

Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs

Volume 39 | Issue 1

2023

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Recommended Citation

Syno, J., McBrayer, J. S., Calhoun, D. W., Zinskie, C., & Fallon, K. (2023). An Examination of Faculty and Staff Collaboration and Relationships In Higher Education. *Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs*, 39(1). <https://doi.org/10.20429/gcpa.2023.390105>

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AN EXAMINATION OF FACULTY AND STAFF COLLABORATION AND RELATIONSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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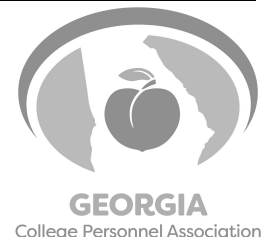
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Collaboration between academic and student affairs professionals is an important means of increasing student success; however, historical divides between these units have made implementation of these efforts challenging. This quantitative study sought to evaluate the perceptions of faculty and student affairs staff towards collaborative efforts and toward one another within a single campus of a research institution within the southeastern United States. Findings show that while both faculty and staff value collaborations and believe they positively impact student success, these units do not experience equitable voice and responsibility within collaborative efforts when conducted. Additionally, differences were found in the enjoyment of collaborative efforts and how various traits impacted willingness to collaborate. Significant differences were also found in the perceptions faculty and staff hold toward one another, both in perceptions of the roles and within relational descriptors. Finally, this study identified that interpersonal relationships and perceptions do in fact relate to a willingness to collaborate, but do so in differing ways for the two employee classifications. Implications for institutional leadership and recommendations for future research are provided.

Syno, J., McBrayer, J.S., Calhoun, D.W., Zinskie, C., & Fallon, K. (2023). An examination of faculty and staff collaboration and relationships in higher education. *Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs*, 39(1), 94-121.

ISSN: 2330-7269



Institutions of higher education have been calling for increased collaboration between faculty and staff in varied modes, suggesting that collaboration between these units positively impacts student engagement and success (Whitt et al., 2008). Collaboration, deemed effective in a university context, is vital to tackle the ever-changing paradigm shifts in learning (Pham & Williamson, 2020). Additionally, partnerships between faculty and staff allow for shared use of resources to support teaching and scholarly creative activity, and both staff and faculty bring their varying backgrounds to advance university initiatives. Much of the literature on collaboration within higher education is focused on best practices and barriers to collaboration (Gulley, 2017), leaving many research areas on these collaborative practices understudied. Additionally, much of the research on faculty and staff collaboration in higher education has become dated as researchers have moved to look at collaborative efforts between higher education institutions and outside partners. Despite the change in focus, individuals within higher education are still tasked to participate in collaborative efforts that streamline processes to improve student learning, such as First Year programming, academic advising, and tutoring services (Gulley, 2017). While faculty and staff collaboration has been shown to positively impact the student experience,

commonly cited issues such as differences in culture, educational background, incentive, poor interpersonal relationships, and differing perceptions of purpose between faculty and staff act as barriers to successful collaboration and building trust between units (Kezar, 2001).

Literature around faculty and staff collaboration is often focused on the perceptions of senior administrators, specifically senior student affairs officers, and not on the perceptions of the faculty and staff tasked to work together (Kezar, 2003). While the support of senior administrators is cited as a means of promoting successful faculty and staff collaboration, it is thought to be less significant in the minds of staff members, taking a secondary role to the cultural components and relationships between faculty and staff (Kezar, 2003). Currently, the lack of empirical research in this area leaves significant questions about the role of faculty and staff relationships in the realm of collaborative programs, and thus further research is warranted. This quantitative study sought to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the perceptions faculty and staff have of collaborative efforts (in terms of willingness to collaborate, the value of collaboration, the impact of collaboration, prior experiences collaborating, and factors contributing to collaboration) and the perceptions faculty and staff have toward

one another (in terms of the caliber of interpersonal relationships based upon role description within the institution).

