Hilo; however, according to institutional fact books, Acme's enrollment was spread across multiple locations. In fall 2010, Acme enrolled nearly 18,000 credit students, compared to Hilo's enrollment of approximately 9,000 students.

Part-time student enrollment. While the Carnegie Foundation does not contend that differences in the proportion of full- and part-time students affect the quality of education, it does note that such differences have implications for class scheduling, support services and activities, and time to completion (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2009b).

Acme's undergraduate profile is designated as a "PT2" (part-time two-year college), which means that at least 60% of the students enrolled part-time. Hilo is classified as a "Mix2" (mixed part/full-time two-year college with a greater mixture of full-time and part-time students) with a fall part-time enrollment between 40–59% of all undergraduates (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2012). In fall 2010, part-time enrollment at Acme Community College was 65% of total enrollment, and at Hilo Community College it was 57% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Race and ethnicity. With regard to race/ethnicity, Acme's minority population for fall 2010 was 29% compared to Hilo's rate of 34% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Retention, graduation, and transfer-out rates. Acme's percentage of full-time first-time students who began their studies in fall 2009 and returned in fall 2010 was 60%

while their percentage of part-time first-time students was 45%. The corresponding

figures for Hilo were 58% and 43% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009a).

The three-year graduation rate for the fall 2007 Acme cohort, as measured for full-time,

first-time students was 9%, and the transfer-out rate, measured according to the

percentage of students who transferred before graduating, was 22%. At Hilo the

graduation rate was 14% and the transfer-out rate was 24%. Graduation rates by time-to-

completion show that for the cohort of students who began at Acme full-time in fall 2007,

3% graduated within two years, 9% graduated within three years, and 13% graduated

within four years. At Hilo, the time-to-completion rate for first-time, full-time enrollment

for fall 2007 was 3% within two years, 14% within three years, and 18% within four

years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Table 1

Site Selection Criteria, Indicators of Criteria, Measurement Methods, and Sources

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Selection criteria	Indicators of criteria	Measurement methods and sources
Size and setting	1. Size: Number of credit students enrolled in fall 2010 2. Setting: Carnegie classification of very large 2-year, and large 2-year	Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) national database
Attendance status of students as measured by percent who attend part-time	Fall enrollment data show at least 60% of undergraduates enrolled part-time at associate's degree-granting institutions	Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Race/ethnicity	Percent minority	IPEDS national database, institutional reports
Performance measures such as retention rates of part-time students and graduation rates of all first-time students	1. Retention of first-time, full-time students and first-time, part-time students 2. Graduation rates of first-time, full-time students 3. Transfer-out rates (before graduating)	IPEDS national database

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Table 2

Site Selection Results

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	Acme Community College	Hilo Community College
Size and setting	18,000 total (the campus studied had <9,000)	9,000
	Large/very large 2-year	Large/very large 2-year
Attendance status fall 2010	65%	57%
Minority population fall 2010	26% (9% unknown)	34%
Performance measures: Fall 2009 to fall 2010 retention	60% full-time retention 45% part-time retention	58% full-time retention 43% part-time retention
First-time, full-time graduation rates at 150% time (fall 2007 cohort)	9%	14%
Transfer-out rates (before graduating)	22%	24%

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Data Collection

This study included recruiting and interviewing administrators, full-time and

adjunct faculty, and current and former students at the pilot institution and at Acme and

Hilo community colleges. Upon approval of the study from the UMass Boston

Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the pilot institution's IRB and received

approval to conduct the study. I also sought and received project approval from the Hilo

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Community College IRB. At Acme Community College, the research study was reviewed and approved by the college's president and senior staff.

Ensuring equity. Equity is an important issue that must be addressed when recruiting participants for research studies. It was essential that the research reflected varying perspectives. In the study, information was collected from part-time students who fell within different categories: currently enrolled students both new and nearing graduation, and those no longer attending the colleges. It was also collected from administrators who either developed policies and/or worked directly with part-time students. The perspectives of full-time and adjunct faculty who taught part-time students were gained in one-on-one interviews.

Equity involves ensuring that those eligible to participate in a study will have a reasonable chance to be included. Attempts were made to schedule focus groups and interviews at times and locations that were convenient. Issues of equity needed to be considered in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Achieving equity among participants by race, social class, and gender proved challenging, but it was my responsibility to be aware of any inequities that might have affected the student interviews, focus groups, and interviews with administrators and faculty.

There were some instances where interviews had to be rescheduled in order to achieve equity. I successfully found times that worked for participants and for me. In some focus groups, students were not able to stay for the entire interview or focus group session because children needed to be picked up from sports practices, parents taken to

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doctors' appointments, or work-related deadlines met. All issues were dealt with in a respectful manner.

Recruitment and selection of administrators. At Acme, I met with the president and one of his associate vice presidents on November 9, 2010 to review the methodology, recruitment materials, and survey instruments that I would use. The president signed a letter of approval for the project, and directed the associate vice president to convene a meeting with senior administrators, including the director of institutional research. On November 23, 2010, each team member was given the following materials: (a) recruitment letters, (b) surveys, and (c) interview protocols. I described the research project and answered questions. Everyone agreed to assist me in accomplishing my tasks.

The recruitment of administrators included those who had some experience working with part-time students. Each administrator was invited via e-mail to participate in a semistructured interview, and these interviews provided me with information on the unique problems they encountered in their work with part-time students. With the exception of a few scheduling changes, interviews with administrators went smoothly. At Hilo, the study's methodology received an expedited IRB review, and I was able to arrange interviews directly with administrators. Using the same procedures that I carried out at Acme, I was able to recruit three administrators from Hilo for the study.

Recruitment of current and former students. My initial approach for recruiting current and former students was influenced by factors I encountered in the pilot study. The research design identified two recruitment strategies. One approach required the

college's Information Technology Services Department to draw two random samples of students: (a) new, part-time students and (b) part-time students nearing completion of degrees/certificates. These students were to have received a letter inviting them to participate. As I began my work on the pilot study, it soon became clear the tasks involved in programmers drawing specific student populations and my contacting and following up with students was too time-intensive and not practical. This approach was, therefore, discarded. The second strategy, which was used in the pilot study, involved placing posters on bulletin boards and distributing flyers at the college bookstore that invited students to participate in the study. However, this strategy was not successful because no students contacted me to participate in the study. In a conversation with a work-study student, I learned that students frequently do not read material posted on bulletin boards; neither did they pay attention to flyers handed out when buying their books. I also considered posting flyers in the college newspaper, but because of publication deadlines, this was not a viable option.

In an effort to address recruitment difficulties, I met with the chief academic officer (CAO) of the pilot institution and discussed another strategy: asking faculty members if I could visit their classes to explain the project. The CAO was very receptive to this idea and it proved successful. I contacted faculty members approximately 10 days before I wished to visit their classes, and they were very accommodating. They invited me to speak with students at the beginning of class or during the break. Classes that met for six weeks tended to run about four hours, and faculty were willing to give up the time

I needed for recruiting students. I selected classes in general education courses such as English and Introduction to Psychology that generally enrolled large numbers of new students, and upper-level courses such as Accounting and Cooperative Education that enrolled students nearing completion of their certificate or degree.

I refined the strategy slightly when I recruited students at Acme and Hilo, and obtained a list of classes offered on the campus where the research was being conducted. These lists contained the number of part-time students in each class along with a range of credits earned to date by students in the class. I attempted to focus on classes that had large numbers of students in a variety of departments and programs so that I could secure a representative sample of students. The departments and programs selected were large, open-access programs that were likely to have a significant number of part-time students enrolled. In a couple of instances, I met with students in small, health science-related programs who happened to be enrolled in general education courses. They were included in the study. For classes of new students to be eligible for selection, a class offered in a specific department or program needed to have five or more part-time students with fewer than 12 credits. Students nearing graduation were also recruited from these same classes. For this latter group, students needed to have earned 45 or more credits. My recruitment process began with sending e-mails to faculty members who taught these courses (see Appendix C).

Students were selected from a variety of day, evening, and weekend classes. These classes were likely to be at the introductory level and were typically required

courses. I was not always able to recruit an equal number of students in each category.

The final number of students who participated in the study is identified in Chapter 4.

Each student who expressed an interest in participating was allowed to participate;

however, students under the age of 18 were excluded from participation due to parental

consent requirements.

Focus group recruitment. Early on in the project, I learned that recruiting

students for focus groups would be difficult. The Hilo IRB gave me permission to

conduct individual interviews as well as focus groups. At Acme four focus groups of

varying sizes were convened. While the time allocated for the large groups was not

sufficient, the discussions were nonetheless rich and frequently some of the profound

problems that part-time students encounter in their daily lives were identified and

discussed.

Recruitment of non-returning students—transfer, official withdrawal, no

official withdrawal. Non-returning students who began as first-time, part-time students

fell into three categories: (a) students who transferred, (b) students who officially

withdrew, and (c) students who did not officially withdraw from the institution. These

students were enrolled in fall 2009 but did not re-enroll in spring 2010 or fall 2010.

Using a random number generator for each category, I called students and invited

them to participate in the study. For Acme, I was able to recruit students from each

group. For Hilo, I recruited a transfer student and a student who had not officially

withdrawn. Students who had transferred were the easiest to recruit.

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Recruitment of full-time and adjunct faculty. Full-time and adjunct faculty were recruited from the same departments and programs that offered the courses in which student participants were enrolled. While faculty may not have taught the same courses in which student participants were enrolled, they did teach in the same academic department. Because it was important to hold interviews with students before the end of the semester, faculty were recruited and interviewed the following semester.

Full-time faculty at Acme taught in: (a) the social sciences, (b) general education, and (c) developmental education. Adjunct faculty taught in: (a) general education and (b) a social service-related program. Despite repeated attempts, I was unable to recruit a third adjunct faculty member.

Full-time faculty at Hilo taught in: (a) a social service-related program and (b) a business-related program. Adjunct faculty taught in: (a) a business-related program and (b) a self-paced program. Despite repeated attempts, I was unable to recruit a third full-time or a third adjunct faculty member.

Recruitment Visits

I made nine visits to Acme from fall 2010 through spring 2011. During the first two visits I made presentations on my proposed research and worked with campus representatives on the logistics related to the interviews and focus groups.

Although it was late in the semester, I spoke with a faculty member who taught a class on the weekend and he invited me to recruit participants in his class. I did and the following weekend held a focus group with these students. Having obtained a contact list

of students who had the left the institution, I also was able to recruit students and schedule interviews for the following semester.

In early spring I returned to campus to continue my work in recruiting participants. During this semester, I was able to recruit a sufficient number of student participants, and I also recruited administrators, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty members. Administrators were interviewed in January 2011, and faculty were interviewed from May through September 2011. Similar procedures were carried out at Hilo.

I worked with two of the vice presidents and the director of institutional research at Hilo to obtain the information needed for recruitment and made seven visits to the campus. Student interviews took place from March 2011 through January 2012. Administration and faculty interviews took place from January 2011 through October 2011.

Data Collection Methods

Case study research involves utilizing multiple sources of evidence that allow for the collection of rich, descriptive data (Yin, 2009). As Yin pointed out, the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence enhances the accuracy and credibility of findings. Relying on just one source of evidence is not sufficient to ensure rigor in the case study method (Yin, 2003).

This embedded multiple case study relied on the following methods of data collection: (a) completion of a Profile Sheet by each participant (see Appendices B, D,

and E); (b) interviews with current administrators, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty (see Appendices B and E); (c) interviews and/or focus groups (Acme only) with current students (see Appendix D); (d) interviews with former students (see Appendix D); and (e) document review (see Appendix F). Quantitative data were collected from the Profile Sheets (see Appendices B, D, and E) and the Financial Matters Response Sheets (see Appendix D). Qualitative data were gathered from interviews and focus groups. All recruitment materials, data collection forms, interview questions, and other relevant materials are included in Appendices A through H.

Profile Sheets

At the outset of each interview, administrators completed a Profile Sheet (see Appendix B) that included questions on their experience in higher education, their experiences with part-time students, and relevant demographic issues. Students completed a Profile Sheet (see Appendix D) that included the sense of belonging rating scale (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990) and the CCSSE items (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005–2012) that focused on student relationships with other students, faculty, and administrators, and on demographics. Students also completed a Financial Matters Response Sheet (see Appendix D) that contained information on their ability to pay for college and means for paying tuition. Faculty were asked to complete a Profile Sheet (see Appendix E) that contained questions about their experience in higher education, questions about their experiences with part-time students, and demographic questions.

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Semistructured Interviews

In semistructured interviews, the interviewer has some latitude about the extent to which he or she will stick to the script (Creswell, 2003; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A major strength of the semistructured interview process is that it enables the researcher to gain information and to see the topic from others' perspectives. In this multiple case study, I accomplished this by listening to participants' stories and constructing knowledge from their comments.

Loosely structured, these interviews with administrators and managers (see Appendix B), with current and former students (see Appendix D), and with full-time/adjunct faculty (see Appendix E) allowed for follow-up questions to certain responses. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately 60–90 minutes. Audiotaped sessions were later transcribed and entered into a qualitative database.

Semistructured Interviews With Administrators

It was important to interview administrators because they are the individuals who create and implement policies that affect part-time students. Semistructured interviews were conducted face-to-face and, if necessary, by phone. Administrators were asked to describe the institution's philosophy on the success of part-time students, and provide information on programs that had been established specifically for part-time students. In addition, they were asked to describe impediments—personal or institutional—that part-time students encounter and the demographic characteristics of part-time students. Administrators were queried about relationships that part-time students develop with

other students, faculty, their academic department, and other members of the college community, and whether they believed that students develop a sense of belonging and engagement with the institution.

Semistructured Interviews and Focus Group Discussions With Students

Current students, both new and nearing graduation, took part in semistructured interviews as did former students. Former students added valuable information regarding the reasons they had withdrawn from the college or transferred to another higher education institution. While it is possible that many had left Acme or Hilo for personal reasons, questions asked of them were directed toward identifying the institutional reasons that might have contributed to their departure.

Behavioral characteristics of students, obtained through interviews or focus groups, provided insight on topics such as motivation, reasons for choosing the institution, and reasons for attending part-time. In addition, students were asked if they would make the choice of attending part-time again. Other topics focused on the lifestyles of part-time students and external responsibilities that might affect their progress. For students who left before graduating, their reasons for leaving were explored. These students were also asked if they would consider returning. The new students and students nearing graduation were asked for their definition of student success and what they thought the college could do to ensure success for part-time students. They also were asked about their engagement in educational activities and whether they had developed a sense of belonging to the institution.

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Student focus groups. Data were also collected in focus groups with current part-time students. Focus groups have a specialized function in terms of their "purpose, size, composition, and procedures" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 2), as they enable participants to describe and share their experiences on specific topics. Focus groups were useful in examining the perceptions of part-time students about programs or services that helped or hindered their educational success. They were used to elicit information on the development and implementation of policies, and provided opportunities for students to discuss issues of concern and suggest practices that might help foster their success.

I facilitated four Acme focus group sessions. The discussions were rich in information and at times emotional as students described their frustrations at home and at school. There were occasions when some members of focus groups attempted to dominate the discussion. To ensure a level playing field, I used a strategy recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009). If participants tried to dominate the conversation, I directed attention to others through the use of eye contact and body language, and encouraged them to participate in the discussion. If the shy or quiet students still did not participate, I called on them, using their pseudonym, to share their perspectives. If discussions led to trivial comments, I redirected the conversation to the topics that were to be covered.

Materials from the CCSSE/MetLife Foundation Initiative on Student Success were adapted for use in the focus group sessions (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009a). Each focus group session began with students filling out the

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Student Profile Sheet. Focus group questions were the same as those used in the interviews (see Appendix D).

Included among these questions were those that provided information on student backgrounds, motivations, perceptions of college effectiveness in meeting student needs, the impact of outside responsibilities on student success, and the role that various college services have in helping students reach their goals. The focus group discussion also provided information on students' academic experiences, the impact of relationships with others at the college that promoted persistence and success, and their opinions about what the college needed to do to help students succeed. The discussion included comments on the students' sense of belonging and on engagement. They were asked to describe the extent to which they felt they were a member of the institution, and whether they were engaged in class discussions or other activities. The four focus group sessions each ran for 75–90 minutes. Sessions were audiotaped and transcribed.

Semistructured Interviews With Faculty

Interviews with faculty included questions on: (a) modalities of teaching (face-to-face, distance education), (b) awareness of student attendance in classes, (c) teaching methods used with diverse groups of students, (d) pedagogical practices specific to part-time students, (e) students' sense of belonging, (f) student engagement, and (g) student/faculty interactions.

Document Review

The final method of data collection involved reviewing institutional documents. The template that was used for this document review appears in Appendix F. While a limited review of documents was conducted as part of the site selection process, a more detailed document review took place regarding information that supported or supplemented comments from the interviews and focus group sessions. These included documents pertaining to each college's mission, vision, and core values statements; college catalogs and student handbooks; and strategic plans and accreditation self-study reports. Much of this information was readily available on the colleges' websites. Some publicly available CCSSE results were also reviewed.

Document reviews provided a wealth of information. One of the strengths associated with document analysis is that the study's results are consistent over time. Document review information was detailed and provided broad coverage on specific topics. This method has some weaknesses. In some cases it may be difficult to get needed information and the researcher can never be certain if the available information is complete. In some instances, institutions may not be willing to grant the researcher access to certain types of information (Yin, 2009). I did not have this experience at either institution. Staff were accommodating and responded quickly to my requests for information.

In addition to documents that were available on the colleges' websites, there was also a great deal of information available publicly through national data sources such as

NCES (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b) and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2013).

Theoretical Framework

In Chapter 2, several theoretical models for understanding student persistence and departure were presented. These models provided the foundation for this study. Each model contributed to an understanding of whether students became involved in the college and in what ways. One key theory reviewed was Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) interactionalist theory that described two forms of integration—academic and social— that he considered necessary for student persistence. Tinto's model has been critiqued by many scholars for failing to take into account nontraditional students, particularly those who attend community colleges, including older students, commuters, and part-time students.

Prior research has shown that while part-time students may become academically integrated, they are not socially integrated into the college environment. Factors such as family and work responsibilities limit the extent to which they can become socially integrated into the college environment (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

A recent study, however, has supported Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) findings, demonstrating that while academic and social integration contribute to a student's likelihood of persistence, integration does not occur equally along both dimensions. Karp et al. (2008) demonstrated that integration is, in fact, important for these individuals, but it occurs through the development of information networks that occur in the classroom

and with staff who work at the institution. Through these networks, students are able to obtain the information they need to persist.

Sense of belonging is an important theoretical construct that is examined in this study. A sense of belonging "captures the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 327). Sense of belonging, like student engagement, places the responsibility for success jointly on the student and the institution (D. W. Johnson et al., 2007). According to Karp et al. (2008), a sense of belonging leads to student engagement.

Student engagement is another theoretical construct that, like sense of belonging, is the joint responsibility of students and the institution. Student engagement is comprised of two components: the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities, and the actions of institutions that encourage students to participate in such activities, including co-curricular activities, classroom activities, and student support services. As students begin their classroom experiences, opportunities for engagement emerge (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Tinto, 1997). Students engage with faculty and other students as they develop content knowledge. They also have the opportunity to take part in internships and other similar activities. It should be noted that some of these activities present limitations for part-time students as a result of when and where they are offered. Opportunities for engagement also exist within support services where students have the chance to meet with peer tutors, take advantage of skills labs, and avail themselves of other support services. These opportunities, as well,

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are dependent upon the services being available when and where part-time students can utilize them. Unfortunately, not all part-time students are equally able to access support services. Many attend in the evening and on the weekend when access to services is limited at many community colleges. Part-time students also are more likely to attend classes at satellite locations where many services may not be available.

The combination of sense of belonging and student engagement is likely to lead to positive outcomes for part-time students. These outcomes include graduation, transfer, or meeting one's own goal. The ultimate outcome of this process is to produce an educated citizenry and workforce prepared for jobs in the twenty-first century.

A final theoretical construct important to this study is intersectionality. Using this construct, it is possible to learn how the interplay of numerous student characteristics can marginalize students in the higher education system and adversely affect their chances for success.

Data Analysis

As Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out, data from so many sources can quickly become overwhelming and unusable. They described data collection as being a selective process because it is impossible to capture everything in every type of situation. Patton (2002) advised that the first step to be taken in analyzing data is to develop a classification system that is manageable.

The process of data analysis for this dissertation began with a thorough review of demographic data, interview transcripts, and documents I collected at each institution. I

used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze quantitative data from the Profile Sheets and the Financial Matters Response Sheets (see Appendix D). I maintained two files that contained memos with key information I gleaned from the document review.

The major research question and subquestions led to the development of the interview questions. I imported all of the interview data into NVivo, a qualitative analysis program, and developed a system in which I created nodes for each open-ended interview question. I used a coding process to analyze the qualitative interview data. Coding is a process that results in a classification system that identifies areas of importance and assigns labels that allow for segmenting the data into themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In describing the coding process, Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that codes are considered tags for assigning meaning to responses, and that codes are attached to "chunks" of data (p. 56); codes assign meaning to the information that was collected. Corbin and Strauss (2008) described two types of coding—open coding and axial coding—that are related and often used together in qualitative analysis. I used both in my analysis.

I coded pertinent quotes from participants and developed appropriate categories, as needed. Once this initial level of coding was completed, I was able to analyze the data according to themes. The first two major themes that emerged were classroom dynamics and support services. It is not surprising that these themes emerged because the line of questioning I used in the interviews focused on these two broad areas. A third major

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theme, communication, emerged as the data were analyzed. It was clear that

communication channels played an enormous role in how faculty, staff, and

administrators communicated with students; how students communicated with faculty,

staff, and peers; and how information was used.

Once the themes were identified I used axial coding to arrive at the subthemes

within each major theme. I examined relationships between and among themes and

subthemes. Through this analysis, I was able determine the criteria that supported or

impeded part-time student success.

Framework for Analysis

The framework for the analysis detailed in Chapter 5 was developed using the

model for success developed by Kuh et al. (2006). Their framework, resulting from an

extensive review of the literature, connected institutional conditions to student success

through "four broad, overlapping categories" (p. 51): (a) structural and organizational

characteristics (SOC), (b) programs and practices (P&P), (c) teaching and learning

approaches (T&L), and (d) student-centered campus cultures (SCCC). Included within

each category are high-impact practices that are labeled as promoting success. The

findings from my dissertation research aligned closely with Kuh et al.'s findings. While

their research focused on institutional conditions that promote student success, the

framework for analysis I developed examined factors that promoted success, identified as

"supports," and those that hindered success, identified as "impediments."

Tables 5 and 6 identify the supports and impediments to success that emerged in my research. The alignment between the two research studies can be identified by my use of Kuh et al.'s (2006) four categories: SOC, P&P, T&L, and SCCC.

Measures to Promote Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, investigators strive to address issues of reliability and validity. In qualitative research, trustworthiness, which is measured according to the rigor of the study, must be established (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, consistency or dependability, and confirmability (Merriam, 2009). The term "credibility" was introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility is a concept that describes whether study findings are believable given the data that have been presented (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Five strategies were employed to address credibility: (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) engagement in data collection, (d) my expertise, and (5) transferability. Triangulation was carried out by using multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, focus group discussions, observations made during my many visits to the institutions, and document reviews.

Member checking was done by soliciting feedback on the findings I identified from the interviewees. The feedback loop was used to test the accuracy of my interpretations. The data collection effort was characterized by "saturation," that is, when I recognized that the same themes were being repeated by a participant and I was no longer hearing new information. Finally, my position as the researcher in this study was

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essential for determining credibility because it was important to understand biases that I might have had regarding this particular research (Merriam, 2009).

Transferability describes the extent to which results are generalizable from one study to another (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). One useful strategy for enhancing transferability was to provide a comprehensive description of the setting, participants, and findings. It was necessary to provide sufficient information so that the study could be carried out in another setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Consistency or dependability reflect whether the results of a study correspond with the data that were collected (Merriam, 2009). Dependability, in particular, is concerned with whether a study is conducted with attention to detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and whether the data are stable over time, that is, whether the findings would be replicated if the study were conducted with similar participants in a similar setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability is concerned with whether the findings of one study can be supported by another study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The concept of confirmability also addresses whether the findings of a study can be audited and traced back so that other researchers can understand the origins of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

It was essential that all of these concepts be embraced in this multiple case study. Credibility was assured through triangulation of multiple data sources. Member checks were conducted with some interviewees to ensure that my interpretation of the interviews

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was accurate. Member checking took place within each participant category. At Acme, three out of six students agreed to review vignettes I wrote based on their interviews. Three out of four focus group members reviewed the focus group vignette. One former student reviewed her vignette. One administrator, one full-time faculty member, and one adjunct faculty member reviewed his or her vignette. At Hilo, four out of six students reviewed their vignettes, as did one administrator, and one full-time faculty member. Most described my brief summary of the interview or discussion as accurate. In a few cases individuals clarified material and changes were incorporated into the findings. I was fully involved in the data collection effort, entered information into NVivo, and coded data for the study. I was sensitive to researcher biases that may have occurred during the interviews, both in coding and summarizing information. To ensure transferability, I developed comprehensive descriptions of the institutions, the interviews I conducted, and the focus groups I held. I also ensured that the study was characterized by dependability and carried out the project with attention to detail. I conducted a pilot study and found the results of that study to be very similar to the findings reported for Acme Community College and Hilo Community College. Finally, I addressed the issue of confirmability by keeping an audit trail so that other researchers would be able to follow my methodology.

Pilot Study

Seidman (2006) cautioned that the interview process must be carefully designed and carried out. A pilot study provides the researcher with the opportunity to test

processes and instruments and revise them as necessary. The exercise is a reflective process that allows the researcher to make changes leading to improvement. Before beginning my research at Acme Community College and Hilo Community College, I conducted a pilot case study for the purpose of refining the processes and instruments I would use. I conducted the pilot at one institution that had been eliminated during the site selection process. This college was similar in many respects to the two community colleges used in this research.

Administrators, faculty, and students tested the recruitment procedures and interview questions (Yin, 2003). The pilot was also used to determine whether or not participant groups and interview questions would yield the information needed to address the research questions at the foundation of this study.

The pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2010 and included a combination of focus group sessions and interviews. Focus groups included new, part-time students and part-time students nearing completion of their degrees/certificates. Students who participated in focus groups also completed two brief questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with administrators, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty. Seven new students participated in focus groups, and five students nearing graduation took part in focus groups. One student who transferred to a four-year institution was interviewed. Two administrators, two full-time faculty, and two adjunct faculty were interviewed.

Lessons Learned From the Pilot Study

   Ensure adequate focus group size. The original proposal called for focus groups consisting of seven to ten students. I was not able to recruit that many students for any of the pilot focus groups. The numbers of participants in each focus group were: two groups of two students, one group of three students, and one group of five students. Small groups, especially those that included only two students, allowed me to ask and have students respond to all of the questions.

   Focus group recruitment at both institutions was similar to the pilot. One change that was made reflected my experience at the pilot institution. This change required that I recruit additional students at Acme Community College. During the pilot study I learned that unforeseen circumstances resulted in students who had agreed to attend not being able to do so. At Hilo, I decided to abandon the idea of using focus groups when prospective students said that transportation problems meant they could not meet before or after class or during the weekend. For this reason, all student participants at Hilo were interviewed one-on-one.

   Encourage students to provide legible contact information. Significant time was spent deciphering handwriting that provided contact information. Several e-mails were returned as undeliverable. I also learned that the vast majority of part-time students do not use the college e-mail system, preferring to have mail sent to their private e-mail accounts. The student contact form used at Acme and Hilo was revised to include instructions about printing clearly and providing relevant e-mail and phone information.

Determine in advance the types of students enrolled in each class. At the pilot college, it was difficult to determine whether students were new or nearing graduation, and whether students were attending part-time. For this reason, I asked Acme and Hilo staff to provide me with data showing the number of part-time and full-time students enrolled in specific classes and to identify the newly enrolled students and those nearing graduation. This enabled me to select classes that met the study criteria.

Make changes to the process for screening students. The study was designed to include students who were 18 years old or older, and who had a high school diploma or a GED. The reason for adding this requirement was that students younger than 18 years of age needed parental consent. In addition, the reason for interviewing an adult population was to learn about the institutional conditions affecting majority-aged or nontraditional students. Two students younger than 18 years of age were very eager to participate but could not because of the requirement that parents give consent.

My Role as Researcher

The characteristics of the researcher can affect his or her role in the study (Seidman, 2006). My background is somewhat similar to students enrolled in community colleges. I grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood and attended Boston public schools. As a student, I belonged to a religious/ethnic minority group, and was often the only person with that background in the schools I attended. My parents gave me the choice of attending a two-year secretarial school or a low-cost, four-year institution. Wanting to pursue a research career, I chose the University of Massachusetts Boston. I entered

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college directly from high school, enrolled as a full-time student, and graduated in 3.5 years. I worked part-time off-campus in a research office, and commuted to and from school and work, and to and from school and my parents' home via public transportation. I had a job as a research assistant waiting for me when I graduated.

With tuition assistance from my employer, I went on to Boston University Graduate School and earned a master's degree in urban affairs. After nearly a quarter of a century, I returned to school—once again to UMass Boston—and enrolled in the doctoral program in higher education administration. I am a strong believer in public higher education and the flexibility that it affords. As a doctoral student I have been enrolled on a part-time basis, taking a full course load and working full-time at a community college as the vice president for institutional research, planning, and assessment.

My great interest and commitment to community colleges stems from the potential these colleges have to transform lives. In addition to my role as vice president, I have served as an academic advisor, and in that capacity I have worked with many part-time students. In doing so, I have learned about the personal and institutional impediments that part-time students face and have seen many of these students leave college. This has been personally and professionally frustrating. The student who leaves has spent considerable time and money, but failed to earn the degree or credits for courses not completed. This situation is also frustrating for the college administrator who knows that resources have been spent with little benefit to the student or the institution.

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Yet, I have also seen the triumphs of many students I have advised and taught. Some of these students have overcome tremendous obstacles on their road to success.

Limitations and Delimitations

The major limitation of the study was that I was not able to use degree or certificate attainment as a measure of success. Due to the fact that the data were collected and the analysis was conducted during a specific time period, none of the students had actually graduated during the timeframe of the study. The students who left had done so before earning a degree or certificate. The students nearing graduation were the closest proxy to graduates. Following students from entry to graduation might have provided more information about their feelings about achieving success. Since I did not follow a cohort for six years, as was done in the national studies I referenced, I was not able to obtain data on whether students' motivations for attending college resulted in their completing their degree.

Delimitations are factors that define the boundaries of a study or narrow the scope of a study (Creswell, 2003). They can also be viewed as conditions that limit the generalizations that can be made about the findings of the study (Locke, Spiraduso, & Silverman, 2007). There were two major delimitations associated with the study. First, the study was limited to two New England community colleges. Second, time, costs, and logistical constraints limited the number of focus groups that could be held and the opportunity to conduct additional interviews. I found the process of trying to recruit former students the most challenging. Transfer students who saw themselves as

successful were willing to participate in the study, but students who had withdrawn were less inclined. Information on why students had left the college was important and the fact that only five participated in the study created limitations in the generalizability of any findings of this population group. Students leave college for many reasons that are clearly not associated with their academic performance. Had I been able to interview more students who did not complete their education at Acme or Hilo, I might have learned more about any institutional impediments that facilitated their leaving. I might also have learned more about the supports that helped those students who successfully transferred.

Explanations of Terms

The following section includes two sets of terms that have been operationalized for this study: (a) terms related to participants and (b) themes.

Study Participants

New students. New students consist of students who earned fewer than 12 credits in the semester in which they were recruited for the study.

Students nearing graduation. Students nearing graduation consist of students who earned 45 or more credits when they were recruited for the study.

Students who transferred. Students who transferred include students who attended and transferred before earning a credential.

Students who officially withdrew. Students who officially withdrew include students who completed the necessary paperwork to withdraw from their class(es) or the college.

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Students who did not officially withdraw. Students who did not officially withdraw include students who stopped attending classes but did not complete the necessary paperwork to withdraw from their class(es) or the college.

Younger students. Younger students are those age 18–24.

Older students. Older students are those aged 25 and older.

Senior administrators and other staff. Senior administrators include members of the administration reporting directly to the president or to a vice president; other staff includes staff who are responsible for key academic and student support areas at the college.

Full-time faculty. Instructional faculty teaching a full course load or who have reassigned time for other college-related duties.

Adjunct faculty. Instructional faculty teaching less than a full course load at the institution.

Themes

Communication theme. Communication includes the following three subthemes: (a) print and electronic communication tools; (b) interpersonal communication, which includes communication that takes place in informal gathering spots and communication that takes place between students and staff, students and faculty, and among peers; and (c) formalized programs that involve processes such as orientation.

Classroom dynamics theme. Classroom dynamics include the following four subthemes: (a) classroom environment, (b) student attitudes toward faculty, (c) student

views on course content, and (d) student views on teaching methods. This theme also includes issues associated with large numbers of adjunct faculty teaching a large proportion of part-time students and professional development needs of all faculty, both full-time and adjunct.

Support services theme. The following two components of support services are identified in this study: academic support services and co-curricular activities.

Academic support services. Academic support services subthemes include: (a) availability of academic support services, (b) student utilization of support services, and (c) student experiences with support services.