By understanding how faculty and staff collaborate and perceive each other, university administrators may promote a more efficient collaborative process. Findings from this study are intended to assist in better understanding how to initiate and continue collaborative efforts within an institution effectively. Improved collaborative efforts may assist in improving student success in terms of retention and graduation. Additionally, data from this study may also be used to address misconceptions or tension (e.g., microaggressions) between faculty and staff units to improve relationships between units involved in collaborative efforts. Therefore, this study was driven by one overarching research question: What association, if any, exists between faculty and staff collaboration and interpersonal relationships based upon institutional role as faculty or staff?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Collaboration and Benefits of Collaboration on Student Success Initiatives

As suggested by Sockett (1998), all partnerships exist within four unique forms: service relationships, where support or service is provided through a voluntary relationship and in which one party seeks no significant involvement; exchange relationships, where

resources or services are exchanged for the mutual benefit of both parties; cooperative relationships, where both parties partake in planning and equally share responsibilities; and transformative relationships, where parties share all elements including financial, operational, and evaluative resources and responsibilities. The researchers employed the seminal work of Kezar (2003) as the guiding theoretical work as this research closely aligned the definition of collaboration with the concept of shared relationships in describing collaboration as “individuals working together toward a common purpose with equal voice and responsibility” (p. 138). This definition of collaboration was utilized for the purposes of this study, and this served as our guiding framework.

Proponents of collaboration suggested that collaboration between academic faculty and student affairs staff creates a seamless learning environment in which the importance of learning both within the classroom and outside of the classroom is brought into focus (Whitt et al., 2008). Collaborative efforts between faculty and staff units are typically found in the areas of first-year experience, housing, bridge programs, service learning, career programming, and advisement (Gulley, 2017). These collaborative efforts have been linked to improvements in student success in the areas of retention rates, critical thinking skills, and institutional

engagement, but also in institutional efficiency and effectiveness (Kezar, 2005). Additionally, Kuh et al. (2011) identified collaborative efforts between faculty and staff as common practice at institutions with high graduation rates and found that graduation rates remained high or improved over time, indicating that collaborative practices may be positively associated with these rates. However, initial research by Syno et al. (2019) revealed that faculty held a higher responsibility to collaborate than staff. There was no relationship found between staff members' willingness to collaborate with faculty and their perceptions of their role as a staff member. Additionally, findings discovered that the more staff believed an incentive was provided to faculty to collaborate, the more staff were willing to participate. One suggested reason for this increase in willingness is that staff perceive faculty as having a higher desire to collaborate if they are incentivized. Additionally, it was found that staff perceived lower levels of respect from faculty members. Therefore, faculty incentives may influence staff's perception of the level of respect they receive from faculty, suggesting the perception that staff will be more respected if faculty are more motivated to engage in collaboration (Syno et al., 2019).

Barriers to Collaboration

Difficulties in collaborating take place as individuals indicate that the classroom is the faculty domain and staff are viewed as support for faculty and staff external to the classroom. Lack of opportunities for collaboration and ways in which organizations are structured separate faculty and staff. Different cultures, minimal incentives for faculty to collaborate, and lack of respect between faculty and staff are also often cited as barriers to collaboration (Dale & Drake, 2005). Ultimately, many of these issues can be grouped into organizational culture issues that act as barriers to collaboration. According to Lau and Williams (2015), "culture within an organization constitutes a set of unspoken rules that govern [sic] how their members interact with each other and with their environment" (p. 338).

Often, the physical distance between faculty offices and staff offices creates a significant barrier to communication and collaboration, as it is inconvenient to work together when located in different physical units (Philpott & Strange, 2003). Additionally, these physical barriers can lead to segregation through the exclusion from meetings and development opportunities (Dale & Drake, 2005). This structural separation may lead to the development of a culture that does not encourage inclusion of these separate units. While technological improvements have

helped to decrease some of the difficulties with this structural separation, Skopp et al. (2015) stated that “more complex situations, which involve resolving differences or problem-solving, may call for higher levels of human interaction such as FtF [face-to-face] meetings” (p. 908). Collaboration at a distance was found to be limited by the technology tools available and connectivity to those tools (Jolak et al., 2018). Also, trust in the technological system being used for collaboration at a distance played a significant role in the collaboration (Choi & Cho, 2019). Additionally, social challenges were reported in those distanced efforts in which individuals felt unable to read social cues, which led to difficulties in decision-making, and participants indicated a higher lack of trust when collaborating at a distance (Jolak et al., 2018). When collaborating at a distance, trust in your collaborators is a vital component of successful collaboration (Choi & Cho, 2019).

Despite the importance of inclusion and proximity, Allen-Collinson (2006) indicated that “shared values are at the center of organizational work cultures” (p. 276). Values can be viewed through the lens of policies. An example of policy impacting culture exists in the promotion of a faculty reward system. Often faculty promotion and tenure guidelines provide little, if any, incentive for collaboration. Faculty are rewarded for

scholarly research and contributions to their fields of study, which is often done in isolation or with limited collaboration (LePeau, 2015). As a result, little additional time is available to participate in truly collaborative efforts with staff, and little importance is placed on collaboration in faculty culture. Additionally, these rewards vary significantly from those offered to staff members, where collaboration is often required or strongly encouraged. It is important to note that at the researchers’ institution, not all faculty are research faculty, as many programs employ both clinical faculty and teaching faculty. With this noted, the researchers’ institution currently holds the status of R2 with a plan for a “road to R1” further promoting the need to meet higher expected research obligations.

It is also important to recognize that different units on campus have different cultural identities. “Collaboration required the introduction and re-acquaintance of campus faculty and student affairs cultures” (Philpott & Strange, 2003, p. 80). Their findings showed significantly different expectations between the two units where units lacked a common language and understanding of roles and student success, which if not addressed, negatively impact their ability to collaborate. Based on similar findings, Kezar and Eckels (2002) recommended that institutions perform an analysis of institutional

culture to help determine effective strategies to implement any changes. Ultimately, their study showed if the change proposed goes against the institutional culture, more issues will be experienced throughout the change. When applied to the creation of collaborative partnerships, it is important that analysis of group cultures occurs to help avoid cultural missteps and misunderstandings.

Strategies for Successful Collaborations

While barriers may hinder collaborative efforts, successful collaborations between faculty and staff do exist and have provided insight to best practices for institutions. Institutions wishing to implement successful collaborative efforts should begin these efforts by focusing on the mission of the institution to help unify different units and cultures (Small, 2008). Whitt et al. (2008) indicated that “effective partnership programs are grounded in, and extend the influence of, the institution’s mission in their purpose, design, implementation, and assessment” (p. 239). This purposeful usage of collaborations prevents collaboration for the sake of collaboration as it requires leaders to evaluate collaborative efforts to ensure they align with the mission and make good sense for the institution (Green & Johnson, 2015).

In a 2003 study, Kezar identified that leadership support was the top indicator of collaborative success but indicated it is less

successful in institutions classified as comprehensive colleges or universities as well as those with a student population of more than 10,000. A suggested possibility is that institutions with fewer faculty and staff provide a collaborative environment due to a more intimate experience smaller colleges can offer. Despite this caveat that leadership support within larger institutions is less important, it is still valuable as it can help develop an enthusiasm for collaborative efforts and help in developing buy-in for such initiatives. As highlighted by Cho and Sriram (2016), institutional support of collaboration is vital to building competency in collaborative skills. With the cultural differences between faculty and staff in mind, it is important to start collaborative efforts small (Green & Johnson, 2015) and in areas where there is already a positive working relationship or shared cultural understanding (Whitt et al., 2008). Because academic and student affairs departments already have positive relationships, these units can often handle additional stressors that may be attached to collaborative efforts better than two units with little in common culturally. Kezar (2003) identified communication as one of the top factors contributing to successful collaboration. In a study by Florenthal and Tolsikov-Mast (2012), both faculty and staff indicated that more meetings, specifically involving both academic and student affairs units, would likely decrease tensions

between the groups and this reduction of tension would provide a more positive working environment. While staff wanted to see an increase in faculty-staff committees, faculty wanted to see more social events which would allow the groups to intermingle and better understand each other. Both groups wanted more opportunities for interaction and felt that those opportunities would lead to better relationships between the units.