Co-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities include: (a) clubs and organizations, (b) athletics, and (c) college work-study (Acme). The major co-curricular activities subtheme includes the availability of such activities, and student involvement in and experiences with co-curricular activities.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Organization of Chapter

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the case study research conducted at Acme
Community College and Hilo Community College. The first section describes the two
community colleges and the categories and characteristics of participants. The three
themes—communication, classroom dynamics, and student services—provided the
organizing framework for presenting information on each community college. The case
study on Acme Community College is presented in the second section and the Hilo
Community College case study is presented in the third. The fourth section describes the
relationship of the findings to the four theories: sense of belonging, engagement,
information networks, and intersectionality. The chapter concludes with summary charts
that identify the institutional conditions that support or impede student success.

Community Colleges and Study Participants

Acme Community College and Hilo Community College are located in New
England. Acme Community College is a multicampus institution and its enrollment is
almost double the number of students enrolled at Hilo Community College, which is

located on two campuses. In fall 2010, Acme enrolled nearly 18,000 students (by

headcount) and part-time students comprised 65% of the enrollment. Hilo enrolled

approximately 9,000 students and 57% of the students were enrolled part-time. Acme's

minority student population for fall 2010 was 29% compared to Hilo's enrollment of

34%.

Data were collected in one-on-one interviews with administrators, adjunct faculty,

and full-time faculty. Current and former students were interviewed individually or

participated in focus group sessions. Demographic data and interviews provided

information on the conditions that promoted or hindered the educational success of part-

time students.

Student demographic data were obtained from the Student Profile Sheet (see

Appendix D). Data on students' sense of belonging were collected using Bollen and

Hoyle's (1990) Perceived Cohesion Scale. However, because students had difficulty

differentiating among the terms used on the scale, the results are not included in this

dissertation. Additional data were collected from student responses to three questions

used on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (2005–2012)

which provided information on student relationships with other students, instructors,

administrative personnel, and student support service offices.

Table 3 provides data on the number of part-time student participants at each

institution broken out by the time of day students attended class and by student

enrollment status (i.e., new to the college or nearing graduation).

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Table 3

Number of Part-Time Enrolled Student Participants According to Time Classes Offered and Enrollment Status

	Acme Community College			Hilo Community College			Total
	New	Nearing graduation	Total	New	Nearing graduation	Total	
Day	4	3	7	7	4	11	18
Evening	5	8	13	7	5	12	25
Weekend	10	4	14	3	4	7	21
Total	19	15	34	17	13	30	64

Demographics, Educational Characteristics, and Significant Challenges

The primary focus of this dissertation was on institutional conditions that promoted or hindered student success. A more comprehensive understanding of these issues required not only information collected in interviews and focus group sessions, but also demographic and educational characteristics that related to students' ability to connect with others with whom they might develop a sense of belonging and engagement. These are relationship behaviors that promote student success.

Individual characteristics such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and attendance status can influence students' experiences in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). When two or more of these variables intersect, students can become marginalized making

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college completion even more difficult. When students are faced with conflicting roles, their need to focus on schoolwork is compromised by other responsibilities including those of family and work. In addition, students' multiple roles frequently diminish any opportunity for them to participate in clubs or athletics.

For example, Lisa, a Hilo student (age group 25–44), said that she was not able to join a group whose meeting times did not match her availability:

> The [organization] that I wanted to do, I just couldn't do. . . . The time that they had chosen to do it was vacation for my children. I couldn't bring them along even though I would have loved to so they could see that people do things for others and don't expect anything in return. . . . The schedule was off. I understand why they wouldn't want kids around because of the risk and the liability, nobody wants that.

Educational characteristics of students and their parents can also influence students' college experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Their plans to earn a bachelor's degree may result in a greater commitment to continuing enrollment. Students whose parents attended college may have a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of higher education. Their parents may also have provided guidance in helping them to navigate the complexities of higher education. Some part-time students may enroll in college several years after receiving a high school diploma or earning a GED. These students may need additional assistance to understand the institution's expectations of what they, as students, will need to do in order to be successful.

Table 4 presents a comparison of demographic characteristics, educational characteristics, and significant challenges faced by students at Acme and Hilo. The

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information on study participants was obtained from the Student Profile Sheets (see

Appendix D) and college data were obtained from institutional research offices at both

colleges.

Table 4

Characteristics as a Percentage of Current Part-Time Students

Measure	Acme			Hilo		
	New (N=19)	Nearing graduation (N=15)	College percent	New (N=17)	Nearing graduation (N=13)	College percent
Demographic characteristics						
Female	84	53	59	53	85	58
White	94	86	65	75	80	64
Age group						
Under 18	n.a.	n.a.	1.6	n.a.	n.a.	1.6
18–21	21	0	32.6	24	15	34.7
22–24	26	27	16.6	18	15	17.9
25–44	47	40	38.1	47	39	37.0
45 and older	5	33	11.1	12	31	8.8
Unknown			0.02			0.03
Educational characteristics						
Entered college directly	26	29	n.a.	29	46	n.a.
Entered college after a break	74	71	n.a.	71	54	n.a.

Measure	Acme			Hilo		
	New (N=19)	Nearing graduation (N=15)	College percent	New (N=17)	Nearing graduation (N=13)	College percent

Educational characteristics, cont'd.

Measure	New (N=19)	Nearing graduation (N=15)	College percent	New (N=17)	Nearing graduation (N=13)	College percent
Plan to earn bachelor's degree or higher	79	100	n.a.	76	92	n.a
Mother—some college education or higher	55	64	n.a.	36	33	n.a.
Father—some college education or higher	69	31	n.a.	40	50	n.a.

Significant challenges

Measure	New (N=19)	Nearing graduation (N=15)	College percent	New (N=17)	Nearing graduation (N=13)	College percent
Children in the household	53	26	n.a.	53	69	n.a.
Employed	74	87	n.a.	59	80	n.a.
Financing education—somewhat or very difficult	77	67	n.a.	71	62	n.a.

Demographic characteristics. Variables such as gender, race, and age are presented to provide a picture of the participants. Comparisons of these three variables

with college-wide data, when available, are identified. When comparing the student participant populations for each college with the respective college population data, the percentages demonstrate that Acme's new student participants and Hilo's students nearing graduation were disproportionately female, and that White students were overrepresented in the study. Age distributions between participants and the college population were different at both institutions. A larger proportion of participants at both colleges were older than the respective college population and there were fewer participants in the youngest age group (18–21).

Educational characteristics. Educational characteristics show that the majority of student participants at both institutions had earned high school diplomas and did not enter college directly from high school. Three-quarters or more of new students and students nearing graduation at both colleges planned to attain at least a bachelor's degree, with a larger percentage of students nearing graduation having this as an objective. Acme students were far more likely to come from families in which mothers had at least some college experience.

Significant challenges. The study participants faced multiple challenges while taking classes: children living with them, work obligations, and limited financial resources. New students at Acme (74%) were more likely than new students at Hilo (59%) to be employed. More than three-quarters of the students nearing graduation at Hilo and Acme were employed. Approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of students at

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both institutions indicated that it was somewhat or very difficult to finance their education.

The study was designed to collect and analyze data from newly enrolled students (students who had earned fewer than 12 credits), students nearing graduation (students who had earned 45 credits or more at the time of recruitment), and students who left before earning a credential. The first two groups were further divided into groups of students who attended during the day, in the evening, or on weekends. However, in organizing and presenting the case study findings, it became clear that these distinctions yielded no additional information. For this reason the case studies were written from the perspective of all part-time student participants, unless administrators or faculty provided additional information. While some comments from former students are interspersed in the case study, the holistic experiences of those students are presented as vignettes at the end of each case study.

Case Study 1: Acme Community College

Communication

Communication emerged as a primary theme related to student success. It also factored significantly in comments related to classroom dynamics and academic support services. Communication influenced multiple issues affecting the students' abilities to be successful.

Print and electronic communications. When visiting Acme, I discovered that significant numbers of information flyers and newspapers blanketed the campus. From

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my perspective as a visitor, the information appeared helpful and identified the different types of services and activities available to students. Flyers were posted on walls, bulletin boards, and in elevators. Current issues of the college newspaper, a student-run publication, were available at several locations.

In conversations with students, I found that they generally felt that there were too many posters and flyers and that much of the print material was obsolete as soon as it was posted and therefore was not read. Students found it difficult to discern what was important for them to read and act upon, and what was not. In one focus group, participants did not feel that students read flyers. One participant, Bob (age group 22–24), noted:

> They put posters up outside of classrooms that announce activities taking place. But that isn't much. It's not like high school [announcements]. It's your choice if you go. Posters don't indicate whether the college thinks that the information is important.

Students enjoyed reading the school newspaper. For example, Michelle (age group 18–21) learned about activities and Eric (age group 25–44) believed that the newspaper provided a sense that the college "stick[s] its hand out" to welcome students by conveying information on a variety of activities. One weekend focus group participant mentioned that the college newspaper was a good source of information and provided opportunities for students to stay connected to the college. However, another student did not know there was a college newspaper. Adam (age group 25–44) indicated that the "student newspaper has student writers and . . . information on events and things. It has movie reviews and things like that or coverage of a political whatever." Younger students

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(aged 18–24) reported that they preferred electronic communication to printed communication, and felt it was more up-to-date. Students used the website to search for information, as well as register for classes. Older students (aged 25 or older), however, still preferred human contact and often made appointments with college staff to ask questions and discuss issues.

Students at Acme reported that they received college e-mail on a regular basis. A few students indicated that they appreciated receiving online announcements about organizations, study group sessions, and activities designed to help students get acquainted with various college services. Eric (age group 25–44) stated he received e-mails about internships and the honors program. Becky (age group 22–24) said she received e-mails about activities going on in the art and psychology departments. Most students said they would often read the subject line of e-mails, and if they were not interested, quickly delete them. The only e-mails that were definitely read were those from faculty. Steph (age group 25–44) noted: "I get lots of school e-mails, and they look like junk. I don't really look at it too closely." Students were divided on whether they felt that faculty were responsive to e-mails from students. Sarah, a focus group participant (age group 22–24), felt that faculty "all like e-mail. They're all pretty good at it." Marie, a member of a different focus group (age group 25–44) disagreed. She stated:

> They say, "E-mail me with any questions," and then you e-mail them and you wait. Say there's a test on Friday and you e-mail on Monday morning first thing and you wait for them to answer you because you're not sure what's going to be on the test or you're confused about something. They'll never answer you. You go to class and they'll say, "Yes, I think I did see something about that."

Elizabeth (age group 25–44) argued that e-mail was impersonal and, while the website was helpful, her preference for acquiring information was to talk with someone, one-on-one:

> If you don't read bulletin boards and you don't go to the website, I would think you could probably find [information you need] from another student in the class or [someplace] in the school, if you happen to mention something to someone. I'd say they make a pretty good effort [to provide the information you need].

Print and electronic communication, while well intentioned, often left students with sensory overload. Despite the bombardment of information, some students indicated they did not know how to find what they were looking for or what they needed to do to be successful.

Rosie, a transfer student (age group 18–21), said she believed the college made an effort to encourage students to participate outside of class and found the college website helpful in identifying campus activities and events. However, she felt that the college needed to increase its efforts in reaching out to students:

> The only time I [feel encouraged to participate is when I read] the [campus] website and see [information on] up and coming events. Sometimes I see flyers around the campus, but I found a lot of the students didn't participate in the activities. They [college staff] could reach out a little bit more to promote activities. They're not doing a great job reaching students.

Two students nearing graduation, who were part of a focus group, indicated that they did not use the website when searching for information about support services.

> Debra (age group 45 and older): They have it on the website, but I don't look at the website.

> Dahlia (age group 45 and older): I find the website extremely not user friendly. The Acme website is just a lot of stuff shoved in there and not categorized.

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A full-time faculty member described how she used a website for communicating with students:

> We have a couple of websites that I use to connect with students. I would post links to things I discussed in class or a video I showed, in case they wanted to watch it again. I would post things like that and then send an e-mail to let them know—a mass e-mail—to let everybody know that it had been posted. I e-mail students whenever I need to make an announcement, or change something, or clarify something, but mostly [I use e-mails] to make announcements. If students e-mail me, I respond back as soon as I can to answer their questions or maybe ease their fears a little bit.

An administrator indicated that the college was proactive about getting information to students and stated: "Our websites [are designed] to reach out and tell the students what services are available."

Adam (age group 25–44) mentioned that the college produces an online newsletter that is designed to provide information about activities that are taking place on campus. He described the difference between the student-run newspaper and the college's electronic newsletter: "In the one by the college, you won't find opinionated articles on a subject matter. The electronic one is more factual—dates and times of activities and events."

Interpersonal communication. The college cafeteria was the place where students congregated and talked. Celine (age group 18–21) said:

> They usually set up tables in the cafeteria that provide information on the different clubs. If you go over to a table, students will tell you what's going on and what you can do [if you join]. There's information about getting involved and stuff. The tables are usually put up in the middle of the term.

Kim (age group 45 and older) mentioned that many activities and events take place in the

school cafeteria:

> They have people out there selling all kinds of beautiful beads and hand-made stuff. Students organize it, and the money goes to God knows what program. If you go up the ramp by the elevators, the tables are there. If you're coming in, you can't miss it. Wherever they have stuff; it's in your face. If you want to partake you do, if you don't you just go your way.

While communications with college staff were challenging, students were

satisfied with their different forms of communications with faculty and with other

students. Their greatest frustrations were caused by the multiple trips to campus to

complete paperwork related to their enrollment. They wished the bureaucratic process

was streamlined, because they frequently had to come back to campus to see someone

who specialized in a specific area of enrollment management. Instead of making several

trips to meet with multiple staff, they wished that staff were cross-trained, so that the trips

to campus were fewer in number and more productive. Michelle (age group 18–21) said:

> They couldn't find my transcript. It was a little disappointing that nobody knew anything. They couldn't look it up on the computers or anything. I had to have a second meeting because I had to send in a second transcript. . . . That was strange, but I did what I needed to do.

Weekend and evening students spent little time on campus and they needed to

take care of all business expeditiously and in one trip. These students complained that

staff in certain offices were not there when they needed help. One weekend student

reported:

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With me, when I first enrolled, I found that there were a million things I needed to know, and so I always seem to have to come back to campus. I would say to someone, "Okay? Is this all that I need to do? I don't want to keep coming back. I've already been here five times to get one signature." But when I'd return, they would tell me about something else I needed, and I'd say, "Oh, you need this? Well, why didn't you tell me [the last time I was here]?"

Another new weekend student noted:

They needed health forms and stuff when we first came in, but instead of telling you what you needed [the first time], they'd bring you back five times. I would come back and they would say, "You just have to sign here." I'm like, "I had to come in to sign? I had to get a baby-sitter. Why didn't you tell me this?" If I was missing a piece of information, they would tell me, "You're missing that specific piece." Then when I return, it'd be like, "Well, you're missing this, too."

Dahlia (age group 45 and older) believed that campus staff should be able to

provide answers to questions frequently asked by students:

When you call or you try to get somebody—a live person—they always tell you that you need to talk to another person. You call back and again you get told that you'll need to talk with another person. I think that people don't know what they're supposed to know. I wanted to enroll in the management certificate course, and so I called. This person didn't know what I was talking about. It's frustrating.

Students were also frustrated with getting inconsistent answers to their questions;

they were not sure who to trust to gain the right answers, and they sometimes had to stand

in long lines for long periods of time to get any information. The outcome of

miscommunication or no communication could be making unwise decisions that had

negative financial consequences and delayed their time to completion.

Communication concerns were identified by older, part-time students who had

received the clear message from staff that because they were older they should know how

to navigate the system. Although they had more life experience than traditional-aged students, they frequently were the first member of their families to attend college.

A new student in a focus group (participant's age group could not be determined) noted:

> Not that they have to walk you through it, but a lot of us haven't been to school in years. So coming back is hard enough, and [then lots of stuff isn't] explained. It's just like, "Okay, do it." "You need this." It's like, "What is that?" I know you can figure it out on your own, but hence the guidance? They don't tell you anything.

Elizabeth (age group 25–44) was not satisfied with Enrollment Services' attitude toward students.

> It's pretty much, "You should know all of this and everything you need to fill it out." God forbid you ask a question. I've always needed to ask a million questions before I get an answer. It's not like "Okay, this is what you need to do. Here are the forms that need to be filled out and then come back and see me." Instead it's "Fill this form out." And when I bring it back, it's "Oh well you need this form, too." They don't ask you about your situation.

Participants in one focus group had problems with the fact that college staff expected them to know how to handle the problems they encountered. Sarah (age group 22–24) indicated that she usually tried to figure things out on her own. When she needed something she looked for a guidebook or manual that might have the information, or she talked to another student. She did not go to the support services offices or a faculty member unless she could not find the information on her own.

Paul (age group 25–44) said that he knew where to look for information, but didn't have the time to look. A number of weekend students lamented that frequently they didn't know where to look for information and believed the college should provide

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more guidance for students who had not been to college or had been away from school

for a long time.

Communication with faculty received a positive assessment from part-time

students. They were grateful that faculty would spend time answering their questions and

taking time to sit and chat with them. According to Kim (age group 45 and older):

> I have a couple of professors that I go and visit with from time to time when I
> need information. When I got a grade that I didn't agree with, I asked them what I
> could do—what the process was. How do I handle this? Who do I see? They are
> usually really informative. I noticed, too, that people in this department work
> together. The ones that teach—they're all together. . . . They are really
> informative in directing you where you need to go if they can't help you.

Adam (age group 25–44) indicated, "A lot of the professors have been helpful,"

and an evening focus group of students nearing graduation sang faculty praises. Sarah

(age group 22–24) stated:

> The teachers definitely help. I had one teacher who was great, awesome. I don't
> know what happened to him. I've looked for him since. He was so much fun and
> interesting. He'd stop and talk to me after every class. That was inspiring to me—
> definitely motivating.

Scarlet (age group 25–44) indicated: "They really are sweet. When I would sit and

have coffee in the cafeteria, they would come and sit with me and have coffee with me."

Older students, in particular, seemed to relate especially well with faculty.

Part-time students relied on one another for information they might have missed if

they did not go to class. Several students stated that they exchanged phone numbers or

e-mail addresses with at least one other student in class so that they could keep up with

announcements or get copies of notes taken during class.

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Orientation. Orientation is both a support program and an important vehicle for gaining information about the college. Some students saw this event as mandatory while others saw it as optional. Sally (age group 22–24) said that she learned about programs and services through orientation. She also learned that what the college wants is for students to get in and then get out with a degree. A new, weekend student who was a focus group participant, and who had not attended an orientation session said:

> Not enough information was given when you started, because, like me, I haven't been in school. It's [been] 10 years. I come into this college and I'm like, "What am I supposed to do?" I didn't know how to go get a student ID. I got it the first day of class, and I wasn't explained the process. They gave me a book, yeah, but I'm like—really, I'd rather have that person vocally telling me, "Okay, this is what you have to do. This is how you register."

Patricia (age group 22–24), who was dual-enrolled in high school and college when she first started at Acme, indicated that she did not think she had attended an orientation. She said: "I just took classes. Some colleges have classes that introduce you to college life. I never took anything like that." Patricia described herself as self-motivated, and stated that when she was a full-time student she was on one of the athletic teams, and study time was both structured and required of all team members. She learned about the college and its resources through her experience as a student athlete.

Rosie, a student who transferred, felt that based on her high school grades, she should not have had to take placement tests. The college, however, has a policy that requires all students registering for courses in English and mathematics to take placement tests to ensure enrollment into the appropriate course level. An administrator emphasized that even though students are required to participate in the online orientation, they still

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receive an invitation to attend an in-person orientation. The administrator acknowledged

that there are some difficulties in accessing the online site. He stated: "You have to kind

of search for it. We've been debating why it's not just right there on the website where

anyone could see it rather than needing to go through so many specific steps to find it."

College administrators believed that the in-person orientation provided additional

opportunities for students to ask questions and meet with staff.

During a weekend focus group discussion, the topic of orientation was discussed

at length. Different viewpoints were presented on whether attendance at orientation was

required, and when:

> Student #1: My son is coming next year in January and he has to do it [attend orientation] or he can't go [enroll]. I didn't have to. But we're all at the same school?

> Student #2: They told me that orientation is done in the second year and you have to do it.

Many focus group participants did not attend orientation either because they lacked the

time or did not feel it was necessary.

Faculty and administrators agreed that most part-time students did not attend

orientation. A full-time faculty member stated:

> Part-time students don't tend to go to the orientation that is held by the college. [The result is] they don't know what classes are necessary. They don't know about all the programs available at the school. They are in and out, and they don't know until it is too late. Maybe they've taken a class that they don't need for their major, or [there were] services that they could have gotten that they didn't know about. It is about not knowing about things that students who are here all day, during the day, know or students coming right from high school who went to orientation would know.

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An administrator added that orientation prepares students for the challenges ahead. He noted: "they're exposed to a whole lot of pieces of information. When they come here and we find out that they went [to orientation], they're really much more versed in their expectations." Another administrator indicated that while attendance at registration was high, attendance at the in-person orientation was not.

Classroom Dynamics

    Classroom environment. Younger students were more likely to associate with students who were the same age. They connected with students they knew in high school or from other classes they had taken. Older female students, especially those nearing graduation, were more likely to associate with students in their age group and believed that an age cohort model was a better fit for them. They also felt more comfortable with students who shared similar backgrounds, for example, being veterans, majoring in the same program, raising teenagers or having grown children, and having lived through the same period in history. However, this was not true of male student participants; neither age nor the behavior of other students was identified as a concern.

    Many of the older female students believed that the younger students were disrespectful to faculty members, and felt that valuable class time was wasted on disciplinary matters. Some older women said that they switched from day courses, which they preferred to evening courses, so that they could be with other mature students. Ellen (age group 45 and older), an Acme focus group participant, said: "Even when you're in class, the disrespect for the professors [is disturbing]. They are texting and surfing the

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web." Kim (age group 45 and older) was enrolled in one class with many students in her

age group. She felt she was able to bond with these students, which gave her a sense of

belonging. She noted:

> Within this classroom, I feel a part of it. . . . The students are all very friendly.
> I've made a couple of really close friends in my age group. I have found that in
> some of my classes, I'm the only older student.

> Small classes were preferred by students who had recently graduated from high

school. Celine (age group 18–21) said:

> I like classes that don't have more than 20 students. With a smaller number of
> students there aren't a lot of distractions. If I need help from a teacher, the teacher
> can usually talk with me during class time, and I don't need to meet with the
> teacher after class. The smaller class size makes it easier to do well.

> Eric (age group 25–44) indicated that he met people in his first couple of classes

and still sees them in the hallway. He feels connected to these students and to the faculty

as well. He stated: "I wouldn't say [I felt connected to] the college as a whole, but I

would say that I get together with whomever I'm involved with in classes." Steph (age

group 25–44) also made connections with students in her classes, but did not feel a sense

of connection with the college:

> I have made several friends in both my classes. I do feel connected to them. One
> of the first things I did, because I knew it would help me succeed, was to
> exchange phone numbers and e-mails with people in each class. I told them if you
> miss a class, e-mail me and if I miss a class, I will e-mail you to find out what I
> missed. There is one person who is in both of my classes. This works out well.

Small program size/cohort models were preferred by most of the study's participants.

Bob (age group 22–24) was in a small program and believed that there were many more

opportunities to get to know students in his program; this helped to build a sense of

community. He did not think the college as a whole could ever provide this feeling of community. Bob stated:

> It's not a big program, so you end up seeing a lot of the same people who are at the same place in the program. I feel like I will get to know them, so I am certain I will feel a sense of community. As far as being a part of the college community, no. I only go from 7–9:30 p.m. I think only 20% of the school is there at that time. . . . Obviously, during the day you have a lot more people.

Student attitudes toward faculty. Student participants had a great deal to say about faculty. Most comments were positive and focused on the vital role of faculty, the quality of the faculty, their availability, their experience, and opportunities for talking with them outside of class. Students indicated they would rather talk to a faculty member than go to the advising center.

Students in the health science programs described the faculty who taught in their program as being aware of what the students were doing and knowing everything about each student. Seth (age group 25–44) indicated that the health science faculty "are so into what they do as far as teaching." He also noted that course content was "very good and the teachers were very good." He provided an example of the responsiveness of one faculty member:

> I can e-mail him at any time. He's called me at 6:30 or 7:00 p.m. . . . I know that was after work hours, and he didn't have to do that. He could have called me at 9:00 a.m. the next day.

Kim (age group 45 and older) found that faculty were there to help and always posted their office hours. She said: "Even if it's not during their posted time, sometimes they're around."

New students indicated faculty were willing to help them and explain course content issues. This made students less fearful of learning challenging material. Eric (age group 25–44) indicated his greatest satisfaction came when he walked out of the classroom knowing that he understood what had been taught:

> I've never had a class that was over the top where you couldn't wrap your head around it. I had a course where there was a lot of information, but the professor was there. I sat with him during his office hours, and he explained a couple of things to me. If you do have a problem, they are more than happy to help you. I am very satisfied.

Jeff (age group 22–24) had similar comments:

> I'm very satisfied with the professors that I've had. When I first decided to go to college, I wasn't sure how the classes were going to be. A lot of people look at community colleges negatively. I honestly can't name one professor that didn't reach the right potential for the class. They are all great. I learned a lot from them. Most of my professors have their Ph.Ds. I was amazed at that.

Paul (age group 25–44) said he reaches out to most of his faculty members when he needs help:

> For me, whenever I had a problem with a professor, I waited to talk to them before class or e-mailed them, whatever. They either helped me through it or showed me how to do what they wanted me to do. There was one professor that I have now, he's the first professor I've had who has everything online, so he helps me out with that at times to figure out the right program, and he's going to show me how to print everything out. . . . I feel like if you go to them, they know exactly what the problem is versus if you go to somebody new [in the help center] you have to explain everything all over again.

Many students noted that faculty experience made a significant difference in their teaching styles. Students nearing graduation had more to say about the relevance of experienced faculty than did new students. Several participants felt that the more seasoned a faculty member was, the better this person did in making course content

accessible and comprehensible, which made it easier for them to learn. Younger and

inexperienced faculty made the material more difficult to learn. Tim (age group 25–44)

explained:

> I had a teacher a couple of semesters ago who was a new teacher. The course was easy, but he was making it hard. I feel like at Acme, you get teachers who are new to teaching and they're not really the greatest teachers.

> I feel like Acme is what it is. Sometimes the classes are pretty easy. You almost don't have to study. It's almost like common sense. Even though I wouldn't get through it as easily, I'd learn more if the classes were a little more challenging. Some have been challenging, but not many of them. I had Anatomy. That's a pretty challenging class. I had a great teacher who has been here for decades. He made it great. That made all the difference in the world.

Interactions with faculty outside the classroom were encouraged. Many times they

were successful, but not always. Tim (age group 25–44) described an out-of-class activity

one professor organized:

> He would have times outside of class where he would have study sessions that he set up. You weren't graded. You didn't have to be there, but it was a meeting that the class would go to. It was fun. He would make it into games. There were study sessions that were fun. He would encourage students to get together and learn and have fun.

Some students made negative comments about faculty members. Marie (age

group 25–44) expressed her dissatisfaction with a faculty member whose accent made it

difficult to comprehend course material. The language barrier compounded her difficulty

in understanding what was being taught in a very challenging class. Some students were

frustrated with faculty who did not use e-mail or those that did but failed to get to back to

students in a timely manner. Student participants said most faculty members encouraged

them to come to office hours, but some faculty would then complain about their heavy

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workload because they taught so many students and indicated that the only time they could really talk with students was during class.

Student views on course content. The relevance of course content was discussed by many student participants. Students nearing graduation often stated that course content was relevant to jobs they held or wanted to hold, and that the content added to their knowledge base.

Mark (age group 22–24) discussed the relevance and usefulness of his courses. Jeff (age group 22–24) stated his satisfaction with course content and believed that the knowledge he gained would serve him well in the future. He noted: "Class content was always updated. I'm very pleased."

Some students, however, found that course material was not relevant. One student wondered why it was necessary to take courses in the humanities. Another student, Adam (age group 25–44), who was a technology major, did not believe the content in his technology course was relevant, even though he thought it would be at the beginning of the course:

> You don't know until you are done with it all how relevant it actually is. It felt relevant while I was going through it, but now that I'm done with it, I feel I can't apply any of the stuff I've learned to what is going on now. I'll say it is relevant, at the same time there were aspects that weren't. . . . I feel like I didn't have the skills in the right area. The software was up to date. There was a lot that was relevant, but they missed some pockets of information that I would need.

Some students felt the coursework was related to real-world responsibilities, but others did not. New students, more so than those nearing graduation, found that the link between school and work was helpful. Michelle (age group 18–21) said:

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In my current position as a nanny, I've applied things I've learned in classes I took last semester. If I didn't take those classes, I wouldn't know how to do things in my job today. I definitely learned a great amount.

Rosie (age group 18–21), a student who transferred to another college, described the course content as only somewhat challenging:

Some courses weren't as challenging as they needed to have been. I was concerned that some of my credits would not be accepted for transfer. The material covered in four-year courses was similar to that offered at Acme, but what has been different is the amount of study time that is needed. Also the concepts are more complex at the four-year college.

Student views on teaching methods. Faculty and students described the different teaching methods that were used. Faculty members described various pedagogies used in the classroom. These included: discussion and learning communities, group work, internships, and online technologies. Students and faculty discussed the effectiveness of different teaching methods in community college courses and both groups agreed that class discussion was preferred over lectures. Barry (age group 18–21) stated:

If [a student] doesn't ask questions, [faculty] ask the questions. I think that's kind of cool because most people are kind of afraid to ask, and they just don't feel like looking like an idiot or something so then they don't ask, and they don't actually get anything out of the class. The teachers actually do that for them so, I mean, it's kind of cool.

Faculty participants talked a great deal about class discussions and group assignments. A full-time faculty member said:

I am one who interacts with students. I don't just lecture. I will walk around the floor. . . . I will tap a desk because I'm not very good at names. I'll say, "Excuse me, but could you answer this question?" I encourage dialogue with my students.

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Adjunct faculty also believed that class discussions, rather than lectures, work best in their classrooms. They indicated that they do not use different techniques for full-time and part-time students because in the classroom they do not see a difference. One faculty member, though, mentioned a homework assignment that worked especially well for part-time students:

> For me, I think the online homework package is the best for part-time students. It is a tutorial. They can ask an instructor a question, and the package will send me an e-mail with the problem so I can answer them that way. They give examples or show an example, so if they are at home or at work and they have access to a computer, they can work on their assignments that way. They can talk to me in school or they can talk to me that way or get help on specific problems.

The advantage for part-time students was that if they were not able to attend tutoring sessions on campus, they had another means of obtaining help from the instructor.

Group work received negative comments from most student participants who did not believe it was a beneficial teaching strategy although many faculty members did. A full-time faculty member assigned group work because she felt it helped students who go to community colleges directly from high school get to know one another, and it helped returning students to gain a greater understanding of the many challenges they all face:

> I think group work does help because they get to talk to each other where they wouldn't otherwise. I think the younger ones sometimes get inspired from the older ones. They realize how many things the older students and the part-time students have to deal with just to get to class. The younger kids are living at home, and it is not a problem to get to school and to get to classes.

Most students expressed dissatisfaction with group projects and assignments. It was hard for them to find time outside of class to work with other students on projects.

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Also they found that their classmates did not put equal amounts of time and effort into projects. Responsibility for completing the assignment would often fall on one or two individuals, yet all students would get credit for the project. An evening focus group of students nearing graduation discussed the problems associated with group work.

> Sarah (age group 22–24): If they learned from something, just never do group projects again. I've never had a good one. I've had ones where half the group just doesn't show up for any of it, any of the meetings or the final presentation. I've had people just lean everything on me and things. That's basically how it goes.
>
> Ellen (age group 45 and older): There's always one person who has to carry the load.
>
> Sarah: They'll argue about the nitpicky things, but they'll never have actually done anything.

Learning communities were identified by one administrator as a good approach for part-time students to gain a sense of belonging. When discussing the needs of part-time students, this administrator said that full-time students had an easier time developing a sense of belonging than did part-time students:

> I think our part-timers are our biggest population of stopping out and restarting. Here for a semester and not here for the next. Here for a semester, skip two, here for the next one or in the summer every now and then. How do you form bonds like that? There's no identity. There's no social identity going on. You never see the same people twice. You don't have the time to meet with faculty and staff. Sometimes your adjuncts come and go. Some of our adjuncts have been here for 20 years. You have all of that as pieces to it, but I think there are significant barriers in our institution and in their lives that make it [hard]. It should be a celebration every time one of these students achieves an associate's degree.

Experiential education was mentioned in many of the Acme documents I reviewed and regarded as a highly respected pedagogy. Students found internships to be very beneficial but they also noted that the time required for these activities added a

significant burden to their already hectic schedules. Also, there were other opportunities

for gaining real-world experience that did not add time to their schedules. For example,

having experts from different professional fields speak in their classes was valued greatly

by students. Ellen (age group 45 and older), nearing graduation, was very satisfied with

her internship: "I've been satisfied I think because in a way they push you to do an

internship to make you realize how important it is to get the experience. So, they keep

bugging you."

Online technologies are increasingly used in courses**.** Some students, especially

those who are older, are not comfortable with online technology and require training to

utilize it effectively. Seth (age group 25–44) described the problems associated with

using multiple platforms such as computer-based, college-wide, learning-management

systems and faculty-developed websites:

> Communication was not so good. It was just different things. It was nothing
> major. The communication could have been better as far as tests and where
> PowerPoints were going to be posted. There was no rhyme or reason. They have
> [system a] and [system b] and some instructors build their own. I'm one of those
> people who always prepares, and it may be because of what I do for a job. I
> always have to be ready for the next thing that is going to happen or occur.
> Sometimes you didn't know if you were going to show up unprepared or little
> things like that. Sometimes we weren't all on the same page. . . . The clinical
> instructor was always available and the communication was very good, but each
> instructor had their own quirks and their way of doing things where I think it
> would make it a lot easier on students if there was one-stop shopping where
> everything would be posted on [system a] or on [system b].