As administrators continue to develop new and innovative ways to provide affordable, high-quality education for students, calls for collaboration continue to be heard across higher education as a means to increase student success in the areas of graduation and retention (Kezar, 2003). Barriers to collaboration within higher education, as a result of poor faculty and staff relationships, continue to plague institutional employees attempting to collaborate (Cho & Sriram, 2016). Despite this, there is little empirical research available to better understand the current perceptions faculty and staff hold of each other and how those relate to collaborative efforts on campuses.

According to Kezar (2001), successful collaboration requires collegiality, but where do those within a singular comprehensive institution within the southeast region currently stand in the development of that collegial environment? Previous research from Syno et al. (2019) indicates that the

environment of collegiality might be weak between faculty and staff. This study sought to expand upon that previous research by increasing the number of participants from across the university. Kezar (2005) indicated that "it is important to gather data from individuals across the institution as faculty, staff, and administrators often have varied perspectives" (p. 842). This expanded study allowed administrators to better gauge the nature of faculty and staff collaborations and the interpersonal relationships between the two groups within the identified research university, allowing for the enactment of purposeful and sustainable collaborative efforts that will positively impact student success (i.e., retention and graduation).

Despite a shared mission to promote student success and the positive influence of collaboration on student success, faculty and staff are faced with challenges in terms of working together. This is often associated with strained faculty and staff relationships. This lack of collaboration not only hinders student success initiatives, it often results in duplicated efforts and inefficiencies within higher education during a time of budget cuts and increased demand for student success accountability. Even though there is exhaustive literature on the need for collaboration and the barriers to faculty and staff collaboration, there exists little empirical research on the associations between faculty and staff

collaborations and faculty and staff interpersonal relationships, and thus, this research bridges that gap in the research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This quantitative study was an expansion of a previous study (Syno et al., 2019) used to evaluate faculty and staff perceptions of collaborations and their perceptions of one another in terms of institutional role within a small number of units within a research institution. This next phase of the study utilized an increased population to include faculty units from all colleges within the institution on a singular campus and all staff employed within the functional areas of student affairs on that same campus, thus expanding upon the previous research to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of collaborative efforts within the institution.

Population

This study was conducted within a public regional university located in the southeastern United States. The institution was designated as a Carnegie Doctoral/R2 institution indicating the institution has high research activity. The population of this study included all full-time staff employed within student affairs functional units as identified by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA, 2014). NASPA is

home to the profession of student affairs; thus, their guiding principles provide the framework for identifying our population. NASPA posits the cultivation of student success through collaboration with their institutional members via a network of colleges and universities that represent all sectors of higher education institutions nationwide.

According to the data available at the time of data collection, there were 1150 faculty and staff members from the identified groups employed on the selected campus. Staff members employed within the Vice President's offices or those above a director level and faculty with less than 50% teaching responsibilities were excluded from this study.

Instrumentation

An initial study was completed in 2015 in which faculty members within one college and staff members within five student affairs functional units were asked to participate (Syno et al., 2019). As a part of the prior study, the first author developed and piloted an anonymous survey using Qualtrics among a small sample of faculty and staff. The survey was aligned to research outlined in the literature and tied to research questions, proving strong relevance. The newly adapted instrument was realigned to the research outlined in the literature review and associated with the research question. This

new instrument was reviewed by a small group of faculty and staff for clarity. Changes were made based upon feedback from this initial phase study sample to provide additional definitions, clarify language, and reword challenging questions. The instrument was expanded to better gain insights into the relationships between faculty and staff. As a result of the modified instrument, content validity was reestablished through the alignment of instrument questions with the literature.

The Faculty and Staff Perceptions of Organizational Units and Collaboration Impact Survey was used in this study (Syno et al., 2019). The instrument contains nine demographic questions, nine multiple-choice questions, and 92 Likert scale questions. The instrument was primarily made up of closed-choice questions to prevent miscoding of participant responses and to increase the likelihood of participant response to questions (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Two optional open-ended questions were included at the end of the instrument, providing those willing, and with applicable insights, to expand upon earlier responses. Likert scale questions are written using affirmative and positive language in both the responses and questions to improve the clarity of both question and answer choices (Frery, 1996). Additionally, questions contain balanced response categories (deVaus, 2014) to

eliminate bias. Questions of value (1=not at all valuable, 2=slightly valuable, 3=moderately valuable, 4=very valuable), willingness (1=strongly unwilling, 2=somewhat unwilling, 3=somewhat willing, 4=strongly willing), contributing factors to collaboration (1=much less likely to collaborate, 2=somewhat less likely to collaborate, 3=somewhat more likely to collaborate, 4=much more likely to collaborate), perception (1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3=somewhat agree, 4=strongly agree), relationships (1=does not describe my relationship, 2=somewhat describes my relationship, 3=describes my relationship well, 4=describes my relationship extremely well), and frequency (1=rarely, 2=somewhat rarely, 3=somewhat often, 4=often) were written consisting of four possible responses to avoid data clustering that could occur with a neutral response (Passmore et al., 2002).

Concerns of social desirability, in which the respondent answers questions based upon not wanting to be judged poorly by others, were minimized through the online web-survey administration (deVaus, 2014). In addition, the questionnaire was conducted completely anonymously to eliminate fear of judgment or retaliation. Skip logic and display logic, also known as embedded logic, are inserted into the instrument design to direct respondents to answer only the questions related to the role identified, making the

experience as short and simplistic as possible for the participant (deVaus, 2014). This means that while the survey contains 150 questions, participants were only responsible for completing at most 110 questions. Completion of the instrument was estimated to require 15 to 20 minutes, and this timeline was verified through additional testing.

Data Collection

Survey participants received an email requesting participation in the study and were provided a link to access the anonymous online measure instrument in Qualtrics via their institutional email. The instrument was available for two weeks, and participants were informed that participation would take approximately 15-20 minutes. One week after sending the initial invitation to participate, a follow-up email was sent out to participants reminding them of the survey and the upcoming deadline for participation (Rea & Parker, 2014).

The instrument included a cover letter informing participants about the study and included the IRB approval information. Participants provided implied consent by continuing past the cover letter to complete the survey. Following this, demographic items were included to help identify the various groupings of participants and to help ensure an appropriate representation of the population. These demographic questions also provided

the role served within the institution so that accurate data analysis could be completed. Individuals were then asked questions regarding their perceptions of collaboration, faculty, and staff using a Likert scale and multiple-choice questioning. Finally, participants were asked to reflect upon professional relationships between faculty and staff at the identified institution.

Data Analysis

Upon conclusion of the data collection period, the data collected in Qualtrics were exported into IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 for Windows for data analysis. The data set was then prepared for analysis by the assignment of codes or values to the data provided by participants. A codebook was developed to ensure consistency in the assignment and analysis of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A pair-wise deletion process was used in analyzing data sets with missing data points (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Using this method, individuals who did not provide data for variables necessary for analysis in a specific test were excluded from the analysis. The researcher reviewed if any specific question or item was found to have many missing data points to determine if that specific item should be removed due to unreliability, and no such items were found (deVaus, 2014).

The research question was addressed through the use of Pearson's correlation analysis. Analyses were performed in SPSS to gain insights into the relationships between faculty and staff perceptions of collaboration and perceptions of interpersonal relationships. Participants who indicated they had not previously been involved in a collaborative effort with faculty or staff were filtered out of the data analyzed using the select case feature in SPSS.

FINDINGS

Demographic information about participants is presented. Demographics are followed by statistical findings for each individual research sub-question, culminating in findings related to the research question.

Participants and Demographics

A total of 286 respondents out of a possible 1102 participants completed the instrument for a response rate of 26.0%. While this response rate was lower than desired, this did match the needed rate to provide a 95% confidence interval with a 5% margin of error as initially planned, and thus data analysis was continued.