Some students felt that the online modality worked well for certain courses, but

not all courses. Dahlia (45 and older) noted that Introduction to Business was being

offered online, but stated: "I never would have taken it as an online course. I would

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probably take a financial course if it were offered. If I know a particular teacher is teaching it, I'd rather go to class." Ellen (45 and older) stated: "I finally got into Research and Writing. I did not want to take it online. It's too tough." In a focus group of women who were primarily between ages of 25–44 a discussion ensued about the fact that online materials that are distributed in class are helpful but "not everyone's computer literate." They agreed that the materials need "to be basic" but they were not.

Elizabeth (age group 25–44) was taking a face-to-face class and an online psychology course. The fact that the class was taught online did not present problems, however she was bothered by the lack of any face-to-face time with the professor. She stated:

> The online class is okay. It seems pretty simple and to the point. There's not a lot of contact with the professor unless you have questions or you have a concern. There's not a whole lot to say about the online class. They're pretty much to the point. You're given an assignment, you study the materials that are given to you, and then you finish your assignment. Pretty much, that's what it is.

A large percentage of part-time students are taught by adjunct faculty members. One of the most significant problems facing community colleges is the heavy reliance on adjunct faculty (Cataldi et al., 2005; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Given budget shortfalls, institutions frequently do not have the funding to hire full-time faculty. At the time this study was conducted, Acme Community College fit this profile. Information on the college's website confirmed that the part-time student population represented about two-thirds of the total student population and that 60% were adjunct faculty.

Professional development was something that interested and concerned most faculty members. One full-time faculty member believed it would be beneficial to have panel discussions at the college's annual Professional Day where students served as panelists and discussed the problems they face. Two other full-time faculty members noted that being provided with empirical studies on part-time student success would be helpful. One adjunct faculty member suggested having workshops on online instruction. She noted:

> I do feel a little isolated from this institution, but for myself, I think having workshops on online instruction and [the learning management system] and things like that would be helpful. They probably do offer it at some point during the year or semester. I think having more assignments and work to do online might benefit part-time students more.

Another faculty member mentioned that learning about important issues such as dealing with difficult students or bullying from other faculty members should be presented at a formal meeting or workshop rather than learned "through the grapevine."

Support Services: Academic Support Services and Co-curricular Activities

The open hours for academic support services played a very significant role in whether or not they were utilized.

Academic support services. Michelle (age group 18–21) stated she used support services, but frequently they were not available when she needed them, which was between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m.: "I usually have to cut out a piece of my day. They are not open late at night when I'm there. It would be nice to have them available at night."

Comments from new student participants indicated that most had not used support services, although they planned to do so in the future. Barry (age group 18–21) said he "was looking into using them. I'm not really very good at math or research papers, so I'm looking into that stuff right now." Gwen (age group 25–44) also stated, "not yet, but I plan to." Steph (age group 25–44) said that she had used advising services when she first started, but now finds it difficult to schedule appointments without having to take time off from work. Bob (age group 22–24) said he met with someone to discuss his individualized education plan (IEP) because he needed to enroll in only two classes but still be entitled to student insurance. Becky (age group 22–24) said she had not yet used any support services, but she planned to go to the advising center before the end of the semester to learn more about transferring courses. The few new students who indicated they had used support services had seen advisors when they first enrolled and two students were being tutored in math. Students in a weekend focus group (some of whom were also enrolled in evening classes) indicated they did not use academic support services because these services were not available when they were on campus.

Students nearing graduation were more likely to have used or were currently using support services. Advising services were used most frequently. Seth (age group 25–44) indicated, "If you don't play your cards right, you are going to end up needing classes you didn't count on." Kim (age group 45 and older) said, "I have test anxiety, and I frequently visit [the advising and counseling center] before a test just to calm down and do the deep breathing relaxation and visualization. It does help." Jeff (age group 22–24)

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reported that he "saw someone in career services. She showed me different tests [you] can take to measure interests and values and abilities." Students in an evening focus group said they had used the career center, and most students were satisfied with the help they received there in securing internships. One student, however, felt rushed when visiting the center. Ernestine (age group 45 and older) expressed uncertainty about using support services:

> I hate to think that there are things I could have been utilizing but that there is no one that can help me figure all that out—where you're supposed to go and what you're supposed to do and what you're supposed to know.

Student reaction to academic support services varied; some students were reasonably satisfied, but others identified significant concerns. Kim (age group 45 and older) was very pleased with support services, in general, and described her experiences:

> Overall, I've had a really positive experience at Acme. Everybody I've encountered from the people in enrollment services to advising and counseling have been fabulous. They are there because they want you to succeed. If there is something in your way, they want to help you overcome those roadblocks and help you be on your way. I think everybody, for the most part, has a vested interest in not just doing their job but in helping students become successful.

Advising was the most frequently discussed support service. Seth (age group 25–44) indicated that when advising takes place in the health program students know what they need to take. He underscored the fact that a very focused, cohort model was in place: "There is one advisor at Acme who is on top of the [health] program. When I sit down with him, he has a color-coded document of what you need to take now and what you can put off."

Seeing the same advisor or faculty member was very important to many student participants. Tim (age group 25–44) who usually went to the advising center at the beginning of the semester stated:

> I like it when you can go in there and see the same face. There's one woman in particular that helped me with testing. She has helped me with advising, and I'm getting familiar with her now because I see that she is always there. It's helpful when you can build a relationship with an advisor. . . . Other than the fact that some are more knowledgeable than others, I guess the knowledgeable ones make you feel really satisfied when you leave. The less knowledgeable ones can make you feel like, "Why didn't I just go to the advisor I always see?"

Tim also noted he felt like his "path [was] clear" after talking with an advisor. Although he did not see the same person every time he went to the advising center, he felt he was always directed to someone who could help, and that services were usually available at the time when he sought help, though "sometimes the wait might be a half-hour or you can schedule an appointment."

A female student in one focus group of new students mentioned that she benefited from having met with an advisor when school started. The advisor helped her plan a schedule for taking courses from her first course through degree completion. She said:

> Well, he asked me, "Are you going to take English next?" and I said, "Oh, no. I'm done with English." And he wrote out every class I needed to take, and he wrote it out for the whole—like, up until the time I graduate. So he helped me that way. His name was Mike. He was very helpful.

Paul (age group 25–44) did not have a positive experience. He saw an enrollment advisor at a different campus and said: "I felt like I was rushed. I didn't like the atmosphere. Here, at this campus, it is more suitable or to my liking, I guess."

There were occasions when student participants were advised to take courses they did not need. This created problems for students because of the additional costs associated with the courses they didn't need and the lack of availability of courses they did. Sarah (age group 22–24) stated she had been advised to take the wrong class:

> I'd go [to the advising center] at the beginning of the semester to work with someone on the courses I needed to take. I actually had a problem when the guidance counselor set me up for taking the wrong class. He had me register for a math class that was too advanced for me and I failed. The next semester I enrolled again and the teacher pulled me to the side and said he had looked at my work and I was not ready for this class and needed to take a lower level one. So I went back to advising and wound up seeing the same guidance counselor. He looked at my records and said, "This is ridiculous. Who would sign you up for this?" And I said, "It was you." He apologized, but I was out $400 by then.

Fortunately, Sarah had a better experience at one of the other campuses:

> This semester, one of the classes was dropped and I needed it to graduate. The guidance counselor worked with me for an hour and went to the different deans to find out what I could do. He thought it was ridiculous for me to come back, so he helped me out.

> Being advised into the wrong course was also discussed at a focus group session:

> Student #1: I went to advising to get help deciding what courses I needed to take. I was told, "Here's the course, and here's the catalogue. Pick. You want general studies, so this tells you what you need to take."

> Student #2: I think we should all be advisors. . . . You do nothing and you get paid.

> Student #3: When you go to advising to review your transcript, they say, "Well, you didn't even need that credit." So now you took a class for nothing.

> Student #4: A waste of time and money, thinking you need a class and at the end you didn't even need to take it.

Ernestine (age group 45 and older) discussed the shortage of advising staff:

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I don't think there are enough of them [advisors] to go around. When you go in, it's almost like you have to take a number and then you're the next in line or they write your name down. Somebody just comes and gets you. You don't work with the same person over and over. You may have to wait an hour. They should have something online. You can't call and talk to an advisor, you can't leave a message. You should be able to e-mail somebody.

Steph (age group 25–44) entered college after having been away for a while due to family matters. She described her problems and frustrations at trying to set up an advising appointment:

If you make an [advising] appointment, you're making an appointment for two months out or more. They do walk-ins. . . . You have to be there by 3 p.m. in the afternoon to be seen by somebody, which means taking time out of work. They don't do walk-ins at night. . . . It is first come, first served. I get that, but you think they would do it a little later at night for those of us who are coming nights and working during the day. You can't necessarily get there by 3 p.m. I had to take time off of work to do it. Being a single parent, it is hard to take time out of work because you need the money to pay the bills.

Ernestine (age group 45 and older) started at Acme following the traditional pathway: applying for admission, taking placement tests, being advised, and registering for courses. She discussed her dissatisfaction with the process:

The only advisor I talked to was after I took the [placement test], and I picked general studies because I looked at some of the other stuff and I didn't know what I wanted to do yet, so I thought maybe I can just take classes all over the place. . . . When I met with the advisor . . . she told me, "This is what the [four-year state] college is looking for, so take this course and this course." She spent a little time talking to me. . . . The girl was so inexperienced. . . . I don't even know that there is anyone here . . . to talk to . . . and possibly gear you toward . . . [registering for] the appropriate courses.

Patricia (age group 22–24) was enrolled in a health science program. She complained about the admissions waiting list and the fact that she had not been told about

certain deadlines. This resulted in her missing an important deadline and having to reapply a year later. She said: "The waiting list takes forever. . . .You have to reapply every year between January and February. I didn't know that so I missed one year, and I got skipped. Now the waiting sucks."

Students discussed their experiences with tutoring. Sally (age group 22–24) indicated that she had to write four-page essays and spent one hour each week at the tutoring center getting help with these assignments, and was also tutored in math:

> I use the tutoring [services] for my math class. . . . I take a math lab. . . . It's just me and my book. . . . I find that my peer tutor is actually better at having me understand things that I'm having trouble with than the proctors who are watching the math lab. The proctor's math level is a little higher, but the peer tutor actually takes the time to show you how to do it. He doesn't put you down for being in a lower-level math class. He is actually here to make sure you do good on your test. He [indicates] that when he talks to you and shows you how to do things.
>
> Right now, I'm only going once a week for about an hour. The way my classes are [scheduled], I have to do it before a class. The tutor gave me his number and his e-mail and said even if I need help on a day when I'm not going to campus, if I have issues I can call, I can e-mail. He really made himself available to help. Not just me, but the other people that he tutors as well. . . . It's a group, but it's no more than three people to the group. I believe we're all about the same level. . . . It's very friendly. He's not like, "I'm in Calculus II, and you can't even add."

Kim (age group 45 and older) described her experience with peer tutors:

> The girl I had, she had previously taken the course I was having trouble with. I guess you have to have an A or better to be a tutor, and she was really, really informative and knowledgeable, and she knew her stuff. I'm pretty good at taking notes, but as far as reading and understanding the book I needed help. I learned how to highlight things so that there are certain things that I don't have to reread. It's time consuming when you go over stuff that you don't need. She was really helpful.

Kim was most satisfied with the fact that she was able to pull her grade up to a "B" in

program courses because this was the grade she needed in order to transfer to a four-year

college.

Some students did not find tutoring helpful. Ellen (age group 45 and older)

mentioned that she had seen a tutor but was disappointed. She was part of a three-person

group and found that the tutor had to move back and forth between students. She

eventually stopped going to the tutoring center:

> I signed up for a tutor in math, and she was a nice enough person. Unfortunately, I
> don't think she knew what she was doing, and it wasn't one-on-one. It was like
> three of us. One person had a problem in this, and I had a problem in that, so she
> kept going back and forth between us. . . . It wasn't helping me at all so I stopped
> going.

Some students encountered problems completing assignments because they did

not have computers and/or Internet access at home. While computer labs were available,

students' work schedules often conflicted with the lab's hours of operation.

Only a few students discussed their experiences with career counseling. Career

counseling advisors worked with students to identify job opportunities and help them find

internships. Students nearing graduation said that internships were important because

they provided opportunities for connecting what they were learning to the real world.

Some students confused career counseling with job placement. They were not familiar

with career planning and its potential value in helping them to plan for employment

opportunities. They thought of the job placement office as a service that they should use

around graduation time. Kylie, a new student (age group 22–24), did not plan to go until

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her last semester, when she would be looking for a job. Jeff, a student nearing graduation (age group 22–24), used career services and he felt that services were available when he needed them. He had taken tests to measure his interests, values, and abilities.

Student participants who used veterans' services said they had been a great help. Jake, a veteran (age group 25–44), was pleased with the advising had received:

I met once with a student advisor, which was really beneficial. He told me how the GI bill works. I didn't know that I could get some elective credits for some of the things that I did in the military. That was really beneficial. He helped me map out classes and gave me different ideas of what I could take to get my associate's.

Elizabeth (age group 25–44), a veteran, described her experiences with the college, including flexible scheduling, which allowed her to enroll with the number of credits required for veterans and those that also met her scheduling needs:

Well, I have the GI bill, which is free money for me to go to school. I could use mine and the military did come out with a post-9/11 GI bill, and they pay for your housing while you attend school. They'll pay the highest amount cost of living in which the school zip code exists. So, I'm getting paid for the cost of living in [town] since Acme is in [town]. Just trying to make ends meet and finish a degree so that I can do something to better our financial situation and do something I like other than the jobs I see, which I'm tired of. . . .
    The main reason I chose the community college is for the simple fact that . . . I'm working and a full-time mom, and my husband's work schedule is not flexible because he is a civilian who works for the military. There's no way that I would be able to take on a university's requirements for academics. I needed a flexible schedule for taking classes. . . . They're more family [oriented]. . . . I was able to get the classes at the times that I wanted, which is nice on nights and weekends. I was able to get an online course from the school, which did help. For the GI Bill to pay me fully and pay for the school, I have to [take] 10–12 credits. I was able to get those 10 credits because of one weekend class and an online class.

Providing courses, programs, and advice for students who want to transfer to a four-year college or university is an important community college service, but unlike

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many community colleges, Acme did not have a separate transfer office. This assistance

was provided by staff in the advising office. During interviews, students discussed taking

courses that would transfer, but did not mention seeking specific advice about the transfer

process.

Administrators described the problems that students often encountered in

transferring to other institutions. One administrator explained:

> Generally speaking, in [New England, transfer articulation] with [state]
> universities and public four-year colleges [presents few problems] if you achieve
> somewhere around 24 credits with a good GPA. If you [have earned] 12 or 15
> credits, and you have a good GPA, and you've been here for a couple of years,
> there's really no significant barrier to transfer to other colleges and universities.
> At least we haven't found that to be the case. A lot of that has to do with
> articulation agreements, too.
> [Private colleges] want to see and look at full-time students. Everybody
> recognizes that. They want to see what you've done on a full-time status. [But] for
> the most part, transferring to other [public and private] colleges and universities
> . . . has not been a hindrance.

Another administrator, however, stated that an impediment to transferring may be

that part-time students lack confidence in their ability to succeed if they transfer:

> It's their internal, mental, psychological issues that usually cause the biggest
> problems. Those who come here first hoping to transfer elsewhere are sometimes
> already feeling inferiority issues. They couldn't get into the school they wanted to
> go to in the first place, either because the [college or university] was full or
> [because] they were told their grades weren't good enough.
> These students had their hearts set on going to the four-year school, but
> they ended up here. They want to go and live at these [four-year] schools. There's
> no student life program here, there's no residential program, and there's none of
> that feeling.

A third administrator noted that students need to take advantage of services at the

college that help them to understand what they need to know and do to successfully

transfer:

> Students who plan on transferring to other institutions are strongly urged to utilize the services of academic counseling because all colleges are different including our own state colleges. Transfer requirements to [state university a] are different than the transfer requirements of [state college b]. The academic counselor [you work with] can ensure that the courses you're taking are the courses that are recommended by the institution you're looking to transfer to.
> When students don't utilize academic counseling, what they start doing is getting confused about elective courses. They think by virtue of majoring in Liberal Arts or General Studies, they will be guaranteed to transfer. Well Liberal Arts and General Studies [are] the preferred program[s] for transfer students, but what's so much more important is that you're taking the courses that are needed to transfer into a degree program at the four-year institution. If General Studies has 28 credits of electives, a lot of students are confused, thinking, "I can take anything I want, and it's going to transfer because it's a General Studies degree." No, not so. The purpose of the 28 credits of electives is that you have the freedom to pick and choose the courses the institution you're transferring to recommends you should take. . . . I guess [you get that information] at freshman registration. At freshman registration, you're going to be getting that [information] because that's where [students] meet with counselors. They also get encouragement at new student orientation. They're getting that encouragement through online orientation. And just through all the publications and literature that we have.

Administrators at Acme noted that transfer services were insufficient. While

articulation agreements existed, they were not consistent across the state's public college

and university systems. Students assumed that if they enrolled in General Studies, all of

their courses would transfer.

Some students at Acme indicated that their plan was not to graduate from Acme,

but to take courses for a year or so and then transfer to a four-year institution. One

student decided that there was no point in transferring because she would not be able to

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repay student loans at a more expensive school. Thus she stayed on at Acme to earn another credential.

Co-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities include sports, student clubs, student government, and other student leadership activities. They provide opportunities to apply student learning outcomes, and to develop feelings of student engagement and a sense of belonging. Younger students participated more in these activities than students in other age groups. Athletics at Acme, with the exception of one sports-related club, appeared to be limited to full-time students. Two students who participated in this study as part-time students had briefly attended Acme full-time. As full-time students they were involved in sports and offered their comments on the relationship of athletics to student success. They found that their involvement in sports provided them with a sense of belonging. Patricia (age group 22–24) participated in sports and sought out quiet spaces for studying during sports season. When she was really interested in a subject, she would go to the lab and study for several hours each day. She described herself as "self-motivated."

Some students involved in sports felt that being a member of a team contributed to their sense of belonging. Patricia (age group 22–24) stated that she felt she was part of the college community when she was on a team:

> I did [feel a sense of belonging] when I was a full-time [student] because I was part of the soccer team. I was part of the athletic community. I hung out with the athletic kids. Now that I'm part-time, I come in and go to class and leave.

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Tim (age group 25–44) also attributed his participation in sports as something that promoted his sense of belonging:

> I played [sports] for a couple of years. At that time, I really felt like [I was] a part of the school. I knew the coach. I knew the trainer. I had teammates. When we went to different [games], we were together. . . . I actually hung out with one of the guys on a regular basis for a while outside of school. But any other time, I didn't really feel that way. You don't know your teacher that well. You don't know many people in the school. To feel a part you need to make yourself feel a part [through] sports or activities in general or study groups.

Students at Acme mentioned that they were members of clubs that focused on the same issues discussed in their majors. Students also belonged to health-related clubs. Part-time students generally found it difficult to participate in activities during the week and in some cases on weekends. Most new students just were not interested in participating in co-curricular activities, nor did they have the time because of other responsibilities. Students nearing graduation said that the college did nothing to encourage their participation in co-curricular activities and they did not know how to find out about activities. Mark (age group 22–24) reported: "The only things that have intrigued me or the only way I have been intrigued to do anything was because of information on posters and signs on the walls around school." Seth (age group 25–44) mentioned that while the school may offer activities, he does not go looking for them. Ernestine (age group 45 and older) said she would like more information and age-appropriate activities:

You have a large population of older people [at the college], but most of the things they seem to have going on are geared toward the younger people. People get together and play Nintendo. Stuff like that is geared in a whole other direction. They're going to have a movie at two in the afternoon. Who's going to go to that? Only the young kids are available to go. They have to have more things available for the older population, and they need to make the information more available to us and then maybe we can do some things.

A full-time faculty member who served as a club advisor was reasonably confident that some of the students in the club were part-time students. The club met in the middle of the day and the faculty member said that if students were working, it was difficult for them to attend meetings. She also noted that many students in her classes wanted to join the club but could not because of their work schedules.

One adjunct faculty member said, "They definitely encourage it. We try to run a lot of activities for students, especially during the day or at 4 p.m." Another adjunct faculty member made similar comments:

At this institution, I think they do try to engage all students. They know they are limited in the sense that no one lives on campus so you are not going to get that potential hub of activity, but they do have a lot of activities during the day such as employment fairs or college fairs and workshops.

One full-time faculty member felt that if students did not participate in activities that took place in the cafeteria, they were not engaged in other co-curricular activities. The perspective of another full-time faculty member was that it seemed as though students got to know each other through the semester and that they probably studied together.

According to administrators, part-time students at Acme were likely to become involved in student leadership or become involved in writing for the school paper.

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One student at Acme discussed his experience with work-study. He found that it enabled him to connect with faculty and that faculty depended on him when they were teaching and needed help with technology. Jeff (age group 22–24) said:

> I work in the IT department so I'm able to bond with a lot of people. . . . When professors have problems with their computers or they are not displaying images or projecting for a PowerPoint, I come in to fix the problem.

The next and final section of this case study includes three vignettes that reflect the experiences of students who attended Acme just prior to the start of the study, but left before earning a credential.

Vignettes of Former Students

Three former students were interviewed: (a) a student who transferred to other institutions, (b) a student who officially withdrew, and (c) a student who left without notifying the institution. Recruiting former students was difficult. At the outset of the project, I intended to interview three students from each of the above groups but soon found it was very time consuming to track them down and decided to limit the number to one from each group. A summary of their characteristics and stories are presented below as vignettes that depict a holistic view of the personal, dispositional, and institutional barriers they faced.

Former Student Who Transferred

Rosie (age group 18–21) was a female, White, non-Hispanic/Latina former student who attended Acme part-time in fall 2009. She had never planned to finish an

associate's degree and attended Acme because she was working part-time and the community college's course schedule allowed her to work and take courses.

She enrolled at Acme immediately after high school, and transferred to a four-year public college (university) after one semester. Her goal was to earn a master's degree or higher. Her mother held a bachelor's degree and her father had taken courses at a four-year college. At the time of our interview, she was not employed and did not have children or other dependents living with her. At Acme, she worked between 15 and 20 hours each week. She found the cost of attending Acme somewhat difficult and relied on her parents and student loans to pay her tuition.

Rosie was frustrated by the requirement that she take course prerequisites, and believed they were unnecessary. She selected Acme because it was local and cost-effective. "It was going to get me from point A to point B in my educational goals," she said. At the end of one semester, she was eligible for admission to a four-year college. Rosie was somewhat satisfied with Acme's academic program, but felt that the courses were not as challenging as she expected, and for this reason she had been concerned they would not be accepted for transfer credit. When she compared courses at Acme with those she took at the four-year college, she said the material covered at the community college did not contain the same depth of information as similar ones she took at the four-year college, and she felt the faculty who taught these courses did not always present accurate information. However, she said that the PowerPoint presentations they used had been very helpful.

Rosie had used the advising center, but did not meet regularly with the same person. Scheduled appointments were inconvenient and so she met with whomever was available. However, she found the time-limited session was not sufficient to discuss all of her issues. She used the computer lab frequently and sometimes used the library.

Rosie had been frustrated with the staff in the enrollment office with the issue of filling out required paperwork and the multiple times she needed to go to other staff members to have things straightened out. She stated that this office was quite disorganized.

Rosie felt no connection to the college. She knew some of the students from high school, but exchanged only brief comments with others. She felt that Acme could have done more to reach out to students and encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities. While she acknowledged that information was available on the website and through fliers, very few students participated.

Former Student Who Officially Withdrew

Suzie (age group 18–21) was a female, White, non-Hispanic/Latina student who had attended Acme part-time in fall semester 2009. She enrolled in college immediately after high school, but withdrew after earning less than 15 credits. Her mother had earned a certificate and her father attended high school but did not receive a diploma or GED. She was employed more than 30 hours per week at the time of the interview and did not have children or other dependents living with her. She found the cost of attending Acme difficult and relied on her parents' income to pay her tuition.

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Suzie attended college part-time because at that time she usually worked between 15–20 hours each week and needed the income. She had chosen to attend Acme because of its reputation, but eventually wanted to go to another college. During her second semester she was hurt in a car accident and was not able to return to school that semester. She was offered the choice of receiving a refund or applying the tuition to the following semester. She chose the latter, but when she went to register she was told that the money she had previously been offered was no longer available. Frustrated, she decided to officially withdraw because she was not happy with the way the support staff handled the issue.

Suzie was satisfied with the quality of the faculty Acme and was pleased with the content of the courses she took. She said her instructors worked with her when she had problems, and didn't feel she needed to use academic support services. When she registered in fall semester 2009 she took the required placement tests and was satisfied with the courses that had been recommended. She did not remember attending an orientation program. She felt that faculty members should have provided more in-class work and less homework. Because she became easily distracted, she would have liked to be busier during class time and decided that the next time she took courses she would work less and study more. Suzie did not feel connected to the college, but stated this didn't bother her: "I just went there, did my work, and left to go to work."

Former Student Who Left but Did Not Officially Withdraw

Ronald (age group 18–21) was a male, White, non-Hispanic/Latino former

student. He attended Acme as a part-time student in fall 2009. He enrolled in college the

semester following his high school graduation, but left Acme before he completed any

courses. His mother had earned a bachelor's degree and his father a high school diploma.

He was employed 21–30 hours per week, and lived with his parents and a younger

sibling. He did not find the cost of attending Acme difficult but relied on his parents'

income to pay his tuition bills.

Ronald attended college part-time because he wanted to work to earn enough

money to buy a car. He had chosen Acme because of its proximity to his home, and

depended on a family member for transportation to and from the campus. He said that he

left college because it was too stressful. He was working and said he "had too much stuff

piling on for school, and guess[ed he] just jumped in too soon." Ronald told his

instructors that he was leaving for personal reasons and they said if he wanted to come

back, that would be fine.

Ronald was very satisfied with the faculty and found the academic level of his

courses generally easy. He had been enrolled in one developmental writing course. He

felt intimidated in his second course because he was required to speak a great deal: "I'm a

nervous guy. I get shy easily, so I didn't get up the nerve." He did not seek any help from

support services and did not remember attending any orientation program.

Ronald said he "definitely fit in." One instructor liked his writing style and would sit with him before or after class to help him. "It really blew my mind at the time. It was like, 'Wow.'" Ronald didn't associate with groups of students, but knew a lot of people and "hung out before class sometimes." He indicated he spent about an hour each night on schoolwork. Although he was aware of co-curricular activities, but didn't participate because he wanted to study; he wanted to be a good college student. He did not believe any institutional conditions were responsible for his leaving Acme and wanted to return to college once he had his own car and could be more mobile.

Findings Related to Theoretical Frameworks

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging can be defined in a number of different ways. The definition used in this case study considers the student's "fit" with the institution. At Acme, two administrators felt that students' sense of belonging resulted from their interactions with faculty, staff, and other students. Frequently students developed a sense of belonging, they said, because of their interactions with advisors, a program director, or those involved in their work-study program. A third senior administrator did not believe that part-time students developed a sense of belonging.

Full-time faculty believed that students' sense of belonging developed from peer interactions, interactions with faculty and staff, or not at all. Adjunct faculty believed that it occurred through peer relationships or not at all, and they did not see themselves as having a role in students' development of a sense of belonging.

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Student participants believed that any feelings of a sense of belonging came from peer relationships and those they developed with others in their programs. This occurred most frequently when students were enrolled in small, cohort-based career programs, and thus took several classes with the same students. Younger students felt a sense of belonging when they were in classes with friends whom they knew from high school, and students who participated in sports derived a sense of belonging from those who also participated in the same activity.

Older students, particularly women, developed a sense of belonging with women who were the same age or who shared similar circumstances such as work experience or being single parents. Students who no longer attended Acme had made few connections with others. Some students did not feel a sense of belonging; they did what they had to do to get through.

Student responses to questions used in the CCSSE are shown in Table 5. The first question concerned peer relationships. The second and third focused on their relationships with faculty and support staff.

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Table 5

Quality of Relationships at Acme Community College

		New			Nearing graduation	
Variable	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Quality of relationships with students	19	5.32	1.34	15	5.33	1.40
Quality of relationships with instructors	19	5.47	.97	15	5.80	.78
Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices	19	4.37	1.57	15	5.07	1.34

Both new students and those nearing graduation gave the highest ratings to the quality of relationships with instructors. Their relationships with other students ranked second. When comparing the two groups of students, those nearing graduation gave higher ratings than new students to the quality of their relationships with others. These data are consistent with information obtained in interviews and focus group sessions suggesting that the quality of relationships improved over time.

Student Engagement

The definition of student engagement used by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) refers broadly to students who are actively involved in meaningful educational experiences and activities. Engagement is linked with a higher level of learning, persistence in college, and graduation (Marti, 2009). The responsibility for success in achieving a sense of belonging and engagement is jointly shared by students and the

institution. Researchers have described a sense of belonging as the antecedent to student engagement (Karp et al., 2008; Stage & Hossler, 2000).

 In this case study, student engagement was addressed in two ways: administrators and faculty were asked whether student engagement occurred at the college; and students were asked if they had selected courses or participated in programs or services that were engaging.

There was little consensus among administrators or faculty that students were actively engaged. Some administrators did not believe students were putting a lot of effort into their course work. They also believed that the college should have more engaging spaces to attract students, such as a café in the library.

In interviews and focus group sessions, students discussed their participation in college activities and indicated whether the college encouraged participation. New students said they received a lot of e-mails focused on co-curricular activities and noted information tables located in public areas that provided pamphlets. But students also acknowledged that while information was provided, they didn't have time to participate in the advertised activities. In one lively focus group discussion students stated that most of their free time was spent meeting family responsibilities and they did not pay much attention to communications about activities. Many students nearing graduation stated that while information was available, the college did little to encourage participation. However, sometimes faculty had encouraged them to take part in certain activities.

Responses from former students provide some insight on whether they left due to lack of engagement. Rosie, the Acme transfer student (age group 18–21), said that she used the college's website to find out about what was going on at the campus:

> I feel like the only way I found [activities were] encouraged is if I looked on their website and I could see . . . what was coming up. . . . Other than that, sometimes I would see flyers around the campus, but I found a lot of the students . . . really didn't participate much in the activities. They [campus staff] could reach out a little bit more to promote their activities, which I feel like they're not doing a great job in.

Suzie, the Acme student who officially withdrew (age group 18–21), said that signs were always going up and the faculty were always talking to students about getting help and using the library. Ronald, the student who did not officially withdraw (age group 18–21), said he was aware of activities but did not participate. He stated: "I just wanted to get all my studying done, and try to be a good college student."

Academic support services provided all students with opportunities to become engaged. Yet, students and faculty found that opportunities for using support services in the evening and on weekends were quite limited, and students stated that the advising that took place at those times and on the satellite campuses was not as good as the support services that were offered on campus during the weekdays. While most new students did not take advantage of student support services, those who did expressed satisfaction, and part-time students who participated in co-curricular activities tended to be traditional-aged and involved in student government.

Proxies for student engagement were also identified in responses to questions listed on the Student Profile Sheet (see Appendix D), which was adapted from the

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Community College Student Report (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009).

New students stated they rarely used support services, but planned to use them in the future. Unfortunately, they did not see the value of using them until they ran into difficulty with their classwork. Some students indicated that faculty built a variety of learning and support activities into their syllabi. For example, new students would go to the library to learn how to use library resources. However, students nearing graduation responded differently. They did seek help from support services, and found the time to do so.

Responses to the CCSSE questions identified what services were used by different groups of students. Fifty percent of the new weekend students (5 students) took courses in developmental reading; all of the new day students (4 students) took developmental math and developmental reading. One new evening student (20%) and one new weekend student (10%) participated in service learning. One new day student (25%) participated in a learning community. Four students (50%) who were nearing graduation and took courses in the evening participated in the honors program.

Most new day students (75%) enrolled in the study skills course and went to the advising services center. One new day Acme student (25%) participated in cooperative education and two new day students (50%) participated in the orientation program.

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Formation of Information Networks

Karp et al. (2008) defined information networks as "social ties that facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge and procedures" (p. 8). They described how students obtained information that contributes to their integration and fosters a sense of belonging. These networks, however, are difficult to form because of the limited amount of time that part-time students spend on campus.

At Acme, students stated they frequently relied on other students for information, because some of the information from academic advising was wrong, and if they took classes in the evening, on weekends, or at another Acme campus, there were no available advising services. They also were frustrated by financial aid staff who assumed they should know how to apply for aid.

Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality is focused on understanding how multiple aspects of one's identity—such as race, gender, or social class—intersect (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011), and how they may result in various forms of discrimination that adversely affect students' opportunities to succeed in college. In this case study, members of a focus group provided specific examples of how various aspects of their identity intersected and caused them to feel marginalized. Three Hispanic/Latina and three non-Hispanic/Latina women who were enrolled in a weekend developmental course participated in the focus group and became very animated in their discussion of the subtle forms of discrimination they experienced.

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They stated that caring for children and working outside the home consumed most of their time when they weren't in the classroom. Sometimes they were also responsible for others living in their homes such as parents and grandparents. One student described her responsibilities to her grandmother:

> She's 89. So when I go home, I have to spend a little bit—some time with her. She goes to a senior center and they bring her back at 4:00, but she misses me and then she recreates the same thing over and over. I have to spend at least 10, 15 minutes, half an hour even, just sitting down watching television with her so she can see me.