Faculty represented 56.3% of respondents, with staff making up 43.7%. All but 7% of participants had worked at the institution for more than one year, with most participants, both faculty and staff, employed

at the institution for one to nine years (64%), with 29% employed 10 to 15 or more years.

Of the faculty respondents, 42.9% were tenured, and 27.3% were not tenured but on a tenure track line. Additionally, 29.8% of faculty were neither tenured nor on a tenure track. All faculty ranks were represented among the participants, with Associate and Assistant professors representing 59.0% collectively. Faculty represented all nine of the institutional colleges, with 28.6% of the faculty participants indicating they worked equally with undergraduate and graduate students; 58.4% primarily worked with undergraduate students, and 13.0% primarily worked with graduate students.

The staff represented a total of 20 different student affairs units within the institution, with 34.4% of those falling within the area of Academic Advising, which is associated with assigned academic colleges. Advising participants represented all undergraduate academic colleges. Participants from the Registrar's Office and Academic Success Center made up 7.2% of participants each. Health Services (6.4%), University Housing (6.4%), Admissions (5.6%), and Career and Professional Development (5.6%) rounded out the top participatory groups. No participants were received from the Dean of Students, Dining Services, Fraternity & Sorority Life, Institutional Effectiveness, Institutional Research, Military and

Veteran Affairs, Student Advocacy, Student Union Facilities & Event Services, or units classified as “Other”.

Association between Collaboration Experiences and Perceptions of Faculty and Staff

Staff responses to their experience collaborating with faculty, both with regard to enjoying prior collaborations and having a positive

overall experience and staff willingness to collaborate were examined for correlations with staff perceptions of faculty (see Table 1). Staff enjoyment of collaboration with faculty and prior positive experiences in these efforts were shown to have no relationship with staff willingness to collaborate with faculty. In fact, none of the perceptions staff held of faculty was related to staff willingness to conduct collaborations.

Table 1

Correlations for Staff Experience & Willingness to Collaborate and Perceptions of Faculty

Outcome	1	2	3
1. Enjoy Collaborating	---		
2. Positive Prior Experience	.64**	---	
3. Willing to Collaborate	.13	.13	---
4. Care about Students	.27**	.38**	.09
5. Responsible for Educating	.12	.13	.09
6. Influence Policy	-.09	-.09	-.08
7. Have Incentive to Collaborate	.08	.11	.02
8. Highly Educated	.18	.19	.04
9. Contribute Prestige	.20*	.26**	.13
10. Respect other Faculty	.08	.15	-.06
11. Respect Staff	.40**	.26**	.01
12. Positively Impact Graduation	.27**	.21*	-.07
13. Positively Impact Retention	.18	.12	-.09
14. Provide Support Services	.26**	.17	-.02
15. Receive Commendation	.13	.08	-.04
16. Should Partake in Governance	.08	.11	-.07
17. Supported by Institution	.03	-.01	-.14

<i>M</i>	3.47	3.34	3.66
<i>SD</i>	.81	.91	.66
Scale Min/Max Values	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4
<i>n</i>	120	121	109

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Analysis was conducted to determine if correlations exist between staff enjoyment of collaborating with faculty, staff prior positive experience with such collaboration, willingness to collaborate, and descriptive words that indicated how well they described their relationship with staff (see Table 2). A link was found with descriptors for the relationships staff held with faculty. Usage of the descriptor “inconsiderate” was found to have a negative association with staff willingness to collaborate ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$, $n = 97$), and “cooperative” was found to have a positive association with staff willingness to collaborate ($r = .23$, $p < .05$, $n = 97$). Additionally, all

positive descriptors used to describe relationships with faculty were associated positively with positive prior experiences and enjoyment of collaborative efforts. While this is not causal, this does provide support that positive interpersonal relationships may lead to positive experiences in collaborations. Further illustrating the connection between interpersonal relationships with collaborations, all negative descriptors were negatively associated with positive prior experiences, although only “inconsiderate” was found to have a negative association with enjoyment of collaborative efforts ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$, $n = 97$).