Another student indicated that it was important to pay attention to one's partner, otherwise "they will look someplace else. It's the reality. They'll say, 'Yes, yes, I understand.' But they feel alone. So you have to be very careful and share with him too."

Students who took pride in keeping up with housework found it frustrating when their homes became disorganized because they did not have time to clean. They felt that their other responsibilities were more important, and that when something had to be ignored, it was their housework. They also expressed frustration about the fact that their significant others had initially offered them support and encouraged them to take courses, but when they realized how much time they would then need to help out, their support waned.

Some of these students were enrolled in weekend and evening classes because these were the only times they could leave the house to attend class. They complained about the lack of evening support staff. A discussion between two of these students highlighted their problems. One student stated: "There's nobody [among the support

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staff] to talk to at night. Everything is during the day. But we work. It's impossible. You cannot get anyone." Another student agreed: "Yeah. You can't get anyone. You can't get a guidance counselor. You can do absolutely nothing. . . . We go nights and weekends because we can't go [any other time]. You can't talk to anyone. It's impossible." Students said their instructors told them to get online help, but this wasn't a workable solution.

These students felt no engagement with the college. They were assigned group projects outside of class, but they found these nearly impossible to complete because of work demands and responsibilities to their children. They also were frustrated by the fact that some evening classes were only offered on another campus, but they would "go wherever" because requesting changes to their work schedules so that they could attend day classes on the main campus was not something they were willing to do. The students were busy all the time. One student said: "I'm in bed by 8:00 at night. I'm exhausted."

Case Study 2: Hilo Community College

Communication

Student success was strongly correlated with all forms of communication: information they received when they first registered for courses, e-mails from faculty and other students, flyers that advertised upcoming events, campus orientation, and a formal orientation program. Communication issues were also identified in findings on classroom dynamics, student support services, and co-curricular activities.

Print and electronic communications. When I visited Hilo Community College, I was struck by the diversity and number of flyers on bulletin boards. A calendar of

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events, which also was called a newsletter, could also be found in many places. Nancy

(age group 25–44) reported:

> They have bulletin boards all over the first floor of the main building. They tell
> you about sporting events that are coming up and whether there is going to be any
> type of job fair or college fairs. There is stuff everywhere to inform you about
> what is going on.

Weekend students, in particular, noted that signs and posters were helpful reminders

about what was going on. One student, Sandra (age group 45 and older) said:

> There are posters and there are billboards in all the campuses that I have seen that
> have things posted. In the bathroom there are things posted about stuff that is
> going on. They do make it so that there is no way that you cannot see it. I think
> that it is really good that they have done that. It kinds of gives those people who
> need that little push a push.

> Students found the newsletter/calendar of events helpful. Maggie (age group 22–

24) said, "I've read the newsletter. The newsletter is the biggest tool that they use, and

they put it all over the place and in the bathroom so that everyone sees it." Nancy (age

group 25–44), referred to the calendar of events posted in the restroom:

> You go in to the bathroom and sit down, and there's a flyer that tells you what the
> events are for the rest of the month and recommends which ones will be best. It
> actually tells you which events are more motivated toward women or toward men
> and [what the best] activities [are].

> Another form of written communication was an advertising notebook distributed

by faculty to all students at the beginning of each academic year. The notebook contains

ads from local businesses as well as notices about services that are available to students.

According to an administrator, notebooks go out to all faculty members who, in turn,

distribute them to students:

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Hilo prints 9,000–10,000 advertising notebooks that they give to professors to hand out at the beginning of the year. Hilo places ads in the notebook. The notebook is filled with college resources. . . . When we do our focus groups, I want to make sure that we are doing a good job with our part-time [students]. We make sure through our Enrollment Center that we have written materials available that we can give to students. We do a [deleted] session which is like a mini orientation. When we are advising students, and this is going to be a little contradictory to the day part-time students vs. the night part-time students, we have written materials available. . . . The thought is that while they are bored in class and are thumbing through the notebook, they will find the resources that are available on campus. . . . They are free of charge, and we provide them through the classroom. We give them to the faculty members to give out in class. . . . We try to get every student.

Students reported that e-mail is abundant at Hilo. Notices are sent frequently to remind students of events that are happening on campus. The majority of students believed that the college tries to encourage students to participate in activities by sending e-mail reminders. Despite these reminders, many students indicated that they are not able to attend events due to their hectic schedules. All of the day students mentioned that the college sends e-mails to their college accounts and secondary e-mail accounts. Windy (age group 22–24) said she gets many e-mails: "Some of them are about some of the programs or activities they have here. One [focused on] donating money to Japan and stuff."

Several evening and weekend students noted the prevalence of e-mails but indicated that either they do not have the time to attend activities or that activities are scheduled at the same time as other commitments they have made. Anna (age group 25–44) stated that she gets a lot of e-mails:

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I get e-mails on my college e-mail and my personal e-mail. They are inviting us and letting us know what is going on in what area or come and try this. . . . If I had the time, I might do some of it, but I don't.

Phoebe (age group 25–44) stated that she receives e-mail from a number of different

places.

I get regular e-mails from not only Admissions with reminders about registering for classes, but there are e-mails from other parts of the college like Student Activities who sent out an e-mail about an upcoming concert, or this or that, or you can join this group. I haven't joined any groups or done anything really extracurricular yet, but I imagine I will at some point. I definitely feel involved because I know what is happening. It's all available to me at their website, which is really good, too.

Maggie (age group 22–24) said, "They send e-mails. I check my school e-mail a lot, and

they send out all their information through [school e-mail] as well." Barbara (age group

25–44) indicated that the college really does try to get students involved:

I know they send a lot of e-mails to my student account and my secondary e-mail. They do encourage participation with outside activities. I don't really participate, but they do advertise for different things that are going on around campus and try to get the students involved.

E-mail serves as a support for some students by keeping them "in the loop"

regarding what is going on at the campus, but for other students, it can be an impediment

because there are so many e-mails and many may be of little interest to students. Jen (age

group 25–44) scans her e-mails and quickly discards them. She stated:

So far, the only ways that they've been trying to get me to do that is by e-mail, which I don't think really works well because if I see an e-mail I read the first few lines and then I erase it.

Amelia (age group 25–44) also refrains from reading e-mail because the messages are

usually about events that she cannot or would not consider attending:

Usually we get e-mails about those special events and what's going on at the college. I don't tend to read them because I don't really have time for them. . . . I don't end up reading them because most of the time they have it at times I don't have available to go to the activities or be part of them. I'm not really a great people person either. I'm really shy, so I don't really venture out that far.

Some students prefer to look for information on the college's website. For example, Sandra (age group 45 and older) said, "They have the website that is easily accessible." Online communication seems to help students find answers quickly. An administrator described online advising:

We have started to do some online advising. We find our part-time students access that service a lot more. I think whether we have designed it that way or whether they gravitate to it is a whole other conversation.

Shirley, a new evening student (age group 25–44) stated:

I like the fact that I can call [the advising office] and someone is willing to help. They will do what they can to help me. Even if they are not able to, I provide a contact number, and they have called me right back. I do admire that because I know they have a busy schedule and so many students calling. I've also sent e-mails, and I've gotten answers very quickly. They have online resources as well. When I can't find what I need online, I will call. . . . When I find whatever information I need, I will print it out and highlight the key terms on it. If I still have additional questions, I will call and confirm what I was able to find on the website. It doesn't hurt to double check.

Online communication tools appear to be very helpful for students. Being able to look things up, get questions answered online and obtain advising help online reduced the number of trips students had to make to campus.

Interpersonal communication. During my visits to the campus, I spent time in the lobby. The comfortable seating areas tended to attract students. There was an information desk with announcements about events being held on campus and

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information on parking. There also were student information tables. Joseph (age group 22–24) stated that he sees tables in the lobby:

> Sometimes I notice that specific groups of people will be in the lobby with a table trying to promote an event and give more information about it. That's one of the ways, and then I know sometimes that they have things in the cafeteria and stuff that give you a little more information about certain things.

To some degree, communicating with staff presented challenges. Despite the fact that this service was available, another new evening student, Barbara (age group 25–44) said she did not receive information she needed. She also noted that because she was older, staff expected her to be able to navigate the system.

> They didn't really try to grasp or be interested in helping me figure out what I needed to do. I know I'm an adult and I need to take care of things on my own, but coming into this for the first time and really not knowing anything about the school itself, I really didn't feel like I had somebody to help me with that. I was not impressed with that. That kind of makes me a little timid as far as going for help or asking for help because I'm not sure I would get the right information I would need.

Communication with faculty was positively reviewed by part-time students. Students at Hilo noted that faculty communicate information about available support services. Faculty remind students about the tutoring labs that are available to them. Jonah (age group 25–44) stated: "They certainly let you know that they are available. . . . The teachers will tell you. If you need help, they'll tell you that the lab is open and to check the hours." Jose (age group 22–24) said: "The professors will announce some things."

Part-time students at Hilo had mixed responses regarding communication with other students. Most students said they did not spend a lot of time talking with peers and that their relationships with other students were very casual. Anna (age group 25–44)

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mentioned that she appreciated having older students in her classes because "there are a lot of adults who are struggling with the same things and who are balancing so many things." One student, Robert (age group 25–44), stated they while students do communicate with one another, they do not develop long-lasting relationships:

> Sometimes I feel I'm a certain age, and I'm the oldest one here with all the young kids. . . . At the same time, I felt part of some groups. The hardest thing I found was toward the end of each semester and the end of the class because you get used to all these people, and then all of a sudden you have to go to a different class and you know you are not going to see the same people.

Students mentioned talking to each other in some classes but not in others. For example, students in English classes communicated with each other, but students in math labs worked primarily by themselves on computers. They identified several reasons for not spending more time talking with one another. For example, they had classes only a couple of times each week. They were doing whatever was needed to get through school and their out-of-class time was spent in the library. They left campus after class to go to work or take care of their children. One student said he did not want to have the kind of relationships in college that he had had in middle school. Some older students indicated that their relationships were with faculty, not students; they found students to be so much younger that they didn't have much in common.

Orientation. Orientation events focused on providing students with information on resources and support systems that would enable them to be successful, and for staff it provided an important vehicle for meeting students and explaining different options and opportunities. Joseph (age group 22–24) said that he received a brief introduction to the

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college's programs and services, but that orientation was held off-site and there was no campus tour. When classes started and he began to navigate the campus, he recognized offices that had been mentioned. Sandra (age group 45 and older), who was nearing graduation, also attended an orientation session when she first enrolled: "We sat in a huge room and looked at what . . . classes we needed to fulfill our requirements. We watched a little intro on Hilo."

Several students did not find orientation helpful. Amelia (age group 25–44) stated:

> We were assigned advisors. I felt like she was rushing me to pick a course [so she could] move on to the next student. There were only about three or four advisors at orientation. There were 10 to 15 students in that room. I think they were rushing to get [finished] and not paying attention to what we wrote about . . . our schedule and . . . our lives and what we do and so forth.

Evening and weekend students said they had not attended an orientation. Anna (age group 25–44) said:

> I didn't get an invitation for one at night. It was only during the day. I didn't get to go to orientation or anything like that. If they could cater to evening students and weekend students, that would be good.

One administrator described the specialized orientations that were held for specific student populations:

> We do a specialized one-day advanced orientation that is a little like a Monopoly game where they get to spend a part of day (morning or afternoon) and get an orientation where they hear about a lot of the resources that are available. Although that is not focused directly on part-time students, we find that the large majority of students who take advantage of that kind of shortened orientation project are usually students that are part-time. We just designed an online orientation that we are beginning to pilot with part-time students who can't get to

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campus but can get online, [and it] has little quizzes to make sure that they are aware of policies and procedures—add/drop and others.

Classroom Dynamics

Classroom environment. In this case study, older students had mixed feelings about being in multigenerational classes. Lisa (age group 25–44) said:

> I don't feel I'm part of them because of my age. A lot of the people are much younger, in their twenties. Their mentality is "We are in school and we want to make change," but they have very little experience and they are thinking about when the next party is and who is dating whom. I think there is an age gap there.

Anna (age group 25–44) enjoyed being in classes with older students:

> In some of my classes, I don't see a lot of younger adults. They are pretty much my age. That makes me feel good. I was really worried about being the oldest in class with a bunch of 19-year-olds who just got out of high school. For me there are a lot of adults who are struggling with the same things and who are balancing so many things. I'm not the only one going through this. . . . That made me feel really good, and the transition was easier for me because of it.

A full-time faculty member who frequently teaches classes with students of different ages said that he asks students to talk about their life experiences during discussions. He noted that this provides for a richer classroom discussion. He also identified a weekend program in the business program that had been developed for adult learners:

> When we set up the program, we were trying to target people who work full-time and need to go back to school and can't afford not to work full-time while they are going to school. Therefore, you tend to get adult students who bring their whole set of work experiences with them, which makes for a richer class activity, particularly when you break into small groups or even when you are facilitating discussions. You get richer feedback from those students given the fact that they do their homework and they show up for class.

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The faculty member went on to describe how the design of the weekend program lends itself to engaging students:

> In terms of the way we designed this program, I know that [students] spend at least an hour and a half to two hours outside of the class because they have to. In order to get their classroom hours, as I said, it is two hours of live instruction and two hours of work outside of the class. In my case, the work they do outside of the class includes e-learning and interactive activities done online. I know they are doing at least an hour and a half to two hours of that work and sometimes two to two and one half. They have to read a chapter each week plus they have to do the activities. . . . They are graded on that work so they have to do that stuff.
>
> In terms of interaction, I know it is going on during the time that they are on campus because of the cohort thing. They are together in two classes, and they tend to stay with each other. They go to Dunkin Donuts and get coffee. They go to lunch together. They bond with the group in terms of the time they are there on a Saturday. Beyond the Saturday time they are together, I have no way of knowing if they are interacting at any other time. Use of the library depends on how many classes they are taking. If they are only doing one or two, then they have time for the library. If they are doing the three classes, I think it is difficult for them to go to the library on Saturday when they are done.

Students who attended class on weekends preferred the cohort model to taking a series of unconnected courses. Hilo has also begun to provide support services to these weekend students.

Small program-sized cohort models were preferred by most of the study's participants. An administrator described a cohort-based health academy that runs as a part-time program and brings new cohorts in every few weeks:

> They have an academy for health professions that is a model that would take me 30 minutes to describe to you. It is a scaffold that embeds developmental education to move students from [field to field] in the allied health area. It is completely off schedule. . . . It is completely off the regular semester term. A new cohort of people is brought in every eight weeks. . . . The students are all taking less than 12 credits as they move through the program.

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An administrator said that some students find a niche through programs that use a cohort model:

> People have told me that successful part-time students have found a niche. A part-time [health sciences] student has that cohort of students that they go along with. By finding a group, it makes them feel more committed to the program, which then makes them feel more committed to the college. If they are floundering and taking a math here and an English there and a psychology there, they are not seeing some of the same faces and they don't get that connection. I don't think they feel connected.

Veterans have a de facto cohort, given that most enroll in a one-credit course in order to reach seven credits. One administrator described a course developed specifically for veterans who attend part-time:

> We created a one-credit [deleted] course for relaxation techniques for our veterans so they can acclimate back to the institution. A lot of them come to us part-time, and we found that our success rate improves greatly when they [take] seven credits. It is a magic seven credits that allows them the maximum [VA] benefits.

Laura (age group 45 and older) changed majors a number of times. She started in one of the college's largest programs, switched to a cohort-based program, and later decided to major in one of the social sciences. She described her experiences in these different majors and stated that she only felt a part of the cohort-based program that was smaller than the other two programs:

> It was only when I was taking the classes for the [smaller] program. . . . There was much more of a sense that we all had a common goal. We were all either working in the field or had a core common thread. . . . Even though I'm in [social sciences], I don't know another person that is in that program, but they just transferred me into that program, too. . . . I really don't even know how many people are even involved in the program. I don't know whether they are moving on to a four-year degree or if it is even something that people who go to a two-year college are really interested in terms of business, or nursing, or something like that.

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Student attitudes toward faculty. Students noted that faculty members were available for help, and in some cases went above and beyond what was expected by providing personal contact information so that students could reach them, if needed. Lisa (age group 25–44) described the process of starting in one major, gaining some work experience, and then realizing that another major would allow her to advance more quickly in her career. She said:

> I never did speak to anyone as far as advising. I looked over the paper, I saw what I needed to do, and I just signed up and went to the registration to get the classes I needed. Once I switched over, that is when I started talking to Professor [deleted], which has been only in the past year.

Faculty play a critical role in classroom dynamics. Students said faculty are engaging and focused on content that students needed to understand. They also stressed that faculty tried to connect what students learned in class with current workforce needs. Shirley (age group 25–44) stated:

> Half of the time I don't even need my book because of the way that the instructor presents the material. It makes it easier hearing from them rather than reading it in a book. . . . Some people like the book, but I'm a hands-on type of learner. . . . [M]y instructor has a way of relating it to family or real-life situations.

Shirley also noted that one of her faculty members used analogies to teach complex material:

> That was her analogy, so when it came to writing my paper, as well as the test the following week, I remembered the [analogy] so I was able to give examples of what it meant in my own words. It helped, and I got a good score.

Nancy (age group 25–44) stated that the professors are interactive. Speaking about one in particular, she said:

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He makes it fun to learn. He doesn't have a problem answering questions. He loves the students to be interactive, and he gives quizzes. . . . Everybody is very interactive. The teacher loves having us have group discussions, and we talk and discuss problems that are going on. . . . He makes it extremely fun to learn. It's easy to retain the information. . . . We have three and a half maybe four weeks left of school, and I swear we just started. . . . Honestly, I wouldn't mind if classes did continue. I'm really enjoying my classes that much.

Similarly, Barbara (age group 25–44) referred to her professor as engaging: "The professor is great and he makes it a fun class. It doesn't feel like it is being drilled into me so I do like the new class material." Sandra (age group 45 and older) said:

My professor for [deleted], the way he set it up wasn't in a classic way of teaching. They kind of put a spin on it. The way they do it is they have conversations, they don't just lecture for hours. They make the students participate. They treat us like equals instead of, "I'm the professor and I'm teaching. Do not speak when I'm speaking."

Interactions with faculty outside the classroom were encouraged and were usually successful. Windy (age group 22–24) said that she was most satisfied with a professor who had one-on-one meetings and set up appointments to talk with students after class. Beverly (age group 45 and older) noted:

This particular professor is so available and makes himself available for any questions. He has given out his home number; he does conference calls when we had snow days. He has done that through the whole course so there is no excuse not to get extra help if you need it.

Helena (age group 18–21) said:

Factors that help are the accessibility to teachers in terms of e-mail or office hours. If ever I'm having difficulty in a course, I know at some point or other I can reach out and ask for help. That's what assisted me in completing it.

Maggie (age group 22–24) remarked:

> The faculty have been there when I needed help. They have always made themselves available. I truly felt like every professor that I have had has wanted to see their students succeed. They do everything that they can to make themselves available. Some teachers have given out cell phone numbers if you need to talk through something. That is probably the biggest factor for me that I can think of.

Marisa (age group 45 and older) stated:

> The most satisfied I have been has been with the faculty. They take into consideration that some of us have worked all day. They realize you're putting in two and one-half hours. There are times that you just can't make it in. They are pretty good about it. They'll bring you an extra set of notes the following week. My science teacher is excellent.

Some students had negative comments. They referred to faculty expectations and engagement in the classroom, which they viewed as negative experiences. Helena (age group 18–21) said:

> With my [deleted] course, it's a little bit more difficult. A lot of the reading he has us do should be pretty [easily] understood. But once again, I work outside of class so it's frustrating for me as a student to be given a boat-load of reading as if it weren't expected that we were doing anything else.

Another student commented on a professor who had some difficulty engaging students in the classroom. Elliot (age group 25–44) stated that the classroom atmosphere was not challenging enough and that student engagement was lacking:

> I don't believe it's challenging enough or the professor probably has a hard time dealing with the class itself for getting involvement. You get that feeling every time you walk in that class that no one wants to be there. You sit there like a deer in the headlights. You feel as if she is struggling to get involvement. I wouldn't say it's the professor. I'd say it's just the students themselves.

Course content. Students discussed the relevance of course content. Robert (age group 25–44) said: "In [deleted], you read things like Shakespeare that I would normally

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not pick up. That was interesting, too. To read some things that I never would have

picked up." Jose (age group 22–24) said: "I feel that all my classes up to this point have

reached what the class was supposed to focus on. I feel the professors have done a good

job of doing that." Sandra (age group 45 and older) agreed that the course content was

relevant:

> There is very little that I'm unsatisfied with. So far all the material that I've taken
> for [deleted] has been very useful for the future. I've kept all my books that are
> related to [deleted]. I feel as if they will be good material for when I am actually
> in the profession to go back and use.

Not all students, though, saw the relevance of what they were learning. Gary (age

group 18–21) stated that he did not see classwork relating to the real world and noted:

> I can't see [the relationship] to the real world—at least the classes I'm taking right
> now. . . . I'm taking math, English, Basic Algebra. Algebra, I can see how that can
> help, but some of the other stuff you learn, I don't know why they teach it. . . . It
> definitely makes you a better writer. There are not too many situations where I'll
> have to write an essay or anything like that. . . . Yes. It helps with writing, but I
> don't usually have to write an essay in that format.

Another student, Laura (age group 45 and older), said:

> To be honest, I know some of the courses are core requirements, and I understand
> that you have to be able to write and read and do some of the basic stuff. For an
> older student, if I can speak to that specifically, I think that a lot of the humanities
> requirements are pretty ridiculous and a waste of time. I'm 5[X] years old; my
> choices for humanities classes are fairly limited. Taking a dance class or a
> beginning piano class or a foreign language, I think that there needs to be leeway
> within those kinds of classes. We need something that doesn't feel like I'm just
> spending money or wasting financial aid money to do something that seems more
> of a hobby-type thing than an actual academic exercise. My goal is to do the
> academics and get to a point where I can get a better paying job. . . . I would
> much rather be taking something that is going to help me with the goal I have. Do
> you understand what I'm saying?

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Similarly, Sacha (age group 25–44) questioned the general education requirements of her

program and indicated that she could not understand why she had to take laboratory

sciences as requirements for her major:

> The two lab science classes that I have to take are not helping. I am not a science girl. I've left them for the very end so now I have to take one over the summer. I'm not thrilled about that. I don't know. . . . Yes, but honestly, I'm kidding. I understand why. I was telling someone at work that I didn't know why I had to take lab sciences when I'm a [deleted] major. She said it was the same reason why she had to take psychology and sociology, so get over it. Those classes were just as painful for her as the lab sciences are going to be for me.

Students commented on the pace of some courses; some were too fast and others

too slow. Jonah (age group 25–44) said he felt the pace was too fast: "I wish the math

would slow down a little bit." Jared (age group 22–24) stated that he needed hands-on

teaching rather than a self-paced class, and noted:

> The only thing I have a problem with is the [deleted] class. It's on the computer. It's not hands-on. It's self-paced. I'd rather have a teacher there instead of doing that. It's just the way I can learn. . . . There are a lot of kids who have been there since day one. In my first class, there were nine people when we first started, and now it's down to four.

Students' views on teaching methods. Students noted their preference for

classroom discussions rather than lectures. They found discussions more engaging and

felt that faculty treated them like adults.

While some students, particularly part-time day students, were able to participate

in out-of-class study groups, others like Helena (age group 18–21) who attended on the

weekend could not. She noted: "What might stop me as a part-time student is that it is

hard to make group times or study in groups because the association with people is very

minimal outside of class."

The current Hilo Strategic Plan stressed the importance of expanding experiential

education, and students supported this approach to learning. Pamela (age group 45 and

older) stated that her professor brought in guest speakers who discussed different places

where students could work:

> It is very nice to hear from those people. [The professor] knows everybody so it is much easier for her to bring in people to lecture. We had a [state agency] person talk to us last week. She has very, very good knowledge.

A full-time faculty member indicated that there is a big push for service learning:

> There are pretty sizeable numbers of students here who participate in service learning, and it does help with the engagement. I usually find folks who do their final essays after participating in service learning have changed their outlook in some way. . . . It is not a college requirement for most courses. There is one for [one program]. For their national accreditation, students have to do service learning.

An administrator noted that students need to make the connection between school and

work:

> When people think of [major], they think of being a [profession]. We need to expose them to the various opportunities that are there with a [major] degree. Their parents don't know, and they haven't exposed them. . . . We need to help them look at all the various things that are out there based on some of the things that they are interested in. I think we are doing a better job more and more. Those career interest inventories are going in that direction. They are looking at strengths, weaknesses, and interests. They are exposing students and showing them the various things that are out there.

Another administrator faulted colleges for not making the connection between the

world of work and what students are learning in the classroom:

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I know that we could say that it is just our part-time students, but it is really all of our students. Many of our students are working. They have multiple priorities. When I say that, I'm a little distressed, and always have been, that we talk about the fact that they work and somehow that is a detriment to them. I actually think we have just not figured out a way to make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and work that they are currently doing and applying that.

We had a [deleted] group that was working on a project where I asked them to look at how they could incorporate the work that the students were currently doing, whether it was at McDonald's or at an insurance agency or in retail, [with their coursework]. How they could use that [work experience] to span with what we are doing in the Institutional Learning Outcomes? Faculty were designing assignments that would help them talk about the world of work and how that relates to going to school.

I think one of the major impediments [to learning] is one that we have created. I don't think we've done a good enough job connecting the application of what they are learning in the classroom every day as they are getting their degree to the work that they are currently doing no matter what level, whether it is a low skills job or a middle skills job. I think there are ways for us to be making connections explicit to that so they see real value in what is happening in the classroom, and it doesn't feel so completely disconnected from their daily lives. Work is an issue.

Online technologies are increasingly used in courses. The Hilo Strategic Plan stressed expansion of online technology. A full-time faculty member who taught a weekend section made extensive use of technology by requiring students to use the college's learning management system to complete online assignments. Hilo has also infused online technology in services such as enrollment, advising, and orientation, as well as in the classroom.

A large percentage of part-time students are taught by adjunct faculty members (Cataldi et al., 2005; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2007a; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009)**.** At Hilo, some adjunct faculty work as staff at the college and take on teaching responsibilities as part of their jobs or as additional

jobs, and others work or have worked outside the institution and bring their external experience into the classroom.

One adjunct faculty member described herself as being slightly different from a "regular" adjunct; she was a full-time staff member who frequently taught a course. Another adjunct taught courses at both a private four-year college and Hilo Community College. This faculty member had considerable experience in a profession that was only loosely connected to the course being taught, but he was very interested in community college student development. He used his professional experience to create a club in which several students became actively involved and for which they received an award. He noted the college's philosophy about student involvement in activities and stated, "Everyone is concerned with retention of part-time or full-time students, but either way they need to get involved in something."

Information gleaned from Hilo's website described services available to adjunct faculty. Shared space was available for them in the library during regular hours of operation. Adjunct faculty were not required, as a provision of the collective bargaining contract, to advise students or hold office hours. One administrator described the challenges that part-time students encounter trying to connect with adjunct faculty, but highlighted the involvement of these faculty members in activities sponsored by the college. The administrator stated:

> Part-time students tend not to have the opportunity to take advantage of office hours of faculty members or to engage in the extracurricular cohort activities that a lot of full-time students can. Interesting enough, I found that a lot of our part-time faculty are advisors for clubs.

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Another administrator described steps being taken to bring adjuncts into the fold at Hilo through professional development opportunities:

> The majority of our teachers are adjunct. They, themselves, are not as engaged with the institution as are full-time faculty who also act as advisors. We are working on fixing that because we started a series of adjunct training sessions, where we talk to them about active learning, academic advising, and support services. We are training them on our "[deleted] Alert" program so that they feel more engaged and understand that they do have a responsibility to help the student outside of just teaching. We ask them to refer students to services as needed. We hope that will help them become more engaged.

The administrator explained that alert system training is covered during part of a 3-hour training session that was piloted just before I visited the college. The training session is part of a semester workshop adjuncts attend. Approximately 200 of the roughly 500 adjunct faculty had participated in the training program.

Academic Support Services and Co-Curricular Activities

Support services comprise two units that are integral to the college experience and to student success: (a) academic support services and (b) co-curricular activities.

The following discussion of academic support services is focused on three subthemes: (a) availability of support services, (b) student utilization of support services, and (c) student experiences with support services such as advising, tutoring, self-paced learning, computer labs, veterans' services, and transfer services. These services are directly related to and support classroom activities. Co-curricular activities include: clubs, college work-study, athletics, lecture series, and other college activities.

Hilo administrators were not in agreement on the college's success in providing

equal services to all students. Administrators discussed services available to evening and

weekend students. One administrator noted:

> We've got all the traditional services I would say for evening students. We have
> evening office folks that are here specifically on each campus, both [city] and
> [suburban] that are the essential locations for one-stop registration, faculty issues.
> There is an evening person here, and there is someone here on weekends as well
> to address part-time student issues. It is a little like a [continuing education]
> model but not exactly.

A second administrator agreed but made a few distinctions:

> We make almost all of our services available. Once again, this is hard for me
> because part-time day and part-time night have a little bit different access. Part-
> time day still have the services that are available to all students. For part-time day,
> we have a program that emanates out of our adult basic education program, which
> is called our [deleted] program. It is really marketed toward those students who
> have just finished [the Adult Basic Education] program and passed the test. They
> then have a part-time free program where they take two courses and get
> themselves into a freshman seminar and a regular math or science. It gives them a
> taste for regular classes and regular learning and then links them into the college
> so that they have some success. They see that they can do college-level courses,
> and they can come into the college and/or continue to go part-time.

The third administrator did not believe that any program or service was designated for

part-time students. Rather, part-time students could access the same programs and

services that were available for full-time students. She stated:

> Nothing is specifically geared toward part-time students. The services are geared
> to our student population—period. The only thing that I can say might be for them
> is the extended hours. . . . The advising office is open at all hours. We don't have
> specific programming for part-time students, not that I can think of. . . . We have
> a daytime program and an evening/weekend program. I would say that the
> evening/weekend program would be the part-time version. If you go to academic
> programs, sure, we have certificate programs. Any program can be completed by
> a part-time student. We have a new accelerated transfer program that is offered on
> the weekends only. That would be for part-time students.

Time and location played a significant role in students' utilization of support

services. Robert (age group 25–44) said he was taking classes at one location but the labs

were open only until 4 p.m. On the other campus, labs were open until 9 p.m. and when

exams were approaching, the labs were open on Sunday. Due to the distance between the

campuses it was too difficult for this student to take classes on the urban campus and use

the labs at the suburban campus. Robert noted:

> One thing I found out was there is nobody at night to help you. The labs close
> around 4 p.m. If you were a night student, you had to come during the day to get
> help if you needed it. After 4 p.m., there is no lab and nobody to help you. That
> was funny because on [suburban campus] it is a little bit different. They have their
> lab open on Fridays and there would be someone there until 9 p.m. . . .
> Sometimes, when people are going to graduate, they would even be open on
> Sunday. On Sundays, they would be open to about 4 p.m. The [city] campus was
> different. It was Monday through Friday until 4 p.m. [On the suburban campus],
> you got more support. You have to get up there. That is the hard part—getting up
> there on time.

One adjunct faculty member discussed the limitations of services provided in the

evening. She stated:

> If you work full-time during the day and you are coming once a week . . . those
> resources are probably not as available to you. Institutionally, staff probably all go
> home at 5 p.m. like a regular workday. They probably are not there in the
> evening.

Many new students said they had not yet taken advantage of the support services,

but planned to do so as exams and paper deadlines approached. Windy (age group 22–24)

stated that she was planning to get math help: "I haven't yet, but I've been planning to go

to a floor where there's a math tutor. I've been planning to go there for some math help."

Nancy (age group 25–44) made a similar comment:

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I do have one specific section of my algebra that I'm having a lot of trouble with. After class . . . I do plan on attending a tutoring session to get some help with that. They also have a tutoring section for people who have a harder time learning in a classroom setting where they have their own private individual section or one-on-one tutoring as opposed to one tutor helping four or five different people at once.

Jared (age group 22–24) stated that he planned to get math help:

Right now, I'm not doing any of that. I'm trying to get back to [an] A in my grades and the knowledge I know. . . . I haven't done it yet. My cousin was telling me about it though. . . . I'm going to have to do it for math really soon. The thing is trying to organize my schedule.

New students stated they had used or planned to use advising services to discuss transferring credits to another college. Charles (age group 18–21) had used the advising services, and Gary (age group 18–21) said that when he had earned a few more credits, he planned to get advice on transferring to another college. Elliot (age group 25–44) stated: "I haven't done any of those things except for advising. I met with my advisor probably about four times before I enrolled. [I did it] to get myself situated."

Students nearing graduation were likely to have used or be using advising, tutoring, reading, writing, and math labs. Some indicated they self-advised by following a guidance sheet from their program, and many students said they preferred to be advised by a faculty member rather than work with a general or assigned advisor.

Advising was the most often-discussed support service. Students stated that the individual who advises them makes a difference. Some students had an assigned advisor, others went to an advising center for help, and still others met with faculty members in their programs. Some of the supports they identified were related to the time they spent getting help with advising. Two older students, for example, mentioned spending a lot of

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time with an advisor because they were unfamiliar with the college environment, while a

third student mentioned meeting a couple of times per month with an advisor just stay on

track. Another student mentioned meeting with an advisor multiple times to work through

a specific issue. Shirley (age group 25–44) expressed:

> I usually look everything up online. As far as the advisors, I think I see them a couple of times a month. I'll just call them up with any little questions that I have. They are very, very helpful. If they don't know the answer, they will guide me in the right direction. They will tell me, "I'm not sure, but let me see what I can find out for you. I'll give you a call tomorrow." If they can't take care of it, they will refer me to someone who is able to. . . . I have one person that is assigned; however, when they are not available, there is always someone who is able to help. They always have a record of what and who I've talked to and what we've talked about.

Beverly (age group 45 and older) remarked:

> I did the advising when I decided to go back. I had no clue what I wanted to do or how to do it or anything so I used them, but other than that nothing. . . . I pretty much just needed to get into a course to get started. They helped me for quite a long time to help me decide what to take.

> Some students did not have favorable experiences with advising. One student

made his own decisions on what courses to take. Jose (age group 22–24) said:

> I did get some advising and finance help, but that was more toward the beginning. To be honest, I looked at what I needed to do and looked at my course requirements, and I took it upon myself rather than using an advisor. Honestly, I felt like the advising wasn't very helpful. . . . I just felt like there was no sense of understanding. It was more like, "Let's get this done because we have a time limit." I must say, though, in this last semester, I visited an advisor and had a couple of sessions with her. She was very helpful and encouraging.

Group advising was presented as an option to students, but at least one student did not

find it beneficial. Laura (age group 45 and older) said:

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I called to make an appointment, and they had me sign up for a group session. . . . I didn't find it helpful at all. I feel pretty lost when it comes to that aspect. I think that it would have been easier if the students were assigned a particular person. If you were required to check in with a particular person even once during the academic year to discuss where you are and where you are going and your expectations and plans. I don't think they provide that service. I get the feeling they are geared toward students who are English as a Second Language. That is something that I've seen. I don't feel like I've gotten any real assistance at all. I don't know their knowledge base, too. They were more like, "This is what you need to take, and just do it." They started me off in Liberal Arts. They never really discussed that with me. That was the beginning part of that. I straddled two programs. I was doing the [deleted] program and taking some classes so I could get my certificate for the [deleted]. I want to work in a [deleted] as a backup plan for myself. I've done a little of that as well as changing over to psychology. That was all my doing and my knowing where I needed to go. . . . I did it by talking to other people, mostly colleagues from work, but not from the school and not from professors. . . . I just used the sheet of paper that they give you that tells you what classes you need to figure out what to take.

Another complaint was that weekend help was not available. Marisa (age group 45 and older) said:

I'd have to go during the mornings because on weekends your advisors aren't there. Many of the teachers were part-time faculty and were never around on the weekends. They are only there during the day, and I'd have to wait for a day to come up at work when I wasn't working those particular hours so that I could go.

Students complained of a waiting list and the fact that it could take up to an hour to be able to meet with someone. Another student lamented about being misadvised and having registered for the wrong course. Windy (age group 22–24) stated that advisers gave her incorrect course information:

In my [deleted] class, I find it difficult because it was originally an honors class, but there weren't enough honors students, so they accepted regular students into it. Our professor grades us more leniently, but there are some honors students in there. . . . She grades honors students differently and gives them a little more work than the rest of us. If we have to write a paper, we have 2–3 pages, and they will have to write 4–5 pages. . . . I was in the class for a few weeks and then one of my classmates told me [that the class was mixed with honors and regular students]. I was telling my classmate that the class was kind of difficult for me to understand. She said right from the beginning that she teaches differently.

When [the faculty member] started teaching and giving us extra time, I realized that it was a little difficult. . . . I missed the first day of class, and I guess that's when she told all the students. When I went to register for the classes, the lady that put me in the class did not inform me that the class was on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She just told me it was on Thursday, so when Tuesday came, I missed it and went on Thursday. My professor said that I had missed the class, and I didn't even realize it.

Part-time students often take courses to fit their schedules rather than following the sequence in which courses are recommended to be taken. Students and administrators noted that an academic plan—one that is readily accessible to students—would be helpful when selecting courses. According to administrators, an academic plan would help students stay on track with the courses the need to graduate. Hilo Community College supplemented its advising program with an online degree audit tool that enables a student to print out an academic plan for his/her academic program and to do a "what if" analysis to see how the requirements would change if he/she transferred into another program. In interviews with student participants, especially weekend students, they indicated that they wanted to have a written plan that would guide them in selecting their courses and identifying the courses that they still needed to take. They said a written plan would be a great help, because getting appointments with advisors was very difficult and the advisors

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frequently did not have the information they needed to help students select the right courses.

Most students at Hilo were aware of free tutoring services. However, most new students did not take advantage of this. If they received a poor grade, they hoped that some support service would be available to help them improve, but the benefit of tutoring services was not as great if they came only after they had done poorly on a test or in a course. The few new students who had taken advantage of tutoring services found it had been a helpful experience. Although most new students did not avail themselves of this opportunity, those who were approaching graduation were more likely to use them.

Amelia (age group 25–44) stated that she was very satisfied with the access she had to her tutor and her instructor:

> They have a tutor and a teacher. I've gone on a Wednesday night to make up a test and the way they ran the class was a whole lot different from how they are running the class on Saturday. . . . The tutor actually works with you one-on-one. They don't try to rush you through the problem.

Shirley (age group 25–44) described a tutoring experience that took place in her class with a fellow student:

> Last semester, I had a hard time in one of my classes, and they always told me that tutoring was available and the times and contact numbers. They [make resources] available [so you can get help]. Right now, a student in one of my classes almost dropped out because she was having a difficult time. She sat down with the instructor one-on-one, and they were able to work something out. Now [before] class she comes a little earlier and there is always somebody there who guides her through it. . . . This person seems to be a student as well. Maybe they understand the material better, but they have the time to sit with her a little bit to guide her through it [and] keep her where she needs to be.

Monica (age group 25–44) discussed student access to the writing lab:

> Sometimes it is [open] during the day and sometimes you have to be on the waiting list so they can call you. If you want half an hour, you have to wait sometimes. . . . If you want to see someone at 1 p.m., they can see you at 1:30 p.m. because someone is ahead of you. Sometimes a lot of students need to see them so it is difficult to see all the students who need them so you have to wait. . . . I just go maybe three days before the paper is due so I can retype it if I need to. Sometimes when I do one paper, I don't have to go the writing center because the grammar is correct.

She added:

> When I have big papers, I want to have a second opinion. I have used the people to help me out with some papers. Sometimes, [though], I have difficulty at the writing center when the person I am sitting with is reading aloud.

Sacha (age group 25–44) mentioned the skills of the staff in the writing lab:

> I felt that the tutors that were working in the writing lab knew what they were talking about. One woman was a retired schoolteacher. She had been a schoolteacher for 30 years or something. Another one was an English major, and never for a second in my life did I think she didn't know what she was talking about. I'm a strong writer, so there was never a situation where they were tearing my paper apart. They would tell me it was good work, "but maybe you could clarify this a bit more," or "What do you think about this?" It was always presented in a very positive way. . . . There were times that I was in and out, and there were times where I spent an extra half an hour in the writing lab just talking to the tutor about what I want to do and what I want to be and things of that nature. They were very casual. I've brought my kids in there, and they were fine with that, too. There was never an attitude about bringing them with me. I would recommend the lab to anybody that I know.

A few students indicated they had visited the math labs. Tio (age group 18–21) stated he used tutoring: "I go to the math help center twice a week to try to get better grades." Another new student, Phoebe (age group 25–44), stated that sometimes she uses the math lab:

I did go to one math tutoring session to prepare for the math exam. It was a classroom setting where a few of us were going over the math part of the exam. Those were the only two times I've used any of the services.

Luann (age group 18–21) said: "Whenever I didn't understand something, they could explain it to me in a way that I could understand." Marisa (age group 45 and older) said: "Yes, I would say they did that well. Even with Algebra . . . they didn't rush me at all. They made time to sit there and talk to me. I felt better afterwards." Jonah, also new (age group 25–44), stated he does not go to the math lab enough:

I've gone to the math lab a few times, but other than that I haven't really done anything with the resources because I just started. I already know what I want to do. I want to get into the graphics program. I want to get my associate's and maybe move on to my bachelor's in graphics.

Students enrolled in self-paced learning courses were satisfied with the experience, and two new students indicated that they preferred self-paced classes.

Carolyn, a new student (age group 18–21), described her experiences:

In the self-paced [course], you're on your own. You only get help when you need to. . . . The self-paced are better for me because I need to focus on the class, and I need to make sure that I pass. . . . Last week, I had two research papers due. . . . I couldn't [hand] in my other paper because I could only focus on one paper. You don't lose credit for not [turning] it in because you don't have a timeline. . . . Yes, she gives you timelines like it should or ought to be done by a certain date, but if you don't, you don't get any credit taken away but make sure you get it done. It's really good for me.

Amelia, also new (age group 25–44), said she preferred self-paced classes: "I actually like the part where it's self-paced and you learn on your own." One administrator described the self-paced program:

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We also have something called the [self-paced] program, where a student who finds that they are part-time and they need to add a course in the semester and they want to do it at a different pace can enter the [self-paced] program to assist them with completing a semester successfully. For example, a part-time student is in three classes and decides that they need to drop one of these classes in a traditional classroom mode. They can shift the course to the [self-paced] program and do it at their own pace with an instructor that has a different grading structure. It is not available for all classes, but it is available for a lot of our gateway classes—Composition I or Developmental English or Introduction to Psychology. There are alternative ways to complete the courses in which the student is having difficulty.

New students were in only the planning stages regarding transfer issues. Sacha (age group 25–44) said:

I think that starting next semester is when I'm going to need a lot of those support services because I'm going to need to talk to a transfer advisor to help me get all my paperwork in line for my transfer.

Administrators noted that the college did not have enough transfer counselors, and the few they had were burdened by needing to discuss issues such as finances, grades, and maturity levels of students, rather than transfer itself. One administrator described some students as "kids who are not 100% sure of what they want to do." Administrators noted that when students who planned to transfer met with advisers, they frequently had not completed the block of courses needed for transferring to public baccalaureate colleges.

One administrator said that transfer advising was one area where students may not get all of the help they need. The administrator indicated that she sends students who want to transfer to the transfer advisor at the appropriate campus, knowing, however, that with the large of number of students who need help and the single transfer advisor on campus, not all students will get the level of assistance that is truly necessary. She said

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the fact that the college has many articulation agreements does help the transfer process.

She also noted that students are advised to follow their program sheets, but that advisors

try not to be prescriptive about the courses:

> If you want to be a [deleted] major take—your English, your math, blah, blah, blah. . . . We need to be better about giving them a breakdown like take these two courses or these three courses or prescribe them. We stay away from prescribing because we want them to have their individuality, but I think it is really confusing.

According to a second administrator, part-time students may not be aware of transfer

policies:

> Part-time students [in the transfer process] don't necessarily see that there have been real barriers other than as they move through they are not aware of transfer and the benefits they would have completing blocks of courses. A lot of our part-time students choose to leave the institution before they complete something. I think there is a whole subset of students coming to us saying things like, "I'm going to complete 12 credits because that is what I need to do or 24 credits because that is what I need to do to get into [the local university]." That is their goal. Sometimes, even when dealing with advising, we tend to really want to push this idea about completion because of all kinds of external pressures that we have. . . . Traditionally more full-time students complete the [statewide transfer program]. That is what we are seeing. Part-time students by their nature need to look at how to put their part-time credits together and how it is done [so that their credits are accepted].

A third administrator noted that students need to understand the transfer contracts and the

grades that they need in order to transfer. She acknowledged that some students try to

transfer too early, before they have completed all of their general education requirements.

Co-curricular activities. Involvement in co-curricular activities facilitates both

student engagement and sense of belonging. At Hilo, some of the typical comments

reported by students were that the college blanketed the campus with announcements

about activities. There was one student, however, who did not feel as though staff tried to

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get students involved. Robert (age group 25–44) said posters and flyers didn't achieve the

goal of students becoming involved:

> I see posters and flyers on the wall. I never felt like anybody came around to ask if I wanted to try anything. . . . If you need help, they will tell you that there is a lab upstairs. If you need to figure out if there are activities, you have to look for it yourself. . . . The teachers would tell you. You start off and they tell you what is upstairs and the different departments. That was for help. I think if the question was about activities other than help, I didn't see too much unless somebody really recommended it. From my point of view, I never saw much about activities.

Two students noted that distance was an impediment for them. Jen (age group 25–

44) said: "It's hard for me to participate in activities at Hilo because of the travel. It's

tough because of location and convenience for me." Lisa (age group 25–44) similarly

described her circumstances noting that once she leaves the campus, she does not want to

return because of the distance:

> They send out e-mails. They put posts all over, like in the bathrooms. I don't know, I think they do the best that they can, but everybody is so busy. As far as I'm concerned, I go to school and take a class to learn, I do my homework, and I get out. I don't have time to go to games or movies. I really don't have the time. It's far away. . . . I think they try to have similar things that are happening because it is a bigger campus. The distance for me is too much. I don't want to go to school again if I don't have to, even if it is something that I would have enjoyed doing.

Marisa (age group 45 and older) described the time conflicts that exist in her life:

> Like I said, I'm not there during the day. A lot of the different activities they do we can't be included in because we are going to school or we are working. They get the day off on certain holidays. If we have a night class, we still have to go.

Some students, particularly those attending in the evening, did not feel as though

staff were trying to promote activities in the evening. Another evening student, Laura

(age group 45 and older) said: "Short of seeing things posted on the bulletin boards or

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walking into the building and seeing something posted, I wouldn't know what was going on there."

Students at Hilo who did participate in co-curricular activities mentioned that they were members of clubs whose purpose and activities were related to their academic programs, they were members of multicultural clubs, or they wrote for the student newspaper. Students indicated that some clubs met at "off" times making it somewhat easier for students to participate. At Hilo, finding adequate space for clubs to meet was a problem.

An administrator described some of the activities that were popular among part-time students:

> We have a very active international center where part-time students gravitate to be with other part-time students because of the subpopulations. It is sort of a drop-in place. . . . It is not just our full-time students. It is really a lot of part-time students who have found that to be a place where they engage with faculty and staff in a way that is meaningful. We have had a lot of events that end up being weekend events in the last year. A lot of times part-time students will engage with faculty in those activities. We had a one-credit [program deleted] weekend that we created. We had a lot of part-time students take advantage of that—about 85 students took part in the Friday/Saturday/Sunday thematic weekend.
>
> It started a long time ago when students didn't have their one-credit science as a lab credit. I liked the concept a lot so we recreated it this year for the [XX] anniversary. The theme was sustainability. Students came on Friday night. They met with faculty, and they ate with faculty. We had faculty from various disciplines create the weekend and be involved. They got a real interdisciplinary approach to a topic but in a very short condensed period of time with a lot of engagement with faculty. The faculty were facilitators in small-group discussions. They were engaged in small-group discussions in a way that was meaningful. I don't know that there is any one pattern that happens, but it is harder for students to connect with faculty when they are part-time and not on campus as much as the faculty.

One student, Tio (age group 18–21), said his motivation for attending college was

to take part in athletics, and he did not receive enough scholarship-related aid to continue

at the four-year institution that he attended prior to Hilo:

> I'm a basketball player and a baseball player, but I don't know which avenue I'm
> going to take yet. I'm leaning toward baseball right now. I went to prep school for
> basketball, and I played basketball in [other country]. That's why I was at the
> University of [deleted], just to play basketball. I've always wanted to be involved
> with business as well, so that another reason why I'm in school.

An administrator indicated that some students find a niche through clubs and

sports and programs that have cohorts, such as allied health programs.

> We have part-time day students who are finding (and some night students but
> much fewer) programs on campus and are getting involved in some of the student
> activities programs. We are increasing our clubs. We have a lot of part-timers
> who connect into the clubs and club sports. We don't have sports at Hilo which is
> a detriment, to me. . . .
> 　　　We are developing our club sports, which has been very successful. We
> find the club sports aren't as intimidating so that you find folks who might have
> been kids who played sports but weren't the best athlete in their high school
> having success from that aspect. That will help them feel more connected. . . . The
> diversity of that [clubs] banquet and the diversity of the age and part-time/full-
> time committed students was overwhelming. I've been going to that affair for
> [several] years, and the other night was the most amazing one that I have ever
> seen. . . . Those are the things that just blow your mind. This woman found a
> niche. She got involved with clubs. She got involved on campus and felt
> connected. Unless we are finding a way to grab their attention, I don't feel that
> they feel connected.

One student enjoyed listening to speakers on campus. Maggie (age group 22–24)
said:

> I know that the college makes an effort to reach out to its students with
> newsletters and flyers and programs that they are doing or guest speakers. I have
> gone to see a few speakers in the past couple of years. I went to a [deleted]
> lecture. . . . It was an amazing talk. I wish I could remember the guy's name. Of
> course, I am blanking on it. I thought it was really cool, and I was really happy
> that my school was doing that. People from all over came to listen to him. . . . I

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had a good time. I brought a friend. I know that the school is having a speaker come in to speak next week. That is something that I would probably want to see. I like her. I like that the school does a lot of events like that where you have the opportunity to go and listen to people from different walks of life. We can learn from their experiences.

Other college activities. By and large, if students did participate in other college activities, they took part in student government or in departmental clubs. Students also expressed interest in and/or participated in other college activities. One student was interested in game tournaments but realized it would take away from his study time. Meeting times were an issue for many students. Joseph (age group 22–24) stated that he sees tables in the lobby, but doesn't have enough time:

> I see certain things happening, and I'd love to get even more involved, but right now work prevents that at the moment. Next semester I plan on cutting down on my work hours and getting into a few more classes so I won't have to worry about when they are available.

Elliot (age group 25–44) expressed interest in being in a Scrabble tournament, but said:

> I don't want to get sidetracked too much. I'm here to learn. Scrabble is a learning experience and a fun game [but] I want to stay on track as much as possible. I tend to drift. I'm a drifter.

A number of students mentioned that they are just too busy to take part in activities, despite the fact that announcements about activities are made. Anna (age group 25–44) noted: "There are tons of posters and flyers for things that are going on. If I had the time, I might do some of it, but I don't." She continued:

> Some of the things they have to offer, I just don't have the time to fit it into my schedule. I have to take a whole week after school to do some retraining so I don't lose my license. Trying to fit that into my schedule was out of control…. Taking time off from work to attend a rally or function is hard. I don't have a social life, so I don't really utilize any of the activities the school has.

Adult part-time students tend to form connections to other classmates and with

faculty through involvement in weekend events. In addition, certain programs are noted

for high engagement. An administrator described one:

> Our [protective services] program advises all its own students. Because those
> faculty members are assigned all of their own students, there is a lot of
> engagement in that program. There is a lot of engagement in the part-time [health
> sciences] program. There is a lot of engagement in some of the allied health
> programs for our part-time students.

Administrators were asked to describe interactions that part-time students have

with the college as a whole. The above administrator noted that part-time students are

engaged in several activities on campus:

> We have a lot of part-time students that sit on student government. We have a lot
> of part-time students that are engaged in . . . a leadership institute here. We have a
> lot of part-time students in the [sports-related] club. There is a pretty good
> outreach here in terms of co-curricular activities for part-time students. Many of
> the co-curricular clubs meet at odd times. We don't have a community time here.
> On some campuses they have Wednesdays from 12–2 p.m. [for community time].
> At Hilo, we are too flat out in the schedule. We've tried to have a community time
> where there are no classes held, but we have never been successful.
>   Interestingly enough, the outcome of that is that a lot of these clubs and
> groups meet at [times other than] 12–2 p.m. We get more part-time involvement
> because of that. I'm not going to say that [the flexibility in meeting time is
> directly related to involvement], but my experience has been that there is more
> part-time involvement here than I have seen at other places. At every other place
> that I have worked, they have had this community time or activity time. We do
> that because we think it is a good thing to do and it is smart, but one of the
> byproducts of not having it here is that groups have been able to form their own
> timeframes to meet. Our [honor society] group meets at 7 p.m. on Wednesday
> [city campus] every other week. They came up with that time themselves. It is not
> a community time. It is essentially a convenient time.
>   There are some pretty good engagement opportunities with the institution.
> I would also say that there was a tremendous effort during the [XX] anniversary
> to reach out to part-time students for speakers and for events and for give-away
> tickets. With students, if it is free, they will take it. It depends on what kind of
> outreach we have for students with what is available.

An adjunct faculty member indicated that part-time students do not typically

engage in a lot of activities:

> My thought would be as a part-time person and learning outside of the traditional day-to-day, I'm thinking they probably don't have the traditional things. They don't join a club and they don't go to an event and they don't have all that stuff.

Lisa (age group 25–44) added that she feels a part of the overall community but

not a part of any group because she has not been able to join a group whose meeting

times match her availability:

> I have never had the time to join the extra stuff available because of the schedule that I have. . . . I think there is an age gap there. I'm not saying that every organization is like that, but it tends to be like that once you get into it. The ones that I wanted to do, I just couldn't do it. . . I couldn't make it to any of the meetings because I had classes.

The next and final section of this case study includes two vignettes that reflect the

experiences of students who attended Hilo prior to the start of the study, but left before

earning a credential.

Vignettes of Former Students

This case study included student participants who were no longer enrolled at Hilo. One

student had transferred to a four-year university, and the other did not officially

withdraw. They are included in the case study because their comments contribute to a

greater understanding of student experiences, and they highlight problems that explain

why students could not or did not persist at the community college.

Former Student Who Transferred

Sadie (age group 18–21) was a female, Asian student. She enrolled in college immediately after high school and was a part-time student in summer 2009. At the end of the summer term, Sadie transferred to a four-year public university having achieved her goal of completing two courses at Hilo. She had never planned to complete a degree at Hilo, but did plan on earning a bachelor's and a master's degree. Her parents had some community college experience. She was employed at the time of the interview and reported that she had other siblings living at home. She found the cost of attending Hilo somewhat difficult and relied on her own income, savings, grants, scholarships, and student loans to pay her tuition.

Sadie attended college part-time because she wanted to take a couple of science courses and labs during the summer. She indicated that she selected Hilo because it was close to home and relatively inexpensive. Regarding her decision to transfer, she indicated that she was planning on attending the local university and had taken these summer courses to get them out of the way.

Sadie was satisfied with the academic characteristics of the college, and she liked the cleanliness of the labs. However, she did find the pace to be very fast. Sadie did not use Hilo's support services, but studied by herself or with classmates. She did take advantage of the library; she visited three times each week for several hours at a time. She said the books she needed were available there and the availability of computers for student use was a nice bonus. She learned how to find what she needed on her own.

Sadie did not feel connected to the college but she did feel a connection to other students in her courses. While many of the students who were enrolled during the summer session attended other colleges during the academic year, she became friends with students in her Hilo classes.

Although currently enrolled as a full-time university student, she appreciated the small class sizes at Hilo and would attend on that basis again. She thought that the summer course schedule worked well for her providing time for both work and school. She said that the pace of course work during the summer was very fast and did not believe that attendance in every class should be mandatory. She felt that faculty were too strict in mandating attendance.

Former Student Who Did Not Officially Withdraw

Naomi (age group 45 and older) was a female, White, non-Hispanic/Latina student who attended Hilo part-time in fall 2009. She graduated from high school in the 1980s, attended college for a short time in the early 2000s, and later enrolled in a certificate program. Naomi did not officially withdraw from Hilo Community College. On her profile sheet, she indicated that had earned more than 60 credits at Hilo. While she had not returned within the timeframe specified for this study, she eventually did return, earned a certificate, and attained her educational goal, while working 21–30 hours per week. She did not have children or other dependents living with her. She found the cost of attending Hilo somewhat difficult but earned an income to pay for her college expenses. Naomi attended college part-time and worked part-time at a fast food franchise.

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She enrolled at Hilo because of its proximity to her house, but left Hilo when she moved out of her parent's house because she needed more income. Naomi was satisfied with the academic courses at Hilo. Prior to enrolling she had never used a computer or acquired computer skills. She successfully completed a developmental math course and used the college's disability services.

Naomi said she was not a good fit with the college; she "felt too old to be there." This lack of fit was the reason it took her so long to complete a program. She did get to know some younger students and became friends with someone who was about 35. Naomi indicated she spent about 4 to 5 hours per week interacting with faculty and/or peers and using educational resources at the college.

She stated that the school had reached out to her. Faculty saw that she needed help and encouraged her to seek academic support services. She did not feel that any institutional factors prevented her from achieving success. She reported that part-time students should be encouraged to ask for help.

Findings Related to Theoretical Frameworks

Sense of Belonging

At Hilo, the three administrators believed that students did develop a sense of belonging through contact with other individuals. One administrator noted that on a recent college survey 85% of students said they had connected with a faculty member, an advisor, or a member of the student activities staff.

Full-time faculty felt that a sense of belonging was developed in a cohort model of education but because Hilo was "a commuter school," opportunities for students to develop a sense of belonging were limited. One adjunct faculty member agreed with this comment. A second adjunct faculty member saw the role of adjuncts as important in helping students to develop a sense of belonging, and believed this happens when they have a course with a "caring instructor or professor that really gives them attention."

Three items from the CCSSE (2005–2012) survey were used to evaluate student relationships with their peers, instructors, and administrative personnel. The results are shown in Table 6. The first question on peer relationships had a direct relationship to sense of belonging. The second and third focused on students' getting help from faculty and staff.

Table 6

Quality of Relationships at Hilo Community College

		New			Nearing graduation	
Variable	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Quality of relationships with students	17	5.59	1.06	13	5.15	1.28
Quality of relationships with instructors	17	5.88	1.00	13	6.23	.60
Quality of relationships with administrative personnel and offices	17	4.88	1.54	13	4.77	1.59

At Hilo, the quality of relationships with instructors was not as high for new students as it was for students nearing graduation, and for this latter group the quality of their relationships with faculty rose to the top of the scale. This is perhaps an indication that the longer a student remained at Hilo, their relationships with faculty became more important than those with peers.

Student Engagement

There was little consensus among administrators and faculty on whether students were engaged. Administrators believed students were engaged academically, but not socially. Faculty stated that while students used the library, it was unclear whether they were engaged in educationally purposeful activities—that is, if they were using computers for academic work or enjoyment. Some Hilo students knew that they needed to study several hours in addition to class hours, if they were going to be successful.

Sadie (age group 18–21), the former student who transferred, said she went to the library after her classes. Because she was a summer student she was not provided with any orientation, but found the library on her own and considered it a "good" library. Naomi (age group 45 and older), the second of the two former students, said she needed services from the disabilities services office. The office reached out to her to provide what she needed. Although she withdrew, she ultimately returned to the college and earned a certificate.

At Hilo, the following views were expressed: Students were satisfied with most information they received from advising and liked getting answers to questions,

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especially if they hadn't been able to initially connect with someone who could help them. Students who had been misadvised expressed frustration, as did students who felt rushed during advising sessions.

New students said they had rarely used support services, but planned to do so in the future. Students nearing graduation indicated that when they needed help, they managed to find the time to access support services. Some students noted that faculty built a variety of learning and support activities into their syllabi, such as using library resources. Students also responded to questions on service learning and their use of academic advising/planning.

New weekend students (2 students; 66%) took developmental reading and math courses. All day students nearing graduation took part in service learning and one also participated in learning communities. Two students in this same group were members of the honors program.

One new day student participated in a study skills course and most evening students nearing graduation made use of advising services. Less than half of the evening students nearing graduation were involved in cooperative education, and only two students nearing graduation had attended an orientation program.

Formation of Information Networks

Karp et al. (2008) defined information networks as "social ties that facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge and procedures" (p. 8). At Hilo, younger students had not formed strong information networks with peers, and several indicated they did not

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have long-lasting relationships. Some older students said they appreciated having older students in their classes because they were struggling and trying to balance many priorities in their lives. They hoped that they could learn from one another. Students felt faculty were available and engaging in the classroom.

The few students who attended orientation said they learned about the institution and support services that were available to them. They complained, however, that orientation was held off campus, and if they did not go on a tour they did not know where key offices were located. At the orientation sessions, some students said that they felt rushed when meeting with advisors. Others, however, stated they had established solid relationships with advisors and saw them throughout the semester.

Intersectionality

Monica (age group 25–44) came to the United States in the early 2000s. In her native country, she had studied accounting at a university. She was advised by a friend that a community college would be a good start for her. Her friend indicated that going to a university in the United States would "be a bit too much." Monica had to retake some courses for her current program. She indicated that she sometimes goes to the writing center, but it is often noisy, and she finds it difficult to concentrate there. She indicated that the courses she needs are sometimes offered at the campus that is further away for her. Due to transportation problems, she often has to put her studies on hold while she waits for classes to be offered at the campus that is closer to her home. Monica was not working at the time of interview and was taking day classes. She mentioned that when

she had taken evening classes in the past, she returned home after the children were already asleep. She was uncomfortable with this situation.

Summary of Findings From Both Case Studies

The summary of the case studies findings are presented using an adapted version of Kuh et al.'s (2006) framework for student success that builds on "four broad, overlapping categories" (p. 51). While Kuh's framework presented the positive factors that enhance student experiences, this dissertation research explored both positive factors, including structural and organizational characteristics, programs and practices, teaching and learning approaches, and student-centered campus cultures—supports—and negative factors—impediments—that influence student success. For each college, Table 7 presents information on the college conditions and factors that support student success in each of the three themes and the related subthemes identified in this study. Table 8 identifies the impediments within each theme and subtheme. Categories that are italicized reflect differences between or unique aspects of the two colleges. The information summarized in Table 7 and Table 8 will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

Table 7

Institutional Conditions That Served as Supports to Student Success

Acme	Hilo
Teaching and learning approaches (T&L)	
Structural and organizational characteristics (SOC)	
Programs and practices (P&P)	
Student-centered campus cultures (SCCC)	

Theme 1: Communication

Print and electronic communication

Receiving email from faculty. (T&L)

Younger students prefer college website. (ACME) (SOC)

Students of all ages check website. (HILO) (SOC)

Full-time faculty use website for communicating with students. (T&L)

Students could get advising help online. (P&P)
Monthly calendar posted around campus and in restrooms. (SOC)
Evening and weekend students found calendars helpful. (SOC)
Advertising notebook: Administrators say that faculty distribute it in class. (SOC)

Interpersonal communication

Open gathering places such as the cafeteria for playing computer games,
guitar, having holiday events, and having coffee with faculty. (ACME) (SCCC)

Open gathering places such as area with large screen TV with constant display
of reminders, events, and other pertinent information attract students. (HILO) (SCCC)

Cafeteria is open on Saturday, making it easy for students to meet with others. (ACME) (SCCC)

Large bank of vending machines available.
Restaurants nearby where students can gather. (HILO) (SCCC)

Acme	Hilo
Athletics enabled students to form peer connections. (ACME) (SCCC)	
	Club sports enabled students to form peer connections. (HILO) (SCCC)
Students felt that faculty provided them with information on departmental activities including academic clubs and support services. (SOC)	
Faculty made announcements in class. (SOC)	
	Students involved in international center. (SCCC)
	Students felt that faculty were available to meet with them. (T&L)
	English courses promoted communication among peers. (T&L)
	Key offices are off the lobby. (SOC)

Orientation

Students who attended orientation said they learned about programs and services. (P&P)

Experimenting with online orientation. (ACME) (P&P)

Experimenting with online orientation for specific populations, e.g., veterans. (HILO) (P&P)

Theme 2: Classroom dynamics

Age—Students seek out students with similar characteristics; students liked that they recognized peers from other college classes. (ACME)

Older students comfortable with students of all ages. (HILO)

Small class size and cohort-based programs were appealing to students. (P&P)

Classroom helped students to develop sense of belonging. (T&L)

Students felt faculty were available and competent. (T&L)
Students were able to meet with faculty. Faculty gave out personal phone numbers and arranged for conference calls during inclement weather. (T&L)

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Acme	Hilo
	Students appreciated out of class experiences. (T&L)

Students felt material was relevant. (ACME) (T&L)

Faculty helped students connect what they were learning with what was happening in the workforce.

Students benefitted from guest speakers and had opportunities for service learning and internships. (HILO) (T&L)

Students preferred discussion to lecture method. (T&L)

Students found learning communities and technology engaging. (T&L)

Younger students receptive to technology. (T&L)

Faculty served as advisors and got to know students well. (T&L)

Adjunct faculty had access to a host of professional development activities. (SOC)

Theme 3: Support services

Academic support services

Students received help in math and English. (ACME) (P&P)

Students received help from advisors, tutors, math lab, writing lab, self-paced learning, and transfer advisors. (HILO) (P&P)

Advising used by all. (P&P)

Preferred faculty advisors. (P&P)

Wanted academic plan. (P&P)

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Acme	Hilo

Writing lab was helpful especially for students who have been away from school for a while. (P&P)
Veterans' services. (P&P)
Advising office handled transfer matters. (P&P)
Support services were available during the day. (P&P)
Students liked to see the same advisor over time. (P&P)
Students gained a clear direction after seeing advisor. (P&P)

Co-curricular activities
Academic clubs. (P&P)

Exercise clubs. (P&P)
Want age-specific activities. (P&P)
Work-study. (P&P)

Student government. (P&P)
Multicultural activities (P&P)
Clubs, organizations, work-study, lectures, and family-based weekend activities. (P&P)

Table 8

Institutional Conditions That Served as Impediments to Student Success

Acme	Hilo

Teaching and learning approaches (T&L)
Structural and organizational characteristics (SOC)
Programs and practices (P&P)
Student-centered campus cultures (SCCC)

Theme 1: Communication

Print and electronic communication

Overloaded with flyers and emails. (SOC)

Posted material out of date. (SOC)

Interpersonal communication

Expectation that older students should know how to carry out tasks involving registration and financial aid. (SOC)

*Students had to make many trips to campus to complete
paperwork; wanted to know in advance what paperwork
was needed. (SOC)
Students believed staff needed cross-training. (SOC)
Older students want face-to-face communication. (SOC)
Students missed out on important information dispensed
at orientation.
Full-time faculty and administrators confirmed that
students do not attend. (P&P)
Those who did not attend received printed material but
would have preferred personal contact. (SOC)*

Acme	Hilo
	Cafeteria was open for limited hours; vending machines were not available when functions were scheduled. (SCCC)
	Math labs were computer-based and did not promote communication. (SOC)
	Adjunct faculty do not have offices. (SOC)

Orientation

Some students saw orientation as optional, some as mandatory. (ACME) (P&P)

Orientation viewed as an open house. (HILO) (P&P)

Students miss out on important information dispensed at orientation.
Full-time faculty and administrators confirmed that students do not attend. Faculty and staff say that part-time students are unlikely to attend and gain information, some of which may be correct and some of which may be wrong. (P&P)
Those who did not attend received printed material but would have preferred personal contact. (SOC)
Dual-enrollment students miss out.