Table 2

Correlations for Staff Experience & Willingness to Collaborate and Faculty Relationships

Outcome	1	2	3
1. Enjoy Collaborating	---		
2. Positive Prior Experience	.54**	---	
3. Willing to Collaborate	.32**	.33**	---
4. Pleasant	.41**	.68**	.14
5. Aggressive	-.15	-.35**	-.14
6. Supportive	.41**	.50**	.14
7. Domineering	-.18	-.36**	-.16

8. Inconsiderate	-.24*	-.52**	-.29**
9. Open	.36**	.46**	.10
10. Positive	.38**	.59**	.17
11. Stressful	-.18	-.45**	-.16
12. Cooperative	.34**	.50**	.23*
13. Rude	-.21	-.33**	-.02
<i>M</i>	3.33	3.12	3.69
<i>SD</i>	.70	.72	.60
Scale Min/Max Values	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4
<i>n</i>	106	107	97

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Faculty experiences, willingness to collaborate, and perceptions of staff were also analyzed (see Table 3). A moderate positive correlation was found between enjoyment of collaborating with staff and positive prior experience with such collaboration ($r = .54, p < .01, n = 140$). Additionally, moderate positive correlations were found between enjoyment and the perceptions that staff contribute to institutional prestige ($r = .42, p < .01, n = 140$) and should be involved in shared institutional governance ($r = .40, p < .01, n = 140$). A weak positive correlation was found between faculty enjoyment of collaboration with staff and the willingness to collaborate with staff ($r = .38, p < .01, n = 140$). Additionally, weak positive correlations were found between enjoyment and

the perceptions that staff care about students ($r = .34, p < .01, n = 140$), respect staff ($r = .30, p < .01, n = 140$), influence graduation rates ($r = .35, p < .01, n = 140$), and provide support services ($r = .30, p < .05, n = 140$). Correlations were found between past prior experiences with collaboration and perceptions of staff as well. A moderate correlation exists between faculty experiencing prior positive experiences collaborating with faculty and the perception that staff contribute to institutional prestige ($r = .41, p < .01, n = 140$). Additionally, weak positive correlations exist between prior positive experiences and the perceptions that staff respect faculty ($r = .38, p < .01, n = 140$), and respect staff ($r = .30, p < .01, n = 140$).

Table 3*Correlations for Faculty Experience & Willingness to Collaborate and Perceptions of Staff*

Outcome	1	2	3
1. Enjoy Collaborating	---		
2. Positive Prior Experience	.49**	---	
3. Willing to Collaborate	.38**	.16	---
4. Care about Students	.34**	.26**	.21*
5. Responsible for Educating	.27**	.23**	.06
6. Influence Policy	.13	.07	.04
7. Have Incentive to Collaborate	.14	.01	-.09
8. Highly Educated	.26**	.29**	.08
9. Contribute Prestige	.42**	.41**	.13
10. Respect other Faculty	.29**	.38**	.05
11. Respect Staff	.30**	.30**	.07
12. Positively Impact Graduation	.35**	.24**	.26**
13. Positively Impact Retention	.29**	.22**	.30**
14. Provide Support Services	.30**	.17*	.10
15. Receive Commendation	.18*	.08	.02
16. Should Partake in Govern- ance	.40**	.27**	.06
17. Supported by Institution	.01	-.03	-.02
<i>M</i>	3.65	3.43	3.58
<i>SD</i>	.55	.60	.72
Scale Min/Max Values	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4
<i>N</i>	147	140	140

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Findings show a weak positive correlation was found between faculty willingness to collaborate and the perceptions that staff care about students ($r = .21$, $p < .05$, n

$= 140$), positively influence graduate rates ($r = .26$, $p < .01$, $n = 140$), and positively influence retention rates ($r = .30$, $p < .01$, $n = 140$). This suggests that as faculty

willingness to collaborate and the perception that staff care about students increase, there is a positive influence on graduation rates and positive impacts on retention rates.