Many evening and weekend students did not go through orientation. (P&P)
Student felt rushed through the process. (P&P)
Orientation held off-campus, which made it difficult to relate to where offices were on campus (P&P).

Theme 2: Classroom dynamics

No time for group projects outside of class. (T&L)

Adjunct faculty did not have office space or office hours or do advising. (SOC) (P&P)

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Acme	Hilo
Some students did not find material relevant; questioned relevance of humanities. (ACME) (T&L)	
	Questioned relevance of writing; thought algebra related to real world. (HILO) (T&L)
Older students felt that younger students were not serious about their work; disciplinary problems got in the way of their learning.	
Older students were resentful they were paying for college while younger students' parents paid for them to retake courses.	
Language barriers with faculty were sometimes a problem. (T&L)	
There were too many computer platforms. (T&L)	
Older students were not as comfortable with technology, especially with the learning management system. (T&L)	
Students felt that some courses should only be offered online and others should not be online at all. (T&L)	
	Younger students had little time to develop relationships with other students. There was too much reading in one class and in another class professor had trouble engaging students. (T&L)

Theme 3: Support services

Academic support services

Providing equal services was a resource issue. (ACME) (P&P)

Administrators offered somewhat inconsistent views of support services:
equal services, almost all services available for part-time students, available but students had to seek them out.

Library hours did not match classes. (HILO) (P&P)

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Acme	**Hilo**

New students, in particular, were in the planning stage and did not seek help early on from many college services.

Lack of transfer staff. (P&P)

Advising staff size was not sufficient. (P&P)
Misadvised to take courses they did not need. (P&P)
Tutoring not helpful. (P&P)
Group tutoring not helpful. (P&P)
Students confused job placement with career counseling.
(P&P)

Lack of advising for weekend students. (P&P)
Students did not like the long wait for writing help. (P&P)
Noise level in writing lab was too high. (P&P)
Group advising not helpful. (P&P)

Co-curricular activities

Not much time for activities. (P&P)

Would have liked Scrabble tournaments but not really enough time. (SCCC)

CHAPTER 5

AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT AND

IMPEDE STUDENT SUCCESS

The goal of student success may be hard to achieve when participant groups

provide different answers to the following question: What is your definition of student

success? For students, success means getting a job, being promoted, or transferring to a

four-year college or university. Faculty feel that student success is defined with the

curriculum of student success courses; that students in the honors program learn how to

be successful; that it involves developing strong communication, critical thinking skills,

and global awareness; and it results in passing certification and licensing tests. Many

faculty said they were not sure how success was defined. For administrators it meant

students earning a degree or certificate, or achieving other goals; and programs that are

recognized by businesses. Some staff said the definition of student success could be

found in the mission statement. And in institutional documents it was described as having

access to the community college, contributing to the community and workforce

development, and resulting from effective teaching and learning strategies.

The responses provided above support the need for answering this study's

research question: In what ways do institutional conditions at community colleges shape

the educational success of part-time community college students? The answer was best derived from analyzing qualitative data, including comments from students, faculty, and administrators who were committed to student success.

The framework for analysis builds on information presented in the Acme Community College and Hilo Community College case studies, which is categorized within three themes: communication, classroom dynamics, and student support services. The conditions that support or impede part-time student success are influenced by students' sense of belonging, engagement, information networks, and intersectionality.

Part-time Community College Student Success

The conditions that support and impede the part-time student success are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Summary of Significant Findings From Both Case Studies: Supports and Impediments

Themes	Supports	Impediments
Communication	Printed announcements: Displayed around campus, allowing students to quickly read and identify important academic deadline dates, holidays, vacations, and significant campus events.	Information overload: Students felt inundated with the volume of e-mails sent to their campus mailboxes by the campus communication office on every subject imaginable and multiple times, by a wide diversity of campus organizations and clubs, and by the book store and library.
Communication	Website: Contained important information on campus policies; activities; hours of operation of cafeteria, student support services offices, library, and labs; campus navigating tools; guide materials on technology use and learning management system. Students preferred using information on the website to being inundated with general purpose e-mails.

Updated information broadcast on monitors. | Website: Many students found website unfriendly to users. |
| Communication | Faculty: Students stated communication with faculty was critical to their success.

Faculty provided help and advice outside of class: information on academic support services, group review sessions, and academic clubs.

They listened to student concerns. | Staff: Receiving wrong and/or misleading from student support services.

Older students frustrated by staff expectations that because they were older, they should know how to navigate the complex college system. |

Themes	Supports	Impediments
Communication	Orientation: Useful. Students appreciated one-on-one meetings with staff, the jumpstart on building information networks, and the chance to talk with other new students. Administrators believed it provided the foundation for student success.	Orientation: Many part-time students didn't get the word about attending orientation. Many could not take time from work or family responsibilities to attend. Many were frustrated they received information that as part-time students they couldn't use; many did not receive information they needed; and most students felt they had been rushed through course advising sessions.
Classroom dynamics	Faculty performance: High marks from students. Faculty made all the difference. Appreciated one-on-one time with faculty. Having and keeping office hours important. Going the extra mile for students conveyed the message they were important.	Faculty performance: Faculty without strong teaching skills made learning more difficult than it needed to be.
Classroom dynamics	Adjunct faculty: Students appreciated the real world experience that adjunct faculty brought into the classroom.	Adjunct faculty: Adjunct faculty did not have offices or places to meet with students outside of class.
Classroom dynamics	Peer interactions: Older female students enjoyed being in classes with students their own age. Feelings of sense of belonging and engagement were greater when they were with peers.	Peer interactions: Older female students upset with the behavior of younger students who were disrespectful to faculty.
Classroom dynamics	Small classes: All students liked small classes and discussions rather than lectures. Those in cohorts thought they got the best deal. Small classes facilitated student engagement and sense of belonging.	Communication problems: Students were frustrated that faculty did not understand the multiple responsibilities and challenges part-time students faced. Example: out-of-class group assignments.

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Themes	Supports	Impediments
Classroom dynamics	Course relevance: Drawing the relationship between learning and work.	Course content: Unaware of rationale for required general education courses and disturbed by time spent and costs.
Classroom dynamics	Technology: Technology was infused in enrollment process and plans were being made to infuse it in advising and orientation.	Technology: Many students lacked technology competencies.
Support services	Academic support services: Appreciated multiple opportunities for support services. Peer tutors were highly rated. Library orientations were beneficial. Transfer information was critical. Some staff went above and beyond to get information students needed.	Academic support services: Students who do not follow the registration and orientation processes typical for full-time students (enter through the "side door") were not aware of available support services. Limited or no access to support services at night or on weekends, or only when they were in class. Many students upset with misinformation, superior or can't-be-bothered attitude of support staff, and multiple trips to campus to complete paperwork. Financial aid information was difficult to find or understand.
Support services	Co-curricular activities: Few part-time students participated in sports, but those that did said they promoted a greater sense of belonging and engagement. Administrators stated that most students who were involved in co-curricular activities chose student leadership opportunities, which also promoted a greater sense of belonging and engagement.	Co-curricular activities: Time was the greatest impediment for students who would have liked to participate in co-curricular activities. Older students noted many activities and events were geared toward a younger group of students.

Using information gained from interviews with all participants and in student focus group sessions, Table 10 identifies the demographics and student situations that interfered with student success.

Table 10

Factors Negatively Affecting Students' Ability to Succeed in College

	Students	Administrators	Faculty
Gender			
Gender roles affected student experiences	Female students acknowledged the hardships they faced as they took care of multigenerational family members and tried to find time to study. Male students noted that they had supportive wives and could devote their time to their studies.	No mention.	No mention.
Age			
Communication	Older students preferred face-to-face communications. Younger students comfortable with information provided online.	First step is to go to orientation.	No mention. Required class attendance. No place outside of class to meet with students.

	Students	Administrators	Faculty
Peer relationships	Older students preferred to be in classes with students their own age. Younger students liked multi-generational classes.	Diversity in the classroom was important. Multi-generational classrooms seen as providing a positive experience for all students.	No mention.
Relevance of coursework	Older students did not see the relevance in taking general education courses.	Administrators wanted students to gain skills and knowledge achieved in general education courses.	Faculty said the connection between coursework and employment was important.

Other responsibilities

	Students	Administrators	Faculty
Activities	Part-time students had too many responsibilities to take time for events and activities. However, some would make time if activities related to new jobs, age/gender issues, or were offered on weekends.	College provided some activities but students' schedules did not often allow them to attend.	Faculty sponsored academic clubs but majority of students could not attend.
Jobs	Employment took priority over classes because students needed money.	Administrators acknowledged students needed to work to pay tuition and provide for their families.	Faculty saw employment as exhausting for some students; this meant students could not focus on homework. Faculty recognized that many students attended part-time because they had to work.

	Students	Administrators	Faculty
Family responsibilities	Students identified responsibilities to their families and significant others.	Administrators understood that childcare and eldercare were priorities for many part-time students.	Faculty understood students' childcare responsibilities, especially those of single parents.
Support services	Part-time student access very limited because support services frequently not available when they were on campus.	Administrators understood importance of support services but limited funding required cutbacks, which included support services that were not cost effective.	Faculty encouraged students to use tutoring programs.

Part-time students identified factors that had an impact on their success, and related comments were sometimes made by administrators and faculty. For example, the student's gender often affected the familial support that the student received. Part-time female students were expected to fulfill traditional caretaking roles, yet male students received support from their spouses so they could have time to study. Age played a role in the expectations of staff, their comfort with technology, in developing peer relationships, and thoughts on course relevancy. Staff expected older students to know how to navigate the complex college environment and faculty did not consider that older students would not be computer literate. The college administration believed in the benefits of multigenerational classes; no one asked the older students. No one explained the importance of general education courses; older students questioned the relevance of general education courses at this point in their lives when their goals were to acquire

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work-based skills. College activities frequently were not scheduled with part-time students in mind. They were offered during the week and most often geared toward younger students' interests. Hilo was sensitive to this and offered some family-oriented activities on weekends.

Administrators and faculty recognized that employment and family responsibilities were likely to affect student success, but acknowledged that they were challenged to find solutions to these problems. Some administrators believed that these were personal issues that students needed to solve. Some, however, identified possible scenarios: financial aid advisors to help students with budget problems, financial aid counselors to work with students throughout the financial aid application process, making connections with social services to help students who cared for elderly, offering more childcare services, and providing support services at times and locations that better met the needs of part-time students.

Full-time faculty noted that students' work schedules affected their chances for success. Because students needed money to survive, some students at Hilo, for example, came to class after having worked a night shift and were physically exhausted by the time they arrived. Some students at Acme increased their work hours at the end of the term as the holiday season approached. Time management was an issue, students were not spending enough time on their homework, and they lacked study skills. Students noted that faculty often required group work that was to be done outside of class, but part-time students had little flexibility in their schedules to meet before or after class or at times when they were not normally on campus. Due to spending limited time on campus, part-

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time students were less likely to find the time to meet with faculty, to straighten out computer issues with information technology departments, or to visit certain support offices for help. Adjunct faculty noted many of the same issues as administrators and full-time faculty: students were worn out and found it difficult to focus in class and on class assignments.

One additional issue raised at both colleges was the inequity of support services. Administrators and full-time faculty were inconsistent in their responses to support services being available at all times and at all locations. Some felt that running courses at night and on the weekend was a sufficient response to address the needs of part-time students. Some felt that all of the services that were available for full-time students were also available for part-time students and that part-time students had to find the time to come for help if they required it. At Hilo, some services were available by appointment at night or on the weekend. The needs of part-time students enrolled in the weekend cohort program at Hilo were being partially addressed by expanding library hours and having the bookstore open on Saturday at the beginning of the semester. Providing in-class tutors was one approach used at Acme. Required courses that students needed to take during their final semester became filled only a few days after registration opened. Some campus locations did not offer the courses that students might need to graduate, and some offices were not open when students were most likely to be on campus. Some services were only offered at one campus location, which created problems for many students. These issues were cited by many students as having a great impact on their ability to earn an associate's degree or certificate.

One administrator at Acme discussed the cost-effectiveness of providing services at all times and at all locations:

> When we start tracking how much people are using our service on the nights and weekends, they don't really generate [income]. . . . Sometimes in the two and a half hour time period . . . I'd see three or four people. It still wasn't costing anything for me to be there because I was there anyway. If you're talking about staff shifting out of a more busy time of the day or hiring someone extra, it's not really cost effective.

This was a significant issue for students who wanted and needed help, but were unable, due to their part-time status, to schedule time for these services at locations that were convenient for them. This represents a disconnect between what students say they need to succeed and what institutions are currently providing.

Understanding Student Success Means Understanding Intersectionality, Sense of Belonging, Engagement, and Information Networks

This study has examined the ways in which students achieve success at community colleges using four theoretical frameworks: intersectionality (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011), sense of belonging (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997), formation of information networks (Karp et al., 2008), and student engagement (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009d; Marti, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

These frameworks provide a means for understanding whether or not students feel accepted as members of the college community and whether and how they become engaged in educationally purposeful activities. The theories are intertwined. Some theories support others; e.g., information networks lead to sense of belonging (Karp et al., 2008) and sense of belonging among peers and with academic advisors leads to student

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engagement in the classroom (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Karp et al., 2008; Schuetz, 2008b; Stage & Hossler, 2000). These case studies make the argument for including part-time student status as an element in intersectionality (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011). Part-time students are marginalized in their opportunities for success.

Understanding the role of these theories in achieving student success leads ultimately to the outcomes of the college experience: graduating, transferring, persisting, or leaving the institution.

Analysis and Discussion of the Study's Major Findings

The overarching research finding is that COMMUNICATION is the central and all-embracing issue that impacts part-time student success.

In the study's design, communication was identified as one of three constructs that provided the foundation for the organizing framework. In writing the case studies, communication issues also emerged as strong elements in classroom dynamics and student support services. The communication theme focused more on information presented on the websites and in e-mails, newspapers, and flyers distributed around campus, and during orientation programs.

The theme of COMMUNICATION was all encompassing. It included the content and usefulness of information conveyed to students, access to information, reliability of information, and as well as the format for receiving information. COMMUNICATION played a dominant role in presenting course content and in students' ability to learn. COMMUNICIATION permeated all matters related to classroom dynamics including opportunities for students to gain information from faculty outside the classroom and for

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students to collaborate with fellow students on group projects. COMMUNICATION was sometimes accurate, conflicting, or wrong.

COMMUNICATION was not only a theme, and not only a strong element in every theme, but it played a critical role in promoting students' sense of belonging and in opportunities to become engaged in the college environment. COMMUNICATION influenced students' perceptions of faculty, staff, and other students. The absence of communication affected students' sense of belonging and, in some cases, lessened their levels of engagement and left them feeling marginalized.

One of the difficulties identified by many part-time student participants was their lack of contact with adjunct faculty. Most of their courses were taught by adjunct faculty who were themselves disadvantaged: they did not have faculty offices for meeting with students; they frequently they were not familiar with college policies and procedures because they spent very little time on campus and did not attend faculty meetings; and unless students made them aware of their part-time status and the challenges they faced, they were relatively unfamiliar with the multiple responsibilities of part-time students and their educational goals, which might have influenced teaching practices.

Faculty and staff participants discussed the importance of communication with students about resources; educational policies, programs, and practices; and services created to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Students, however, stated that they experienced information overload and found it challenging to sort out what was important to their education from all the incidental information.

The findings revealed that while student participants were relatively pleased with their community college experience, they encountered many institutional barriers that impeded their success: they did not receive sufficient and/or beneficial information about the college's comprehensive enrollment process including registration, financial aid, orientation sessions, academic support services, and co-curricular activities.

Many part-time students entered college in nontraditional ways, taking a credit or noncredit course to "test the waters" or entering through high school–college dual-enrollment programs. In doing so, they bypassed the traditional route to orientation that was designed primarily for full-time students and included a comprehensive and multistep intake process: completing an admission application; applying for financial aid, if needed; taking placement tests; meeting with an advisor; choosing an academic program; and registering for classes. At orientation students received information on campus academic and student support services. When students did not attend a formal orientation program or were not assigned advisors, their orientation came piecemeal and fragmented, and they were left to navigate the community college environment on their own, or with advice from other students, which frequently was not accurate or applicable to their needs. Administrators stated that students who did not attend an orientation program missed out on several learning opportunities that might have helped them achieve success early on. Yet orientation sessions were held during traditional daytime hours and their content did not always answer the part-time student's questions.

Administrators at both colleges stated that the campuses operated without distinctions being made between full-time and part-time students. Faculty did not

receive any information, unless it came from a student, on whether students enrolled in their classes were full-time or part-time. Unintentionally, this lack of distinction between full and part-time students revealed other institutional conditions that presented barriers to part-time student success. All academic and student support service offices were open during the day to all students, but a limited number of services were available in the evenings and on weekends when the majority of part-time students attended class. With full-time and part-time students being treated the same way, differences between the needs of the two groups of students were obscured. One administrator even noted that when financial resources were cut the majority of support services offered in the evening were reduced or eliminated because this was the most cost-effective way to handle resource constraints.

Student engagement and sense of belonging were most likely to take place in the classroom. For part-time students their time on-campus was spent in the classroom, and the faculty member served as their primary source of campus information. The majority of student participants valued the relationships they formed with faculty, and they were very positive in their comments on the quality of faculty members. This was especially true for students who were in small cohort-based programs where full-time faculty knew the students well and often served as their advisors. But the majority of courses offered in the evening and on weekends were taught by adjunct faculty. Their clinical experiences and expertise in the workforce gave legitimacy to the value of an education. They provided knowledge that was needed in the work environment and they taught the skills that would enable students to be competent in meeting their

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responsibilities. Their relationships with students were strong because they shared the same interests in their choice of workforce employment. However, many adjunct faculty had little pedagogical training.

Administrators at both colleges acknowledged the importance of faculty professional development opportunities, and faculty indicated that they would benefit from a greater understanding of student experiences and the barriers that confronted most part-time community college students. They identified their interest and need for workshops, online instruction, teaching skills, and training on student behavioral issues in the classroom. At the same time, adjunct faculty noted the differences in pay scales and benefits between full-time and part-time faculty and the absence of incentives for spending more time on campus or in professional development programs.

Communication problems between academic offices and student affairs were apparent in comments from the participants. Student support services fell within the purview of student affairs, and counselors frequently did not have up-to-date information on program requirements, prerequisites that were needed for enrollment in certain courses, criteria for accepting courses from other colleges, and issues related to externships and internships. Tutoring services were not informed by faculty concerns and course scheduling did not always coordinate with course requirements and sequencing. Courses needed by students nearing graduation frequently were not offered in what should have been the student's final semester.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the institutional conditions that promote or hinder success for part-time community college students. Figure 1 displays the pathways to the community college experience that emerged from my dissertation research and analysis. It depicts the entry points for full-time and part-time students.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Examining Theories and Themes Related to Community College Experience
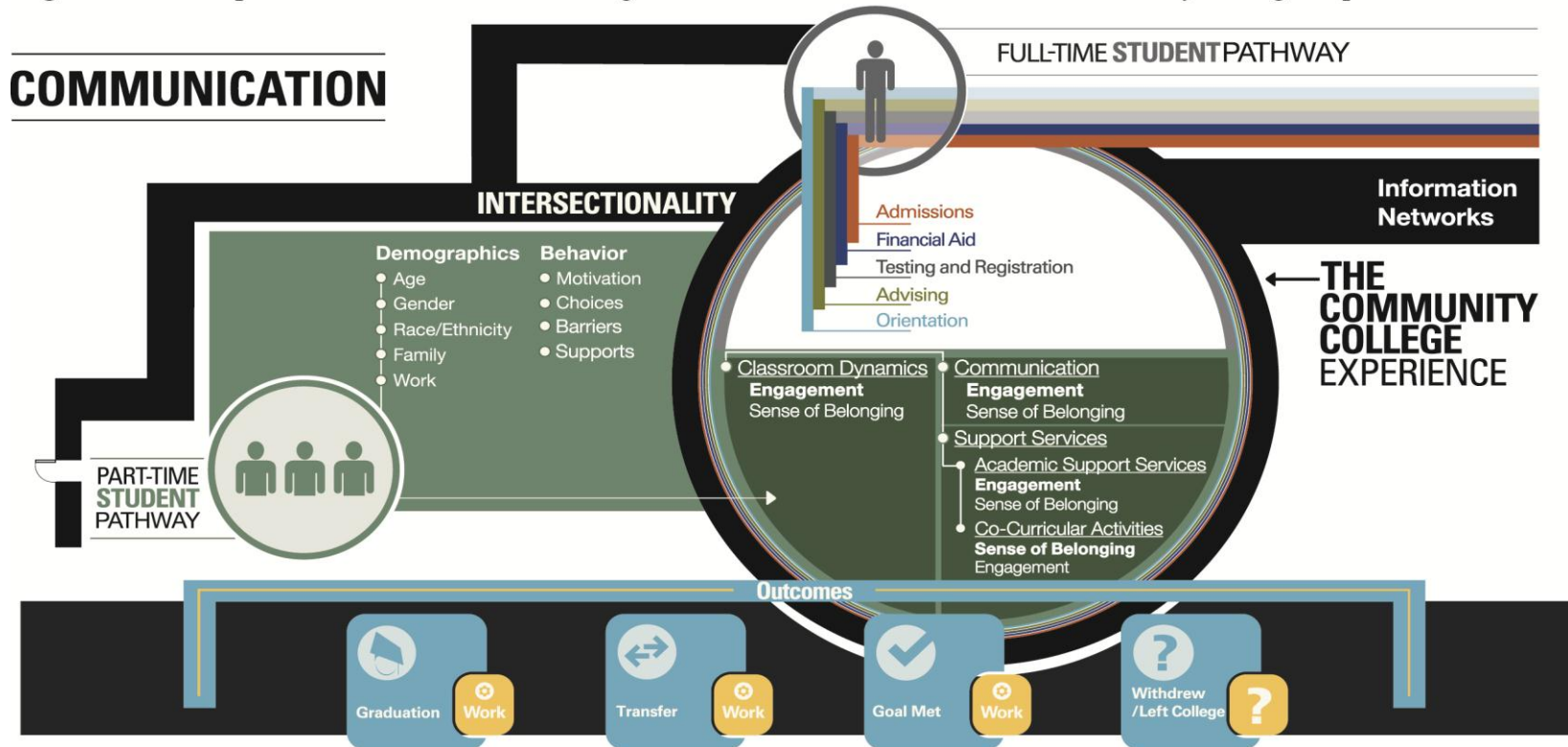
Figure 1. At most community colleges full-time students enter "through the front door" – and follow the traditional enrollment pathway, participating in a full-range of new student services. Part-time students frequently enter "through the side door" – following a pathway that is fragmented and does not include many of the traditional new student services: information on financial aid, testing, advising and a formal orientation program.

The part-time student experiences are described within three themes: communication, classroom dynamics and support services. Within each theme students may be provided with opportunities that facilitate student engagement and a sense of belonging.

The overarching theme – COMMUNICATION – represents a major finding in the study.

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Full-time students enter college through the "front door" and begin the college intake process, which starts with admissions; then continues with information on applying for financial aid; includes placement testing for courses in mathematics, reading and writing; is followed by an advising session focused on possible majors and course requirements; and concludes with attendance at a formal orientation program where important information is conveyed to aid them in navigating the college experience. Through this comprehensive approach to enrolling in college, students begin to connect with college staff who provide them with the information needed to be successful in their college careers. Information networks are developed with faculty, staff, and other students, who help them to become comfortable in the college environment and provide them with the tools needed to be successful.

Part-time students follow a different pathway. Most part-time students enter community colleges through the "side door." The choices they make in registering for courses are frequently based on external responsibilities. Many work full-time and/or have significant family responsibilities, including raising children and caring for aging parents. The choices some part-time students make are based on their need to approach the college experience on a limited basis until they feel comfortable as members of this new environment and are successful in completing postsecondary coursework. This is particularly the case with individuals who graduated from high school many years earlier and are not sure they are up the challenges of college. The majority of part-time students register for one or two classes, and, unless they are taking math, reading, or writing courses, do not take placement tests or take part in other activities that foster

development of information networks. Part-time students seldom attend orientation, a program that provides both a means of communication and a support service for students. They are either not invited or choose not to attend because they feel it is not much more than a tour of the campus. They often do not learn about student support services or opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities.

Part-time students enter the institution with little understanding of what it will take for them to become successful college students. The first point of contact, following registration, is the classroom where they are suddenly thrust into an environment that is different from what they might have experienced in the past. This is especially true if they have been away from school for any significant period of time, which is the case for many part-time students who graduated from high school or earned GEDs several years ago. In the classroom, they encounter new teaching methodologies such as class discussions rather than lectures. In addition, they are faced with having to adapt to technology in order to complete their assignments. For many students, as the case studies illustrated, the experience is frustrating: they spend considerable time learning how to use technology for online research, developing tables and charts, writing and submitting papers, participating in online discussions, using the college's learning management system, and taking online tests. Time spent learning technology is taken away from the time spent mastering course content.

For most part-time students who take courses in the evenings and weekends, courses are taught by adjunct faculty. These faculty members may be college staff members, clinicians and field experts, and retired faculty. The combination of part-time

students and adjunct faculty can create difficulties that had not been anticipated by the college leadership because the roles of both part-time students and adjunct faculty are marginalized.

Interactions with faculty were among the most important communications that students had at the institution. This was evidenced through the CCSSE data presented in Chapter 4. In addition, positive interactions with faculty were noted in many of the discussions that took place with students. They saw faculty as caring and wanting to help them to succeed. Students praised the quality, availability, and experience of faculty.

On the CCSSE survey questions, students rated their relationships with faculty higher than they rated relationships with peers or administrative personnel and offices; however, they did provide some negative comments. These comments concerned both new faculty and adjunct faculty. Students, particularly those at Acme, felt that new faculty often lacked teaching experience and presented material in ways that were confusing to students. They compared their experiences to classes taken with veteran faculty who had taught their subject matter for many years and were able to effectively communicate the material to students. Students were generally pleased with the real-world experiences that adjunct faculty brought to the classroom, but they similarly felt that some of these faculty had difficulty presenting the material in a coherent manner.

Adjunct faculty often did not have their own offices and they had little time to meet with part-time students. Both populations came to campus for class and quickly left. Some adjunct faculty taught at multiple institutions and were unfamiliar with the policies and procedures of the college at Acme and Hilo where they taught. Due to their lack of

familiarity with the college and the critical factors that could provide part-time students with the knowledge that could help them to succeed, adjunct faculty were unlikely to serve as part of the students' campus information networks.

If student engagement did occur, it most likely happened in the classroom, which is where part-time students spent most of their time. Student engagement takes into account the dual responsibilities of the student and the institution to promote success. The CCSSE provides five benchmarks that measure engagement: (a) active and collaborative learning, (b) student effort, (c) academic challenge, (d) student–faculty interaction, and (e) support for learners (McClenney, 2006). Sense of belonging is also likely to occur in the classroom, when students feel a part of the classroom activities. It is also in the classroom that part-time students develop peer and faculty relationships.

Part-time students are affected in a variety of ways through communication at the institution. The colleges in this study posted a great deal of information about what was happening on their campuses. Students were overloaded with paper and could not often distinguish one flyer from another. Many flyers were out-of-date. Students did, however, like monthly calendars where they could see at a glance what was happening during the course of a month. Students sometimes found college websites to be confusing and disorganized. They seldom read broadcast e-mails, but they would immediately read e-mails from faculty. Students liked to congregate in campus locations where they could talk to faculty or other students. They would browse tables in the cafeteria and lobby and pick up pamphlets or purchase items from vendors. They were most challenged by communications with campus support staff. Students could not always get the

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information they needed and they often had to make repeated trips to campus, which cost them time and money. The communication with faculty, with a few exceptions, was highly beneficial. Students felt that faculty provided much useful information about programs and services that were available to students. As mentioned, orientation was also an important source of communication as well as a support service. Administrators and faculty felt that students who had attended orientation were more knowledgeable about the college.

Students experienced engagement and sense of belonging through the communication they had with others on campus. They gained information from faculty and peers. Their relationships, however, with administrative personnel and offices were somewhat strained and often left students feeling marginalized.

Finally, support services were important for students, but new students rarely took advantage of them—especially students who had not been to orientation. New students indicated that they were planning to seek help at some time in the future. Students nearing graduation frequently used services, especially advising, tutoring services, the writing center, and various academic labs.

Part-time students participated to some degree in co-curricular activities. Some students were involved in student government and others in club sports, but, for the most part, students did not participate because they had little time. Again these are both areas where students can become engaged and develop a sense of belonging. Engagement takes place as students utilize support services. Unfortunately, few of the students used services, either because they had not attended orientation and did not understand the

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benefits of these services or because the services themselves were not available at the times and locations where part-time students could access them. Sense of belonging and engagement can occur as students participate in co-curricular activities, but, again, few students participated because they did not have time or the activities did not interest them.

Student outcomes include graduation and/or transfer and subsequent employment. Some students attend college for the purpose of attaining a particular goal and move on to jobs, and after a six-year period nearly three-quarters of all part-time students leave the college without having earned any credential at all (Goldberger & Choitz, 2008; McClenney & Marti, 2006; Milam, 2009).

Throughout the educational process, part-time students may experience different forms of discrimination leading to their being marginalized in the higher education setting. Multiple aspects of one's identity such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and social class intersect (Jones & Wijeyesinghe, 2011) and result in discrimination that can adversely affect their opportunities for success in college. Part-time attendance status, as evidenced in this study, represents an aspect of identity that marginalizes students in higher education. This was most apparent in a focus group that took place at one of the colleges. Six women discussed how multiple aspects of their identity intersected and caused them to feel marginalized. Their gender, in some cases race/ethnicity, age, and part-time attendance status, caused role strain (Mohney & Anderson, 1988) as the women had to take on the added role of student.

Students noted that they had children, and sometimes grandparents, for whom they were responsible. They spoke of their personal relationships with spouses and significant others, which they felt were deteriorating because they were trying to take care of the household and be successful students. Women were upset with their family members who had promised them support as they assumed the role of "student." Over time, these individuals withdrew their support because they felt overburdened.

Part-time students felt disenfranchised by the fact that they often had to attend classes at night or on the weekend due to their work schedules or their significant others' work schedules. They were tired at night, yet this was when they had to attend school. Support services were lacking. As students noted, they could not get the services they needed at night or on the weekend or at some of the campus locations they attended. They sometimes had to attend campuses located in another geographic area because the courses they needed were not offered at campuses nearby, or the classes nearby were filled. Faculty acknowledged the problem of gaining access to support services and suggested that students go online for help. For many students, this did not work. They felt that they needed to talk to an individual and found it difficult to do so during the day. It meant extra trips to campus that interfered with their personal and work schedules. These extra trips often resulted in frustration because students were told in a piecemeal fashion that they were missing paperwork that was needed by the college. Their other obligations prevented them from being full-time students, but their part-time status hurt their ability to connect, engage, and develop a sense of belonging.

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One of the greatest problems that students face is that despite the fact that a larger proportion of students attend community colleges part-time, these colleges still operated on a full-time student model. In my visits to the campuses at night and on the weekends, offices were shuttered early in the evening. There were, however, a few occasions when services were offered at times when part-time students could access them, such as during peak advising periods. However, the problem remained that students had to wait in long lines and had to come to campus several times to straighten out their paperwork. Advising and tutoring were often not accessible other than during regular business hours. The library at one location was initially not available when weekend students had classes, but changes were being made to align library hours with weekend classes. Food services were not available on the weekend at one of the colleges and they were closed before evening classes began. Campus resources were not equally accessible at all campus locations.

Responsibility for Student Success

Student success is a joint effort between students and institutions. Students are responsible for their academic work (Kuh et al., 2005). Colleges are responsible for creating and upholding policies and practices and offering support services and activities that promote retention, assist students in transferring to baccalaureate institutions, and prepare students to enter the workforce. These institutional conditions should be designed in such a way that helps students become self-directed and acquire the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed. The responsibility at the institutional level rests with many individuals within the institution. These individuals include the president, the chief

academic officer, the chief student affairs officer along with members of the student affairs staff, and members of the faculty (Kuh et al., 2005). At Hilo, for example, some students mentioned that faculty explained how much time they needed to study outside of class in order to keep up with in-class material as well as their homework assignments. At Acme, faculty indicated that students had difficulty with time management and following a syllabus. Students need to understand the responsibilities that are required of them in order for them to succeed.

The following recommendations were developed to assist college leaders to focus on important areas that influence the success of part-time community college students and to propose areas of further research.

Recommendations for Practice

Community colleges are complex and multidimensional organizations. As such, they require complex and multidimensional leadership. Today's leaders must learn to facilitate cooperative work among campus constituents and must seek to develop their leadership dimensions to effectively respond to challenging new situations. Community college leaders must also engage in continuous reflection on their actions and the resulting organizational outcomes in order to strengthen aspects of their leadership that have worked well in the past and acquire new leadership competencies where necessary. (Eddy, 2010, p. 37)

Dr. Pamela L. Eddy, a professor in the School of Education at The College of William and Mary, has written extensively about multidimensional leadership for effecting change, particularly in the community college environment. If significant change is going to occur in complex organizations, leadership must start with the college president. Other college leaders must work collaboratively to respond to challenges as they arise (Eddy, 2010). The president needs to be informed about issues that pertain to part-time students, and must discuss the fundamental needs of this population with others

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at the institution who are empowered to effect change. Continuous assessment is needed to determine if changes are producing the desired results. If not, additional steps need to be taken to ensure that this population of students receives what it needs in order to succeed. Recommendations are provided below for college presidents and vice presidents. Recommendations for future research are also provided.

Recommendations to Community College Presidents

The community college president must lead the charge in making an institutional commitment to address the needs of part-time students. The president should announce to the board of trustees, cabinet members, and the college community that there will be a renewed commitment to the success of part-time students, and acknowledge that changes will be made to address the needs of these students.

The president should ensure that the college has a clearly articulated definition of student success. In interviews with students, they defined success as earning a degree or certificate and/or getting a job or transferring to a four-year institution. Administrators and faculty did not appear to have a clear sense of the definition of student success. Some said that it was probably mentioned somewhere but they did not know where and they could not articulate how success was defined. Others thought it was embodied in a course on student success. Hiring an individual at a level of a dean or vice president—a person responsible for student success—might be one way the college can ensure that the success of part-time students is an institutional priority.

The president's office should publish a statement of actions to fulfill this commitment. This statement should address communication challenges, emphasize

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improvement of support services, and provide additional support for adjunct faculty. In the case studies, both adjunct faculty and full-time faculty indicated they would like to participate in professional development opportunities. They suggested panel discussions at the college's professional day in which they would hear from students about the problems they face. They said they would like to receive empirical studies about student success. They would like workshops on online instruction and discussion sessions focused on bullying and dealing with difficult students in their classes. Other faculty wanted to learn more about college student development. Administrators mentioned the need to offer training in active learning strategies, academic advising, and support services.

The president should meet regularly with groups of part-time students to gain a greater understanding of part-time student responsibilities and academic needs. The president should require greater collaboration among faculty and staff in providing services to part-time students and provide an annual report on improvements made to support the success of part-time students.

The vice-presidents should be charged to develop and implement plans for changes to the campus infrastructure and policies and practices to support the success of part-time students. The president, with senior staff, should make decisions on the reallocation of resources to provide greater support for part-time student success. Finally, the president should conduct serious discussions about combining the office of the vice president of academic affairs and the office of the vice president of student affairs with

the goal of developing student support programs that are aligned with academic programs and that address part-time student needs.

Recommendations to Vice Presidents

New attention must be given to all classroom activities. This involves reviewing the roles and responsibilities of adjunct faculty, in addition to professional supports and benefits. Appropriate changes should be made to improve the institutional support for adjunct faculty so that they can be more effective teachers and advisors.

The vice president of academic affairs should institute new curriculum program models that are designed to create more opportunities so that more part-time students can complete certificates and degrees. The vice president should convene meetings with adjunct faculty to discuss their concerns about changes and/or improvements that need to be made to be more supportive of part-time students.

The strengths and weaknesses of programs for part-time students should be assessed and a strategic plan for improvement developed. The vice president of academic affairs should assess communication challenges, and design, implement, and continually evaluate effective communication strategies.

The vice president of student affairs should align student support services with academic program needs. This individual should include adjunct faculty in discussions on the perceived needs of part-time students, and should ensure that support services staff are cross-trained. Support staff must learn how to give clear instructions to students on paperwork that must be completed. Another responsibility for the vice president of student affairs should be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of programs for part-time

students and to develop a strategic plan for improvement, including specialized orientation sessions for part-time students. Finally the vice president should require a renewed commitment to addressing communication challenges and should assess the results.

Policies should be driven by reliable and valid data. Data directly related to part-time students' academic performance must receive comprehensive analysis. The vice president of institutional research, planning, and assessment should collect data appropriate to gaining an understanding of the demographics of part-time students and their academic records. Data should include all available information on students who left the college. This office should provide a comprehensive assessment of data with part-time students as a unit of analysis.

Recommendations for Future Research

Almost two-thirds of community college students enroll in classes on a part-time basis. Research has shown that sense of belonging and student engagement are important for all students. While graduation rates for all community college students are low, they are especially low for part-time students. The CCSSE addresses student engagement for both populations of students. A need exists to find or develop a more easily understood instrument that measures sense of belonging, particularly for part-time students. Armed with the knowledge that such a survey can provide, administrators can begin to address the specific issues that may prevent students from developing a sense of belonging.

Six-year trend analyses should be conducted on part-time students. Graduation rates of part-time community college students constitute a major crisis in higher

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education and for the American workforce. Recent large-scale studies show that only 12% of part-time students earn a credential of any type within a six-year period (Berkner et al., 2002). Studies conducted at the institutional level would provide information on barriers—such as prerequisites and the lack of availability of certain courses to graduate—that hinder student success. Study results should be used to examine possible changes in institutional policies.

A survey of adjunct faculty is needed. In addition, a survey of full-time faculty regarding their perspectives of adjunct faculty should be conducted. Adjunct faculty comprise a significant portion of all faculty at most community colleges. They have an even more critical role than full-time faculty with respect to the success of part-time students. It is important to survey adjunct faculty to learn more about their needs and interests for professional development opportunities.

Importance of Institutional Conditions and Change

Cross described "subconsciously erected" (1981, p. 104) barriers that students often encounter. While it is unlikely that institutional policymakers consciously implement barriers to student success, they do exist. The barriers identified by Cross include course scheduling difficulties, campus locations and associated transportation issues, uninteresting or irrelevant course offerings, organizational problems, and inadequate information on how to navigate the complex college environment. While her work dates back more than three decades, many of these problems still exist despite the best intentions of community college administrators and faculty.

The percentage of part-time student enrollment at community colleges has remained constant during the past 30 years and completion rates have remained substantially lower than those of full-time students. Yet the majority of students are enrolled part-time and the workforce demands employees with a coherent set of skills and knowledge that are learned in degree and certificate programs. The information shared by the participants in this study contributed additional knowledge on the institutional conditions that promoted or hindered the success of part-time community college students. A major finding of this dissertation research is the identification of COMMUNICATION as an institutional condition that demands objective assessment and greater alignment with the needs of part-time community college students.

Presidents, chief academic officers, and senior administrators need to understand the best practices identified by organizations such as the Center for Community College Student Engagement, as well as institutional and scholarly research focused on graduation rates, including improved communication systems and the development of a community college culture that values the success of part-time students in words and actions.

You're Invited to Participate in an Interview

If you are a part-time student and are nearing completion of your program, you are invited to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences in college.
You must be 18 or over and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.

Your interview will be held at your convenience.
The interview will run for approximately 30 minutes.

Please RSVP to:
Rhonda Gabovitch, Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston
rgabovitch@gmail.com
(phone number)

*To thank you for your participation, you will receive a **$20 gift card** at the conclusion of the interview.*
This project has been approved by the _____ Community College Institutional Review Board.

Rhonda Gabovitch rgabovitch@gmail.com (phone number)

Rhonda Gabovitch rgabovitch@gmail.com (phone number)

Rhonda Gabovitch rgabovitch@gmail.com (phone number)

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Rhonda Gabovitch rgabovitch@gmail.com (phone number)

APPENDIX B

FORMS FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND MANAGERS

Invitation to Participate in Research Project - Administrators

Date

Name
Title
Institution
Address
City, State Zip

Dear <u>Administrator</u>,

You are invited to participate in a research project that I am conducting as part of my doctoral dissertation work in Higher Education Administration at University of Massachusetts Boston. The overall purpose of this project is to examine college policies and practices that affect the educational success of part-time community college students. Your name was selected because you are an administrator at ____ Community College. Permission from your institution for this study has been granted by President ___ and the ____ Community College.

I will be scheduling interviews with administrators at ____ Community College from April 25 to May 26, 2011.

The interview is scheduled to run for about 60-90 minutes. Before the start of the interview, I will ask you to read and sign an informed consent form and a form that gives your permission for the interview to be audiotaped. Please be assured that taking part in this interview is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect on your relationship with your institution or with UMass Boston. If you have questions, you can reach me via email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the research advisor, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact Ms. ____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at ____ Community College at the following address: ____. You may also contact her by telephone at ____ or by email at ____@____.___.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by April 25, 2011. Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you.
Sincerely,

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow-up Recruitment Letter for Administrators

Date

Name
Title
Institution
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Administrator:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an upcoming interview to talk about your experiences with part-time students at _____ Community College.

Your interview will be held on:

      Date: Day, Month, Date, 2011

      Time: XX:XX p.m.

      Location: XX

If for some reason, you are unable to participate, could you please email me as soon as possible at rgabovitch@gmail.com or call me at (781) 775-1992. I am looking forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

<center>**Informed Consent Form for Administrators**</center>

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent form for:
Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community
College Students

Introduction and Contact Information:
You are being asked to participate in a research project that is exploring institutional
conditions to improve the education outcomes of part-time community college students.
The researcher is Rhonda M. Gabovitch, a doctoral student in the Higher Education
Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and
feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Rhonda M. Gabovitch will
discuss them with you. You can reach Rhonda by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by
phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the advisor for this research project,
Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu.

Description of the Project:
The purpose of this research project is to explore what and how various institutional
conditions promote or hinder the educational outcomes of part-time community college
students. Institutional conditions refer to the policies, programs, practices, and resources
of the institution.

Participation in this research project, including filling out forms, will take approximately
60-90 minutes to complete. If you choose to take part in this research project, you will be
asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be conducted by
Rhonda M. Gabovitch.

Risks or Discomforts:
This research project is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort associated with this research
project is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the interview.
You may speak with Rhonda to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study
participation. This research project does not directly benefit participants, though research
findings may help institutions gain a better understanding of the conditions that promote
success and of the obstacles that hinder success.

Confidentiality:
You will sign in using your real name and then will select a pseudonym. You will be
asked to fill out the Profile Sheet for Administrators. You will be asked to provide your
pseudonym on the Profile Sheet for Administrators and to identify yourself by your

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pseudonym during your interview. The sheet that contains your name and pseudonym will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be kept separate from the Profile Sheet for Administrators and Managers and the interview transcript. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

I will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose of this research project. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the dissertation committee, the transcriber, and Rhonda M. Gabovitch will have access to the primary data. Identifying information and audio files will be destroyed by October 31, 2011. Confidential information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation:
The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell Rhonda Gabovitch. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your status as an administrator or manager at this institution.

Rights:
You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach the researcher Rhonda M. Gabovitch at (781) 775-1992 or rgabovitch@gmail.com and the research advisor Judith Gill, Ph.D. at judith.gill@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: Institutional Review Board (IRB), Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact ____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at ____Community College at the following address: ____, ____ ____. You may also contact her by telephone at ____ or by email at ____.

Please sign and date the following page.

Signatures:
I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN
ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I UNDERSTAND
THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I
ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher

Consent for Audiotaping & Transcription for Administrators and Managers

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes
of Part-time Community College Students
Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audiotaping of the interview session. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the research team, consisting of the Dissertation Committee, the transcriptionist, and Rhonda Gabovitch, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of the interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this research project. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Immediately following the interview, if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased and to have your comments stricken from the written transcript.

By signing this form you are consenting to:

❑ having your comments in the interview taped;

❑ having the tape transcribed;

❑ use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: October 31, 2011. On or

before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature _____Date_____

Profile Sheet for Administrators

Name of College _____   **Pseudonym** _____

Interview No._____   **Date of Interview**_____

1. How long have you worked in higher education?

    ⭕ less than one year ⭕ 1-3 years ⭕ 4-6 years ⭕ 7-10 years ⭕ 11 or more years

2. How long have you worked in a community college setting?

    ⭕ less than one year ⭕ 1-3 years ⭕ 4-6 years ⭕ 7-10 years ⭕ 11 or more years

3. How long have you worked at this community college?

    ⭕ less than one year ⭕ 1-3 years ⭕ 4-6 years ⭕ 7-10 years ⭕ 11 or more years

4. Approximately how many part-time students do you meet with during the course of a week?

    ⭕ zero ⭕ 1-5 ⭕ 6-10 ⭕ 11-15 ⭕ 20 or more

    If 20 or more, please specify approximate number _____

4a. How do you communicate with part-time students? <u>Check all that apply</u>.

☐ Group faced-to-face meetings ☐ Individual face-to-face meetings ☐ Individual telephone calls ☐ Group e-mail ☐ Individual e-mail

4b. Are these types of contacts similar or different from the contact you have with full-time students?

    ⭕ Similar ⭕ Different

4c. In what ways are they similar or different?_____

5. Gender

    ⭕ Male   ⭕ Female

6. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic/Latino?

◯ Yes   ◯ No

7. Please select **one or more** of the following racial categories to describe yourself.

□ American Indian or Alaska Native
□ Asian
□ Black or African American
□ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
□ White

8. Age Group

◯ 24 or younger ◯ 25-30   ◯ 31-35   ◯ 35-39   ◯ 40-45 ◯ 46-50   ◯ 51-55
◯ 56 or older

9. What is the **highest** academic credential you have earned?

□No College   □ Some College   □ Associate's Degree □ Bachelor's Degree
□ Master's Degree   □ Professional Degree □ Doctoral Degree □ CAGS □ N/A

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students Interview Protocol

Rhonda Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston
rgabovitch@gmail.com

Interview: 60-90 minutes
Thank you for agreeing to take time out of your schedule for this interview. I am conducting research for my dissertation at University of Massachusetts Boston and am studying institutional conditions that improve educational outcomes such as retention, graduation, and transfer of part-time students at community colleges. By institutional conditions, I am referring to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution. The purpose of this study is to gain a fuller understanding of the institutional conditions that help or hinder students and to determine the types of conditions that will promote educational success for part-time community college students.

I will be conducting interviews with three administrators, three full-time faculty, and three part-time faculty on this campus. I am also conducting focus groups and/or interviews with part-time students (new and those nearing completion of degrees or certificates) and interviews with three former students. The purpose of the focus groups and interviews with these three groups of individuals is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of part-time students.

Your name and the name of your institution will not appear in this study. The information that you provide will be confidential.

Could you please read the informed consent form and sign and date it if you are comfortable in doing so. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

I will audiotape this interview to ensure the accuracy of our conversation. The audiotape will be transcribed by an individual who will not have access to your identity. When the research is over, a copy of the transcription will be retained, and the tape will be destroyed. Could you please sign and date the audiotaping form. You may, at any time, ask that the tape recording device be turned off. Immediately following the interview, if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased and to have your comments stricken from the written transcript.

This interview will run approximately 60-90 minutes. I will ask you approximately 12 questions about part-time students at this college.

Thank you for your time. The information you provide will be very helpful in beginning to understand the how institutional conditions affect the educational outcomes of part-time community college students.

Interview with Administrators and Managers

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview**_____

The central question for this research study is: In what ways do institutional conditions at community colleges shape the educational success of part-time community college students?

1. Can you tell me about your institution's philosophy regarding access for and success among part-time students?

2. Does your college have a definition for student success and what is it?

3. Could you identify and describe programs and/or services that are available specifically for part-time students.

4. How do part-time students become aware of services made available to them?

5. Could you identify obstacles that part-time students encounter in trying to complete their degrees/certificates? Personal _____ Institutional _____

6. Can you identify obstacles that part-time students encounter in trying to transfer to other institutions?

7. When you think about part-time students, what characteristics come to mind?

8. How would you describe the interactions of part-time students with the following?
   a. Class/peers
   b. Teaching staff
   c. Department/Program
   d. College

9. Do you think that part-time students develop a sense of belonging to the institution? That is, to what extent do they feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What makes them feel most connected?

10. To what extent do you think that student engagement – the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities *(educational activities*

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used at Acme) (characterized by amount of time students study, interact with faculty and peers, and use resources such as the library and technology) occurs throughout the college? What does the college do to encourage participation among part-time students in such educationally purposeful activities?

11. What else can your community college do to promote the educational success of part-time students?

12. What plans might exist to promote the educational success of part-time students?

13. Is there anything else you can tell me about part-time students' experiences at this college?

APPENDIX C

FORMS FOR PROFESSORS OF PART-TIME STUDENTS

Letter to Professor of New, Part-time Students

Dear Professor ____,

I am currently employed at Bristol Community College in the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and I am also working on my doctorate in the Higher Education Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. I am at the dissertation stage and am conducting a study at ____ this fall. President ____ has granted permission for this study to be conducted. I have received Institutional Review Board approval from UMass Boston and from ____.

The purpose of my dissertation is to explore how institutional conditions such as policies, practices, and resources contribute to part-time students' educational success. Success, for the purpose of this study is defined as retention, completion, and transfer to a four-year institution. One group of students whom I am trying to recruit is new, part-time students. These students would have begun in Fall 2010 or Spring 2011 and are attending part-time this semester. I am seeking the help of faculty who are teaching introductory level courses to allow me to visit their classes for a few minutes to explain my study to students.

I would like to know if it would be possible for me to visit your class for about 5-10 minutes to explain the study. I will ask students who meet the criteria for the study if they would like to participate in a focus group that would meet prior to or after your class the week following my visit. I have conducted similar focus groups as part of a pilot study and have found that meeting one hour before the start of class or after has worked out well. I will provide pizza, salad, and dessert so students have a chance to eat. I also am providing a $20 gift card to students who attend the focus group. If I cannot obtain a sufficient number of students, I will ask if they would like to participate in an interview at their convenience.

Would it be possible for me to meet with your students either on ____ just prior to the beginning of class or during a break. I will distribute a sign-up sheet and ask them to sign up if they are interested in participating. I am looking for a total of 3-5 students.

I can be reached at the email or telephone number listed below.

Thank you for your consideration regarding my study.

Rhonda Gabovitch
RGabovitch@gmail.com
781.775.1992 (cell)

Letter to Professor of Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Dear Professor _____,

I am currently employed at Bristol Community College in the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and I am also working on my doctorate in the Higher Education Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. I am at the dissertation stage and am conducting a study at _____ this fall. President _____ has granted permission for this study to be conducted. I have received Institutional Review Board approval from UMass Boston and from _____.

The purpose of my dissertation is to explore how institutional conditions such as policies, practices, and resources contribute to part-time students' educational success. Success, for the purpose of this study is defined as retention, completion, and transfer to a four-year institution. One group of students whom I am trying to recruit is part-time students nearing graduation. These students will include students who have earned 21 credits toward a one-year certificate or 45 credits toward an associate's degree. I am seeking the help of faculty who are teaching upper level courses to allow me to visit their classes for a few minutes to explain my study to students.

I would like to know if it would be possible for me to visit your class for about 5-10 minutes to explain the study. I will ask students who meet the criteria for the study if they would like to participate in a focus group that would meet prior to or after your class the week following my visit. I have conducted similar focus groups as part of a pilot study and have found that meeting one hour before the start of class or after has worked out well. I will provide pizza, salad, and dessert so students have a chance to eat. I also am providing a $20 gift card to students who attend the focus group. If I cannot obtain a sufficient number of students, I will ask if they would like to participate in an interview at their convenience.

Would it be possible for me to meet with your students either on __/__/__ just prior to the beginning of class or during a break. I will distribute a sign-up sheet and ask them to sign up if they are interested in participating. I am looking for a total of 3-5 students.

I can be reached at the email or telephone number listed below.

Thank you for your consideration regarding my study.

Rhonda Gabovitch
RGabovitch@gmail.com
781.775.1992 (cell)

APPENDIX D

FORMS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

Sign-up Sheet for Focus Groups/Interviews

"COMMUNITY COLLEGE"

(Please print clearly)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Email Address_____

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

☐ New Part-time Student (provide number of credits enrolled in this semester) _____
Preference:

_____ Focus Group   _____ Individual Interview (phone)

Days and times available_____ Days and times available_____

Follow-up Recruitment Letter for New Part-time Students

Date

Name
Address

Dear <u>Student Name</u>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the upcoming focus group to talk about your experiences as a new part-time student at _____ Community College.

The focus group will be held on:

       Day of week

       Time

       Location (Building and Room Number)

There will be a small group of students. Light refreshments will be served. At the end of your participation in the session, I will have a $20 gift card for you to thank you for helping with this research project.

If you are unable to attend, please email me at <u>rgabovitch@gmail.com</u> or call me at (781) 775-1992 as soon as possible so that I can invite another participant.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Informed Consent Form for New Part-time Students

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent form for: Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students

Introduction and Contact Information: You are being asked to participate in a research project that is exploring institutional conditions to improve the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. The researcher is Rhonda M. Gabovitch, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Rhonda M. Gabovitch will discuss them with you. You can reach Rhonda by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the advisor for this research project, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

Description of the Project: The purpose of this research project is to explore what and how various institutional conditions promote or hinder the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. Institutional conditions refer to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution.

Participation in this research project, including filling out forms, will take approximately 75-90 minutes. If you choose to participate in this research project, you will be asked to participate in a focus group in which Rhonda M. Gabovitch (Rhonda) will serve as moderator.

You may also be asked to review Rhonda's interpretation of your focus group participation for its accuracy. Rhonda will provide $20 gift cards to invited participants at the end of the focus group session.

Risks or Discomforts: This research project is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort associated with this research project is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the focus group. You may speak with Rhonda to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study participation. This research project does not directly benefit participants, though research findings may help institutions gain a better understanding of the conditions that promote success and of the obstacles that hinder success.

Confidentiality: You will sign in using your real name and then will select a pseudonym - a name other than your actual name that will be used on forms you will fill out and on written transcripts. You will be asked to fill out the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet that contain questions about your demographic background, your educational background, the educational background of your family, and the ways in which you finance your college education. You will be asked to provide your pseudonym on the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet and to identify yourself by your pseudonym when you speak during the focus group. The sheet that contains your name and pseudonym will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be kept separate from the Student Profile Sheet, the Financial Matters Response Sheet and the focus group transcript. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

I will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose of this research project. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the Dissertation Committee, the transcriber, and Rhonda M. Gabovitch will have access to the primary data. Identifying information and audio files will be destroyed by October 31, 2011. Confidential information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation: The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell Rhonda Gabovitch. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your status as a student at this institution.

Rights: You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach the researcher, Rhonda M. Gabovitch, by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992 and the research advisor, Judith Gill, Ph.D., at judith.gill@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Massachusetts Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: Institutional Review Board (IRB), Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact ____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at ____ at the following address: ____, ____ ____. You may also contact her by telephone at ____ or by email at ____@____.

Please sign and date the following page.

Signatures: I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   Date_____

Signature of researcher

_____

Printed name of researcher

Consent to Audiotaping & Transcription for New Part-time Students

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes
of Part-time Community College Students
Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audiotaping of the focus group session. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the research team, consisting of the Dissertation Committee, the transcriptionist, and Rhonda Gabovitch, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of the focus group may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this research project. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

By signing this form you are consenting to:

❑ having your comments in the focus group taped;

❑ having the tape transcribed;

❑ use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

If, after participating in the focus group session, you decide you want to withdraw from this study, your comments will be stricken from the written transcript.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: May 31, 2011. On or before

that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature_____
Date_____

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Student Profile Sheet for New Part-time Students

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

Sense of Belonging
A. I feel a sense of belonging to ____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

B. I feel that I am a member of the ____ community.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

C. I see myself as part of the ____ community.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

D. Feelings of Morale
I am enthusiastic about ____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

E. I am happy to be at ____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

F. ____is one of the best schools in the nation.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

G. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with other students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Unfriendly,	**Friendly,**
Unsupportive,	**Supportive,**
Sense of	**Sense of**
Alienation	**Belonging**

H. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with instructors.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Unavailable,	**Available,**
Unhelpful,	**Helpful,**
Unsympathetic	**Sympathetic**

I. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with administrative personnel and offices.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Unhelpful,	**Helpful,**
Inconsiderate,	**Considerate,**
Rigid	**Flexible**

1. What is your gender?

   O Male   O Female

2. How old are you?

   O 18-21   O 25-44
   O 22-24   O 45 or older

3. Are you an international student or foreign national?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

4. Did you enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

5. What is your current major? _____

6. Which of the following have you done, are you doing, or do you plan to do while attending this college? **Please check all that apply**.

   ☐ Developmental reading course   ☐ Honors program
   ☐ Developmental math course   ☐ Study skills course
   ☐ Developmental writing course   ☐ Academic Advising/Planning
   ☐ Service-Learning   ☐ Cooperative education experience
   ☐ Learning Community   ☐ Orientation program

7. How many TOTAL credit hours have you earned at this college, not counting the courses you are currently taking this semester?

   ○ None   ○ 30-44 credits
   ○ 1-14 credits   ○ 45-60 credits
   ○ 15-29 credits   ○ Over 60 credits

8. How many credits are you taking this semester?

   ○ 1-3   ○ 4-6   ○ 7-11

9. At this college, what is your approximate grade average?

   ○ A   ○ D
   ○ B   ○ F
   ○ C   ○ This is my first semester

10. What is the **highest** academic credential you have earned?

   ○ None   ○ Associate's Degree
   ○ GED/High School Equivalent   ○ Bachelor's Degree
   ○ High School Diploma   ○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree
   ○ Vocational/Technical Certificate

11. What is the **highest** academic credential you intend to earn?

- ○ Vocational/Technical Certificate
- ○ Associate's Degree
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree

12. What is the **highest** level of education obtained by your:

Mother	**Father**	**Guardian**
○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less
○ Some high school	○ Some high school	○ Some high school
○ High School/GED	○ High School/ GED	○ High School/GED
○ Some comm. college	○ Some comm. college	○ Some community college
○ Certificate	○ Certificate	○ Certificate
○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree
○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college
○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree
○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree
○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree
○ Unknown	○ Unknown	○ Unknown

13. Are you employed?

○ Yes   ○ No

14. If yes, how many hours do you work each week?

- ○ 1 to 5   ○ 21-30
- ○ 6 to 10   ○ More than 30
- ○ 11 to 20   ○ Varies, please specify_____

15. Do you have children living with you at home?

○ Yes   ○ No

16. Do you have other dependents living with you at home?

○ Yes   ○ No

17. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic/Latino?

○ Yes   ○ No

18. Please select **one or more** of the following racial categories to describe yourself:

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White

Financial Matters Response Sheet for New Part-time Students

Name of College _____ Pseudonym (Alias) _____

Interview No._____ Date of Interview/Focus Group _____

1. To what extent is the cost of attending the college difficult?

◯ Not difficult   ◯ Somewhat difficult   ◯ Very difficult

2. Which of the following do you use to pay your tuition <u>at this college</u>? (Please mark all that apply)

□ My own income or savings   □ Spouse/significant other's income or savings

□ Parent(s) income or savings   □ Employer contributions

□ Grants and scholarships   □ Student loans (bank, etc.)

□ Work-study   □ G.I. Bill

□ Unemployment Assistance

□ Other _____

Student Interview/Focus Group Outline and Discussion Protocol for New Part-time Students

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. Background and general information about participants
   a. Students complete Student Profile Sheet
   b. Students complete Financial Matters Response Sheet
   c. Students introduce themselves
      i. (a) name (pseudonym), (b) major, (c) how long you've attended this college,
         (d) other colleges you've attended

2. What motivated you to pursue higher education?

3. Why did you choose to attend this community college?

4. Why are you attending college part-time?

5. What it is like to be a part-time student?

6. What responsibilities outside of school might affect your ability to succeed?

7. To what extent do you use college support services (e.g. advising, tutoring, career planning, etc.) to help you reach your academic goals? Please jot down, on the index card provided, which services you use or have used.

8. Are support services available to you at the times you most need them?

9. When are you most likely to seek help? Day? Night? Weekends? As needed through the semester? Steadily through semester? Before mid-terms? Before finals?

10. How satisfied are you with college support services?

11. What are you most satisfied with? What are you least satisfied with? Why?

12. How satisfied are you with the academic characteristics of the college (course content in your major, availability of advisor, etc.)?

13. What are you most satisfied with? What are you least satisfied with? Why?

14. As you look forward to your education at this college, what will you have to do to achieve success?

Next, we are going to discuss the types of relationships that you are forming/have formed at the college and whether you feel these are important or unimportant to your educational success.

15. In what ways, if any, do you feel a sense of belonging to this institution – that is, to what extent do you feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What makes you feel most connected?

16. How much time and energy do you devote to educationally purposeful activities (e.g. amount of time you study, interact with faculty and peers, and use resources such as the library and technology) at this institution?

17. What do you feel the college does to encourage you to participate in these types of activities?

18. What do you feel the college could do or needs to do to help you become successful?

   Summary and Close of Focus Group
   1. Thank students for participation.
   2. Hand out stipends.

Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Sign-up Sheet for Focus Groups/Interviews

_____COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(Please print clearly)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Email Address_____

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

Telephone number _____ -_____ - _____ (Circle) Cell   Home   Work

☐ Part-time Student Nearing Graduation (provide total number of credits earned (not including this semester) _____

Preference:

_____ Focus Group   _____ Individual Interview (phone)

Days and times available_____ Days and times available_____

Follow-up Recruitment Letter for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Date

Name
Address

Dear <u>Student Name</u>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the upcoming focus group to talk about your experiences as a part-time student nearing completion of your degree or certificate at _____ Community College.

The focus group will be held on:

      Day of week

      Time

      Location (Building and Room Number)

There will be a small group of students. Light refreshments will be served. At the end of your participation in the session, I will have a $20 gift card for you to thank you for helping with this research project.

If you are unable to attend, please email me at rgabovitch@gmail.com or call me at (781) 775-1992 as soon as possible so that I can invite another participant.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Informed Consent Form for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent form for: Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students

Introduction and Contact Information: You are being asked to participate in a research project that is exploring institutional conditions to improve the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. The researcher is Rhonda M. Gabovitch, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Rhonda M. Gabovitch will discuss them with you. You can reach Rhonda by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the advisor for this research project, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

Description of the Project: The purpose of this research project is to explore what and how various institutional conditions promote or hinder the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. Institutional conditions refer to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution.

Participation in this research project, including filling out forms, will take approximately 75-90 minutes. If you choose to participate in this research project, you will be asked to participate in a focus group in which Rhonda M. Gabovitch (Rhonda) will serve as moderator.

You may also be asked to review Rhonda's interpretations of your focus group participation for its accuracy.

Rhonda will provide $20 gift cards to invited participants at the end of the focus group session.

Risks or Discomforts: This research project is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort associated with this research project is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the focus group. You may speak with Rhonda to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study participation. This research project does not directly benefit participants, though research findings may help institutions gain a better understanding of the conditions that promote success and of the obstacles that hinder success.

Confidentiality: You will sign in using your real name and then will select a pseudonym - a name other than your actual name that will be used on forms you will fill out and on written transcripts. You will be asked to fill out the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet that contain questions about your demographic background, your educational background, the educational background of your family, and the ways in which you finance your college education. You will be asked to provide your pseudonym on the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet and to identify yourself by your pseudonym when you speak during the focus group. The sheet that contains your name and pseudonym will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be kept separate from the Student Profile Sheet, the Financial Matters Response Sheet and the focus group transcript. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

I will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose of this research project. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the dissertation committee, the transcriber, and Rhonda M. Gabovitch will have access to the primary data. Identifying information and audio files will be destroyed by October 31, 2011. Confidential information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation: The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell Rhonda Gabovitch. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your status as a student at this institution.

Rights: You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach the researcher, Rhonda M. Gabovitch, by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992 and the research advisor, Judith Gill, Ph.D., at judith.gill@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Massachusetts Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: Institutional Review Board (IRB), Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact _____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at _____ at the following address: _____, _____ _____. You may also contact her by telephone at _____ or by email at _____@_____.

Please sign and date the following page.

Signatures: I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher

Consent to Audiotaping & Transcription for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes
of Part-time Community College Students
Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audiotaping of the focus group session. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the research team, consisting of the Dissertation Committee, the transcriptionist, and Rhonda Gabovitch, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of the focus group may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this research project. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

By signing this form you are consenting to:

❏ having your comments in the focus group taped;

❏ having the tape transcribed;

❏ use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

If, after participating in the focus group session, you decide you want to withdraw from this study, your comments will be stricken from the written transcript.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: May 31, 2011. On or before

that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature _____ Date_____

Student Profile Sheet for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

Sense of Belonging
A. I feel a sense of belonging to _____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

B. I feel that I am a member of the _____ community.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

C. I see myself as part of the _____ community.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

D. Feelings of Morale
I am enthusiastic about _____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

E. I am happy to be at _____.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

F. _____ is one of the best schools in the nation.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Strongly disagree   Neutral   Strongly agree

G. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with other students.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Unfriendly,   **Friendly,**
Unsupportive,   **Supportive,**
Sense of   **Sense of**
Alienation   **Belonging**

H. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with instructors.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Unavailable,   **Available,**
Unhelpful,   **Helpful,**
Unsympathetic   **Sympathetic**

I. Mark the number **from 1 to 7** that best represents the quality of your relationships with administrative personnel and offices.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Unhelpful,   **Helpful,**
Inconsiderate,   **Considerate,**
Rigid   **Flexible**

1. What is your gender?

    ○ Male   ○ Female

2. How old are you?

   ○ 18-21   ○ 25-44
   ○ 22-24   ○ 45 or older

3. Are you an international student or foreign national?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

4. Did you enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

5. What is your current major? _____

6. Which of the following have you done, are you doing, or do you plan to do while attending this college? **Please check all that apply**.

   ☐ Developmental reading course   ☐ Honors program
   ☐ Developmental math course   ☐ Study skills course
   ☐ Developmental writing course   ☐ Academic Advising/Planning
   ☐ Service-Learning   ☐ Cooperative education experience
   ☐ Learning Community   ☐ Orientation program

7. How many TOTAL credit hours have you earned at this college, not counting the courses you are currently taking this semester?

   ○ None   ○ 30-44 credits
   ○ 1-14 credits   ○ 45-60 credits
   ○ 15-29 credits   ○ Over 60 credits

8. How many credits are you taking this semester?

   ○ 1-3   ○ 4-6   ○ 7-11

9. At this college, what is your approximate grade average?

   ○ A   ○ D
   ○ B   ○ F
   ○ C

10. What is the **highest** academic credential you have earned?

○ None   ○ Associate's Degree
○ GED/High School Equivalent   ○ Bachelor's Degree
○ High School Diploma   ○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree
○ Vocational/Technical Certificate

11. What is the **highest** academic credential you intend to earn?

○ Vocational/Technical Certificate
○ Associate's Degree
○ Bachelor's Degree
○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree

12. What is the **highest** level of education obtained by your:

Mother	**Father**	**Guardian**
○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less
○ Some high school	○ Some high school	○ Some high school
○ High School/GED	○ High School/ /GED	○ High School/GED
○ Some comm. college	○ Some comm. college	○ Some comm. college
○ Certificate	○ Certificate	○ Certificate
○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree
○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college
○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree
○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree
○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree
○ Unknown	○ Unknown	○ Unknown

13. Are you employed?

○ Yes   ○ No

14. If yes, how many hours do you work each week?

○ 1 to 5   ○ 21-30
○ 6 to 10   ○ More than 30
○ 11 to 20   ○ Varies, please specify_____

15. Do you have children living with you at home?

○ Yes   ○ No

16. Do you have other dependents living with you at home?

❍ Yes   ❍ No

17. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic/Latino?

❍ Yes   ❍ No

18. Please select **one or more** of the following racial categories to describe yourself:

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
☐ White

Financial Matters Response Sheet for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. To what extent is the cost of attending the college difficult?

◯ Not difficult   ◯ Somewhat difficult   ◯ Very difficult

2. Which of the following do you use to pay your tuition <u>at this college</u>? (Please mark all that apply)

□ My own income or savings   □ Spouse/significant other's income or savings

□ Parent(s) income or savings   □ Employer contributions

□ Grants and scholarships   □ Student loans (bank, etc.)

□ Work-study   □ G.I. Bill

□ Unemployment Assistance

□ Other _____

Interview/Focus Group Materials for Part-time Students Nearing Graduation

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. Background and general information about participants
   a. Students complete Student Profile Sheet
   b. Students complete Financial Matters Response Sheet
   c. Students introduce themselves
      i. (a) name (pseudonym), (b) major, (c) how long you've attended this college,
      (d) other colleges you've attended

2. What has motivated you to pursue higher education?

3. Why did you choose to attend this community college?

4. Why are you attending college part-time?

5. What has it been like to be a part-time student?

6. What responsibilities outside of school have affected your ability to succeed? In what ways did those responsibilities affect your ability to succeed? And what did you do to make sure that you can still succeed at this institution?

7. Now that you are nearing completion of your degree, what makes you believe that you have achieved success as a student here?

8. To what extent do you use or have you used college support services (e.g. advising, tutoring, career planning, etc.) to help you reach your academic goals? Please jot down, on the index card provided, which services you use or have used.

9. Have support services been available to you at the times you most need(ed) them?

10. When are you most likely to seek help? Day? Night? Weekends? As needed through the semester? Steadily through semester? Before mid-terms? Before finals?

11. How satisfied are you/have you been with college support services?

12. What are you/have you been most satisfied with? What are you/have you been least satisfied with? Why?

13. How satisfied are you with the academic characteristics of the college (course content in your major, availability of advisor, etc.)?

14. What are/were you most satisfied with? What are/were you least satisfied with? Why?

Next, we are going to discuss the types of relationships that you are forming/have formed at the college and whether you feel these are/have been important or unimportant to your educational success.

15. In what ways, if any, do you feel a sense of belonging to this institution – that is, to what extent do you feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What makes you feel most connected?

16. How much time and energy do you devote to educationally purposeful activities (e.g. amount of time you study, interact with faculty and peers, and use resources such as the library and technology) at this institution?

17. What do you feel the college does to encourage you to participate in these types of activities?

18. Please describe factors that have helped you toward completing a degree or certificate at this community college and factors that might have been prevented you from completing a degree or certificate at this college.

If time permits, the following questions will be asked.

19. If you had it to do over again, would you attend part-time?

20. What kinds of course scheduling options should be available for part-time students?

21. What would you like educators to know about how this college can improve to help
part-time students succeed?

    Summary and Close of Focus Group
    1. Thank students for participation.
    2. Hand out stipends.

Invitation for Part-time Students who are no Longer at the Institution to Participate in a Semi-structured Interview

Date

Dear <u>Student Name</u>,

Our records indicate that you were enrolled part-time at _____ Community College but are not currently attending this college. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.** We are very interested in hearing from you about why you did not return to this college and about your degree of satisfaction with the various programs and services provided. Permission from your institution for this study has been granted by the University of Massachusetts Boston and _____ Institutional Review Boards.

To help us determine the programs and services that the college already has in place that were particularly helpful to you, and also to help us identify ways to improve programs and services, we would like to hear from you. We invite you to participate in a 60-90 minute interview with Rhonda Gabovitch, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration at University of Massachusetts Boston. Her area of research involves policies and practices that affect the educational success of part-time community college students.

Prior to the interview, you will be asked to fill out the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet that contain questions about your demographic background, your educational background, the educational background of your family, and the ways in which you financed your college education. Ms. Gabovitch will ask you to sign an informed consent form acknowledging your participation in the research study. She will also ask you to sign a form that provides your consent to be audiotaped. At the end of the session, she will provide you with a $20 gift card to thank you for participating in the interview.

The information you share will be kept confidential. You will be asked to select a pseudonym for the interview. That pseudonym will also be used on the two forms that you will fill out before the interview begins. Please be assured that taking part in this interview is completely voluntary and will have no effect on your grades or enrollment status at _____.

Since Ms. Gabovitch will be talking with a limited number of people, the success and quality of this project depends on the full participation of the people who are interviewed. If you would like to participate in this interview, please contact Rhonda Gabovitch via email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992 to set up a time for this interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration in participating in this project.

Sincerely,

<u>OFFICIAL</u>
<u>OFFICIAL'S TITLE</u>
<u>NAME OF COLLEGE</u>

Follow-Recruitment Letter for Part-time Students No Longer at the Institution

<u>Date</u>

Name
Address
City, State ZIP

Dear <u>Student Name</u>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an upcoming interview to talk about your experiences as a part-time student at ____.

Your interview will be held on:

      Day, Month Date, 2010

      XX p.m.

      Via telephone (your cell phone number or other number)

      I will have a $20 gift card for you to thank you for helping with this research project.

If for some reason, you are unable to participate, could you please email me as soon as possible at rgabovitch@gmail.com or call me at (781) 775-1992 so that I can invite another participant. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Informed Consent Form for Part-time Students No Longer at the Institution

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent form for: Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students

Introduction and Contact Information: You are being asked to participate in a research project that is exploring institutional conditions to improve the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. The researcher is Rhonda M. Gabovitch, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration Program at University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Rhonda M. Gabovitch will discuss them with you. You can reach Rhonda by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the advisor for this research project, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

Description of the Project: The purpose of this research project is to explore what and how various institutional conditions promote or hinder the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. Institutional conditions refer to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution.

Participation in this research project, including filling out forms, will take approximately 60-90 minutes. If you choose to participate in this research project, you will be asked to participate in an interview in which Rhonda M. Gabovitch (Rhonda) will serve as interviewer.

You may also be asked to review Rhonda's interpretations of your interview for its accuracy.

Rhonda will provide a $20 gift card to invited interviewees.

Risks or Discomforts: This research is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort associated with this research project is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the focus group. You may speak with Rhonda to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study participation. This research project does not directly benefit participants, though research findings may help institutions gain a better understanding of the conditions that promote success and of the obstacles that hinder success.

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Confidentiality: You will sign in using your real name and then will select a pseudonym – a name other than your actual name that will be used on forms you will fill out and on written transcripts. You will be asked to fill out the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet that contain questions about your demographic background, your educational background, the educational background of your family, and the ways in which you finance your college education. You will be asked to provide your pseudonym on the Student Profile Sheet and the Financial Matters Response Sheet and to identify yourself by your pseudonym during your interview. The sheet that contains your name and pseudonym will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be kept separate from the Student Profile Sheet, the Financial Matters Response Sheet and the interview transcript. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

I will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose of this research project. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the dissertation committee, the transcriber, and Rhonda M. Gabovitch will have access to the primary data. Identifying information and audio files will be destroyed by October 31, 2011. Confidential information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation: The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell Rhonda Gabovitch. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your status as a student at this institution.

Rights: You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach the researcher, Rhonda M. Gabovitch, by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992 and the research advisor, Judith Gill, Ph.D., at judith.gill@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Massachusetts Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: Institutional Review Board (IRB), Quinn Administration Building-2-015, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact _____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at _____ at the following address: _____, _____ _____. You may also contact her by telephone at _____ or by email at _____@_____.

Please sign and date the following page.

Signatures: I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher

Consent to Audiotaping & Transcription for Part-time Students No Longer at the Institution

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes
of Part-time Community College Students
Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audiotaping of the interview session. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the research team, consisting of the Dissertation Committee, the transcriptionist, and Rhonda Gabovitch, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of the interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this research project. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. **You must be over 18 and have graduated from high school or have taken a high school equivalency test to participate in this study.**

Immediately following the interview, if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased and to have your comments stricken from the written transcript.

By signing this form you are consenting to:

❑ having your comments in the interview taped;

❑ having the tape transcribed;

❑ use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: May 31, 2011. On or before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature _____Date_____

Student Profile Sheet for Part-time Students No Longer at the Institution

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. What is your gender?

   ○ Male   ○ Female

2. How old are you?

   ○ 18-21   ○ 25-44
   ○ 22-24   ○ 45 or older

3. Are you an international student or foreign national?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

4. Did you enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

5. What was your major when you attended this institution?
   _____

6. Did you achieve your education goal by attending this community college?

   ○ Yes   ○ No

7. Did you transfer to another institution? If so, to what type and why?
   _____

8. What other reasons did you have for leaving the institution?
   _____

9. Which of the following did you do while attending this college? **Please check all that apply**.

   ☐ Developmental reading course   ☐ Honors program
   ☐ Developmental math course   ☐ Study skills course
   ☐ Developmental writing course   ☐ Academic Advising/Planning
   ☐ Service-Learning   ☐ Cooperative education experience
   ☐ Learning Community   ☐ Orientation program

10. How many TOTAL credit hours did you earn at this college?

- ○ None
- ○ 1-14 credits
- ○ 15-29 credits
- ○ 30-44 credits
- ○ 45-60 credits
- ○ Over 60 credits

11. At this college, what was your approximate grade average?

- ○ A
- ○ B
- ○ C
- ○ D
- ○ F

12. What is the **highest** academic credential you have earned?

- ○ None
- ○ GED/High School Equivalent
- ○ High School Diploma
- ○ Vocational/Technical Certificate
- ○ Associate's Degree
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree

13. What is the **highest** academic credential you intend to earn?

- ○ Vocational/Technical Certificate
- ○ Associate's Degree
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's/Doctoral/Professional Degree

14. What is the **highest** level of education obtained by your:

Mother	**Father**	**Guardian**
○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less	○ 8th grade or less
○ Some high school	○ Some high school	○ Some high school
○ High School or GED	○ High School or GED	○ High School/GED
○ Some comm. college	○ Some comm. college	○ Some comm. college
○ Certificate	○ Certificate	○ Certificate
○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree	○ Associate's degree
○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college	○ Some four-year college
○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree	○ Bachelor's degree
○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree	○ Master's degree
○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree	○ Doctorate degree
○ Unknown	○ Unknown	○ Unknown

15. Are you employed?

    ○ Yes   ○ No

16. If yes, how many hours do you work each week?

    ○ 1 to 5   ○ 21-30
    ○ 6 to 10   ○ More than 30
    ○ 11 to 20   ○ Varies, Please specify_____

17. Do you have children living with you at home?

    ○ Yes   ○ No

19. Do you have other dependents living with you at home?

    ○ Yes   ○ No

20. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic/Latino?

    ○ Yes   ○ No

21. Please select **one or more** of the following racial categories to describe yourself:

    ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
    ☐ Asian
    ☐ Black or African American
    ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    ☐ White

Financial Matters Response Sheet for Part-time Students No Longer at the Institution

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. To what extent was the cost of attending the college difficult?

   ⭘ Not difficult   ⭘ Somewhat difficult   ⭘ Very difficult

2. Which of the following did you use to pay your tuition <u>at this college</u>? (Please mark all that apply)

   ☐ My own income or savings income/savings   ☐ Spouse/significant other's

   ☐ Parent(s) income or savings   ☐ Employer contributions

   ☐ Grants and scholarships   ☐ Student loans (bank, etc.)

   ☐ Work-study   ☐ G.I. Bill

   ☐ Unemployment Assistance

   ☐ Other _____

Student Interview and Discussion Protocol for Part-time Students
No Longer at the Institution (Transfer Students)

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No. _____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. Background and general information about participant
   a. Student completes Student Profile Sheet
   b. Student completes Financial Matters Response Sheet

2. What motivated you to pursue higher education?

3. Why did you attend college part-time?

4. What was it like to be a part-time student?

5. Why did you choose to attend this community college?

6. What was your major reason for leaving the college?

7. What other reasons did you have for leaving the institution?

8. What type of college did you transfer to? 2-year? 4-year? Public? Private? Proprietary?

9. When you left _____, describe whether or not you had reached your goal.

10. If you did not reach your goal, how do you feel that the institution might have helped you achieve your goal?

11. To what extent did you use college support services (e.g. advising, tutoring, career planning, etc.) to help you reach your academic goals?

12. Were support services available to you at the times you most needed them?

13. When were you most likely to seek help? Day? Night? Weekends? As needed through the semester? Steadily through semester? Before mid-terms? Before finals?

14. How satisfied were you with college support services?

15. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

16. How satisfied were you with the academic characteristics of the college (course content in your major, availability of advisor, etc.)

17. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

Next, we are going to discuss the types of relationships that you formed at the college and whether you feel these were important or unimportant to your educational success.

18. In what ways, if any, did you feel a sense of belonging to this institution – that is, to what extent did you feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What made you feel most connected?

19. How much time and energy did you devote to educationally purposeful activities (e.g. amount of time you studied, interacted with faculty and peers, and used resources such as the library and technology) at this institution?

20. What did you feel the college did to encourage you to participate in these types of activities?

If time permits, the following questions will be asked.

21. Please describe institutional factors that might have prevented you from completing a degree or certificate at this college.

22. If you had it to do over again, would you attend part-time?

23. What kinds of course scheduling options should be available for part-time students?

24. What would you like educators to know about how this college can improve to help part-time students succeed?

Summary and Close of Interview
1. Thank you for participating.
2. Hand out (or mail) stipend.

Student Interview and Discussion Protocol for Part-time Students

No Longer at the Institution (Students who did not return the Following Semester but have not Officially Withdrawn)

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. Background and general information about participant
    a. Student completes Student Profile Sheet
    b. Student completes Financial Matters Response Sheet

2. What motivated you to pursue higher education?

3. Why did you attend college part-time?

4. What was it like to be a part-time student?

5. Why did you choose to attend this community college?

6. What was your major reason for leaving the college?

7. What other reasons did you have for leaving the institution?

8. What responsibilities outside of school might have affected your ability to succeed?

9. When you left _____, describe whether or not you had reached your goal.

10. To what extent did you use college support services (e.g. advising, tutoring, career planning, etc.) to help you reach your academic goals?

11. Were support services available to you at the times you most needed them?

12. When are you most likely to seek help? Day? Night? Weekends? As needed through the semester? Steadily through semester? Before mid-terms? Before finals?

13. How satisfied were you with college support services?

14. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

15. How satisfied were you with the academic characteristics of the college (course content in your major, availability of advisor, etc.)?

16. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

Next, we are going to discuss the types of relationships that you have formed at the college and whether you feel these are important or unimportant to your educational success.

17. In what ways, if any, did you feel a sense of belonging to this institution – that is, to what extent did you feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What made you feel most connected?

18. How much time and energy did you devote to educationally purposeful activities (e.g. amount of time you studied, interacted with faculty and peers, and used resources such as the library and technology) at this institution?

19. What did you feel the college did to encourage you to participate in these activities?

20. Please describe institutional factors that might have prevented you from completing a degree or certificate at this college.

21. If you had it to do over again, would you attend part-time?

22. What kinds of course scheduling options should be available for part-time students?

23. What would you like educators to know about how this college can improve to help part-time students succeed?

24. Have you thought at all about returning to this college or to going to any other college? What do you think would most help you to succeed?

   Summary and Close of Interview
         1. Thank you for participating.
         2. Hand out (or mail) stipend.

Student Interview and Discussion Protocol for Part-time Students
No Longer at the Institution (Students who have Officially Withdrawn)

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview/Focus Group** _____

1. Background and general information about participant
   a. Student completes Student Profile Sheet
   b. Student completes Financial Matters Response Sheet

2. What motivated you to pursue higher education?

3. Why did you attend college part-time?

4. What was it like to be a part-time student?

5. Why did you choose attend this community college?

6. What was your major reason for leaving the college?

7. What other reasons did you have for leaving the institution?

8. What responsibilities outside of school might have affected your ability to succeed?

9. When you left _____, describe whether or not you had reached your goal.

10. To what extent did you use college support services (e.g. advising, tutoring, career planning, etc.) to help you reach your academic goals?

11. Were support services available to you at the times you most needed them?

12. When are you most likely to seek help? Day? Night? Weekends? As needed through the semester? Steadily through semester? Before mid-terms? Before finals?

13. How satisfied were you with college support services?

14. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

15. How satisfied were you with the academic characteristics of the college (course content in your major, availability of advisor, etc.)?

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16. What were you most satisfied with? What were you least satisfied with? Why?

Next, we are going to discuss the types of relationships that you have formed at the college and whether you feel these are important or unimportant to your educational success.

17. In what ways, if any, did you feel a sense of belonging to this institution – that is, to what extent did you feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What made you feel most connected?

18. How much time and energy did you devote to educationally purposeful activities (e.g. amount of time you studied, interacted with faculty and peers, and used resources such as the library and technology) at this institution?

19. What did you feel the college did to encourage you to participate in these activities?

20. Please describe institutional factors that might have prevented you from completing a degree or certificate at this college.

21. If you had it to do over again, would you attend part-time?

22. What kinds of course scheduling options should be available for part-time students?

23. What would you like educators to know about how this college can improve to help part-time students succeed?

24. Have you thought at all about returning to this college or going to any other college? What do you think would most help you to succeed?

Summary and Close of Interview
1. Thank you for participating.
2. Hand out (or mail) stipend.

FORMS FOR FULL-TIME AND ADJUNCT FACULTY

Faculty Invitation

May 11, 2011

Dear Professor ___,

You are invited to participate in a research project that I am conducting as part of my doctoral dissertation work in Higher Education Administration at University of Massachusetts Boston. The overall purpose of this project is to examine college policies and practices that affect the educational success of part-time community college students. Your name was selected because you are a full-time/adjunct faculty member at ____ Community College. Permission from your institution for this study has been granted by President ____ and the ____ Community College Institutional Review Board.

I will be scheduling interviews with full-time/adjunct faculty members at ____ Community College from May 16-July 15.

The interview is scheduled to run for about 60-90 minutes. Before the start of the interview, I will ask you to read and sign an informed consent form and a form that gives your permission for the interview to be audiotaped. Please be assured that taking part in this interview is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect on your relationship with your institution or with UMass Boston. If you have questions, you can reach me via email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the research advisor, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact Ms. ____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Community College at the following address: _____. You may also contact her by telephone at ____ or by email at ____@____.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by May 15, 2011.

Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Follow-up Recruitment Letter for Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members

XX XX, 2011

Name
Title
Institution
Street
City, State Zip

Dear Full-time/Adjunct Professor,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an upcoming interview to talk about your experiences with part-time students at Hilo Community College.

Your interview will be held on:

   Date: Day, Month, Day, 2011

   Time: XX:XX p.m.

   Location: XX

If for some reason, you are unable to participate, could you please email me as soon as possible at rgabovitch@gmail.com or call me at (781) 775-1992. I am looking forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Rhonda

Rhonda Gabovitch
Doctoral Candidate
University of Massachusetts Boston

Informed Consent Form for Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Leadership in Education
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent form for: Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students

Introduction and Contact Information: You are being asked to participate in a research project that is exploring institutional conditions to improve the education outcomes of part-time community college students. The researcher is Rhonda M. Gabovitch, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Rhonda M. Gabovitch will discuss them with you. You can reach Rhonda by email at rgabovitch@gmail.com or by phone at (781) 775-1992. You may also contact the advisor for this research project, Judith Gill, Ph.D., who can be reached at judith.gill@umb.edu.

Description of the Project: The purpose of this research project is to explore what and how various institutional conditions facilitate or hinder the educational outcomes of part-time community college students. Institutional conditions refer to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution.

Participation in research project will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete. If you choose to participate in this research project, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be conducted by Rhonda M. Gabovitch.

Risks or Discomforts: This research project is of minimal risk. Possible discomfort associated with this research project is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the interview. You may speak with Rhonda to discuss any distress or other issues related to your study participation. This research project does not directly benefit participants, though research findings may help institutions gain a better understanding of the conditions that promote success and of the obstacles that hinder success.

Confidentiality: You will sign in using your real name and then will select a pseudonym. You will be asked to fill out the Profile Sheet for Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members. You will be asked to provide your pseudonym on the Profile Sheet for Full-time Faculty/Adjunct Faculty Members and to identify yourself by your pseudonym during your interview. The sheet that contains your name and pseudonym will be stored in a locked file cabinet and will be kept separate from the Profile Sheet for Full-

time/Adjunct Faculty Members and the interview transcript. Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project.

I will not ask you for any personal information that is not directly associated with the purpose of this research project. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Only the dissertation committee, the transcriber, and Rhonda M. Gabovitch will have access to the primary data. Identifying information and audio files will be destroyed by October 31, 2011. Confidential information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation: The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to terminate participation, you should tell Rhonda Gabovitch. Whatever you decide will in no way affect your status as a faculty member at this institution.

Rights: You have the right to ask questions about this research before you sign this form and at any time during the study. You can reach the researcher Rhonda M. Gabovitch at (781) 775-1992 or rgabovitch@gmail.com and the research advisor Judith Gill, Ph.D. at judith.gill@umb.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached at the following address: Institutional Review Board (IRB), Quinn Administration Building-2-080, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393. You can also contact the Board by telephone or email at (617) 287-5370 or at human.subjects@umb.edu. In addition, you may contact ____, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at ____ at the following address: ____, ____ ____. You may also contact her by telephone at ____ or by email at ____@____.

Please sign and date the following page.

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Signatures: I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. I ALSO CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher

Consent to Audiotaping & Transcription for Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes
of Part-time Community College Students
Rhonda M. Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston

This study involves the audiotaping of the interview session. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audiotape or the transcript. Only the research team, consisting of the Dissertation Committee, the transcriptionist, and Rhonda Gabovitch, will be able to listen to the tapes.

The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of the interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this research project. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Immediately following the interview, if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased and to have your comments stricken from the written transcript.

By signing this form you are consenting to:

❑ having your comments in the interview taped;

❑ having the tape transcribed;

❑ use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

By checking the box in front of each item, you are consenting to participate in that procedure.

This consent for taping is effective until the following date: October 31, 2011. On or

before that date, the tapes will be destroyed.

Participant's Signature _____Date_____

Profile Sheet for Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No. _____ **Date of Interview** _____

1. How long have you taught in higher education?

   ❍ less than one year ❍ 1-3 years ❍ 4-6 years ❍ 7-10 years ❍ 11 or more years

2. How long have you worked in a community college setting?

   ❍ less than one year ❍ 1-3 years ❍ 4-6 years ❍ 7-10 years ❍ 11 or more years

3. How long have you worked at this community college?

   ❍ less than one year ❍ 1-3 years ❍ 4-6 years ❍ 7-10 years ❍ 11 or more years

4. Approximately how many part-time students do you meet with during the course of a week?

   ❍ zero ❍ 1-5 ❍ 6-10 ❍ 11-15 ❍ 20 or more

   If 20 or more, please specify approximate number _____

4a. How do you communicate with part-time students? <u>Check all that apply</u>.

☐ Group faced-to-face meetings ☐ Individual face-to-face meetings ☐ Individual telephone calls ☐ Group e-mail ☐ Individual e-mail

4b. Are these types of contacts similar or different from the contact you have with full-time students?

   ❍ Similar ❍ Different

4c. In what ways are they similar or different? _____

5. Could you tell me in which department you teach? _____

6. Gender

    ○ Male   ○ Female

7. Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic/Latino?

    ○ Yes   ○ No

8. Please **select one or more** of the following racial categories to describe yourself:

    ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
    ☐ Asian
    ☐ Black or African American
    ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    ☐ White

9. Age Group

    ○ 24 or younger ○ 25-30 ○ 31-35 ○ 35-39 ○ 40-45 ○ 46-50 ○ 51-55
    ○ 56 or older

10. What is the **highest** academic credential you have earned?

    ○No College   ○ Some College   ○ Associate's Degree ○ Bachelor's Degree
    ○ Master's Degree ○ Professional Degree ○ Doctoral Degree   ○ CAGS
    ○ N/A

Introduction to Interview with Full-time/Adjunct Faculty Members

Institutional Conditions to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Part-time Community College Students Interview Protocol

Rhonda Gabovitch
University of Massachusetts Boston
rgabovitch@gmail.com

Interview: 60-90 minutes
Thank you for agreeing to take time out of your schedule for this interview. I am conducting research for my dissertation at University of Massachusetts Boston and am studying institutional conditions that improve educational outcomes such as retention, graduation, and transfer of part-time students at community colleges. By institutional conditions, I am referring to the policies, programs, practices, and resources of the institution. The purpose of this study is to gain a fuller understanding of the institutional conditions that help or hinder students and to determine the types of conditions that will promote educational success for part-time community college students.

I will be conducting interviews with three administrators, three full-time faculty, and three adjunct faculty on this campus. I am also conducting focus groups and/or interviews with part-time students (new and those nearing completion of degrees/certificates) and interviews with three former students. The purpose of the focus groups and interviews with these three groups of individuals is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of part-time students.

Your name and the name of your institution will not appear in this study. The information that you provide will be confidential.

Could you please read the informed consent form and sign and date it if you are comfortable in doing so. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

I will audiotape this interview to ensure the accuracy of our conversation. The audiotape will be transcribed by an individual who will not have access to your identity. When the research is over, a copy of the transcription will be retained, and the tape will be destroyed. Could you please sign and date the audiotaping form. You may, at any time, ask that the tape recording device be turned off. Immediately following the interview, if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study, you will be given the opportunity to have the tape erased and to have your comments stricken from the written transcript.

This interview will run approximately 60-90 minutes. I will ask you approximately 11 questions about part-time students at this college.

Thank you for your time. The information you provide will be very helpful in beginning to understand the how institutional conditions affect the educational outcomes of part-time community college students.

Interview with Full-time/Adjunct Faculty

Name of College _____ **Pseudonym (Alias)** _____

Interview No._____ **Date of Interview** _____

The central question for this research study is: In what ways do institutional conditions at community colleges shape the educational success of part-time community college students?

1. Could you briefly tell me about your experience as a full-time/adjunct faculty member at this college?

2. Do you teach all face-to-face classes? If not, what proportion of courses is taught in another modality? What is that modality?

3. Are you aware of students' attendance status? If so, do you know which students are attending college full-time and which students are attending part-time?

4. Could you identify obstacles that part-time students encounter in trying to complete their degrees/certificates? Personal _____ Institutional _____

5. What kinds of teaching methods work best for situations where you have full- and part-time students in the same class? What doesn't work?

6. What types of pedagogical practices, if any, do you employ to address the needs of part-time students in your classes?

7. Do you think that part-time students develop a sense of belonging to the institution? That is, to what extent do they feel a part of the college community as a whole or a part of a particular group at the college? What makes them feel most connected?

8. To what extent do you think that student engagement – the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities (characterized by amount of time students study, interact with faculty and peers, and use resources such as the library and technology) occurs throughout the college? What does the college do to encourage participation among part-time students in such educationally purposeful activities?

9. As a full-time/adjunct faculty member, can you describe the types of interactions you have with your students? Are there any differences depending on the full-time or part-time status of your students?

10. If students need to reach you outside of class, what do you find is the most effective way for them to do so?

11. Does your college have a definition for student success and what is it?

12. What kinds of professional development activities might there be that could help faculty better understand the needs of the part-time community college population?

APPENDIX F

TEMPLATE FOR DOCUMENT REVIEW

(Adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 54–55; and Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008)

Name or Type of Document:_____

Document No.:_____

Date Received:_____

Date of Document:_____

Event or Contact with which Document is Associated:

_____

☐   Descriptive

☐   Evaluative

☐   Other_____

Page #	Key Words/Concepts	Comments: Relationship to Research Questions

Brief Summary of Contents:

_____
_____

Significance or Purpose of Document:

_____
_____

Is There Anything Contradictory About Document?

☐   Yes

☐   No

Salient Questions/Issues to Consider:

_____
_____

Additional Comments/Reflections/Issues:

_____
_____

APPENDIX G

LIST OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS AT ACME AND HILO

	Session	Pseudonym	Gender	Age group
Acme new	Day	Barry	Male	18–21
	Day	Sally	Female	22–24
	Day	Gwen	Female	25–44
	Evening	Michelle	Female	18–21
	Evening	Bob	Male	22–24
	Evening	Kylie	Female	22–24
	Evening	Eric	Male	25–44
	Evening	Steph	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Lily	Female	18–21
	Weekend	Becky	Female	22–24
	Weekend	Meg	Female	22–24
	Weekend	Brianna	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Elizabeth	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Eunice	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Victoria	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Zelma	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Marie	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Inez	Female	45 and older
Acme nearing graduation	Day	Mark	Male	22–24
	Day	Patricia	Female	22–24
	Day	Seth	Male	25–44
	Evening	Jeff	Male	22–24
	Evening	Sarah	Female	22–24
	Evening	Adam	Male	25–44
	Evening	Paul	Male	25–44
	Evening	Scarlet	Female	25–44
	Evening	Tim	Male	25–44
	Evening	Ellen	Female	45 and older
	Evening	Kim	Female	45 and older
	Weekend	Jake	Male	25–44
	Weekend	Ernestine	Female	45 and older
	Weekend	Dahlia	Female	45 and older
	Weekend	Debra	Female	45 and older

	Session	Pseudonym	Gender	Age group
Acme transfer		Rosie	Female	18–21
Acme official withdrawal		Suzie	Female	18–21
Acme not official withdrawal		Ronald	Male	18–21
	Day	Carolyn	Female	18–21
	Day	Charles	Male	18–21
	Day	Gary	Male	18–21
	Day	Joseph	Male	22–24
	Day	Windy	Female	22–24
	Day	Jonah	Male	25–44
	Day	Chris	Male	45 and older
	Evening	Tio	Male	18–21
	Evening	Barbara	Female	25–44
	Evening	Elliot	Male	25–44
	Evening	Nancy	Female	25–44
	Evening	Phoebe	Female	25–44
Hilo new	Evening	Shirley	Female	25–44
	Evening	Beverly	Female	45 and older
	Weekend	Jared	Male	22–24
	Weekend	Amelia	Female	25–44
	Weekend	Anna	Female	25–44
	Total N		17	17 17
	Day	Maggie	Female	22–24
	Day	Lisa	Female	25–44
	Day	Monica	Female	25–44
	Day	Sacha	Female	25–44
Hilo nearing graduation	Evening	Luann	Female	18–21
	Evening	Jose	Male	22–24
	Evening	Robert	Male	25–44
	Evening	Laura	Female	45 and older
	Evening	Marisa	Female	45 and older

	Session	Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	
Hilo nearing graduation	Weekend	Helena	Female	18–21	
	Weekend	Jen	Female	25–44	
	Weekend	Pamela	Female	45 and older	
	Weekend	Sandra	Female	45 and older	
	Total	N		13	13
Hilo transfer		Sadie	Female	18–21	
	Total N		1	1	1
Hilo not official withdrawal		Naomi	Female	45 and older	
	Total N		1	1	1
Total	N		69	69	69

APPENDIX H

LIST OF ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY PARTICIPANTS

		Gender	Status
Acme Administrators	1	Male	Full-time
	2	Male	Full-time
	3	Male	Full-time
Acme Faculty	1	Female	Full-time
	2	Female	Full-time
	3	Male	Full-time
	4	Female	Adjunct
	5	Female	Adjunct
Hilo Administrators	1	Male	Full-time
	2	Female	Full-time
	3	Female	Full-time
Hilo Faculty	1	Female	Full-time
	2	Male	Full-time
	3	Female	Adjunct
	4	Male	Adjunct

Note. Administrators, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty members are identified as "an administrator," as "a full-time faculty member," or as "an adjunct faculty member."

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