Evaluation of associations between enjoyment of collaborating with staff, positive prior experiences at such collaboration, willingness to collaborate, and descriptions of faculty relations with staff were also conducted (see Table 4). Moderate positive correlations were found between faculty enjoying collaborations with staff and the usage of the words pleasant ($r = .48, p < .01, n = 147$), open ($r = .41, p < .01, n = 147$), positive ($r =$

$.41, p < .05, n = 147$), and cooperative ($r = .42, p < .01, n = 147$) to describe the faculty relationship with staff. Weak negative associations were found between enjoyment and the usage of the words inconsiderate ($r = -.30, p < .01, n = 147$) and rude ($r = -.33, p < .01, n = 147$) to describe their relationships with staff. This indicates that as enjoyment of collaboration with staff decreases the usage of these words to describe the relationship faculty have with staff increases. A weak positive correlation was found between enjoyment and the usage of the word supportive ($r = .37, p < .01, n = 147$) to describe the relationship with staff.

Table 4

Correlations for Faculty Experience & Willingness to Collaborate and Staff Relationships

Outcome	1	2	3
1. Enjoy Collaborating	---		
2. Positive Prior Experience	.49**	---	
3. Willing to Collaborate	.38**	.16	---
4. Pleasant	.48**	.36**	.16
5. Aggressive	-.18*	-.10	.08
6. Supportive	.37**	.43**	.04
7. Domineering	-.11	-.01	.01
8. Inconsiderate	-.30**	-.24**	-.05
9. Open	.41**	.36**	.11
10. Positive	.41*	.42**	.05
11. Stressful	-.12	-.10	.17
12. Cooperative	.42**	.50**	.01

13. Rude	-.33**	-.17	.01
<i>M</i>	3.65	3.43	3.58
<i>SD</i>	.55	.60	.72
Scale Min/Max Values	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4
<i>n</i>	147	147	147

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Similarly, prior positive experience with collaborating with staff was found to have associations with the descriptors used toward the faculty relationship with staff. Moderate positive relationships were found between prior positive faculty experience collaborating with staff and the usage of the words supportive ($r = .43$, $p < .01$, $n = 147$), positive ($r = .42$, $p < .01$, $n = 147$), and cooperative ($r = .50$, $p < .01$, $n = 170$) to describe the relationship faculty experience with staff. Weak positive correlations were found between positive prior experiences and the usage of the words pleasant ($r = .36$, $p < .01$, $n = 147$) and open ($r = .36$, $p < .01$, $n = 147$). A weak negative correlation was found between prior positive experience and the usage of the word inconsiderate ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$, $n = 140$) to describe the relationship with staff. While associations existed between the descriptions used to describe faculty relationships with staff and collaboration experiences, no such associations were found between willingness to collaborate with staff and words used to describe relationships.

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study note that staff were less likely than faculty to describe their relationships with faculty as pleasant, supportive, positive, or cooperative. Despite significant relationships between both enjoyment of collaboration and prior positive experiences with perceptions of faculty and staff, few associations were found between these factors and individual willingness to collaborate with faculty and staff. In fact, no associations were found between staff willingness to collaborate and the perceptions of the role of faculty. However, staff willingness to collaborate slightly decreased with the usage of the word inconsiderate to describe their relationship with faculty. Conversely, staff willingness to collaborate increased with the usage of the word cooperative to describe staff relationships with faculty. Weak positive associations were found between faculty willingness to collaborate with staff and the perception that staff care about students and positively influence student success markers of graduation and/or retention rates.

However, none of the words used to describe faculty relationships with staff held any correlation with faculty willingness to collaborate with staff.

Additionally, findings suggest that for staff members, being a faculty member and how you are perceived as a faculty member did not influence their willingness to collaborate with those faculty. Instead, it was the relational descriptions that were associated with willingness to collaborate. If faculty are perceived as inconsiderate, this may have a negative impact on staff willingness to participate in collaborations. This aligns with existing literature on collaboration in which trust and positive relationships are important to successful collaborative endeavors, specifically in higher education (Klein, 2017). Additionally, this supports prior research that found that a culture in which incivility is commonplace discourages willingness to collaborate among employees (Porath & Erez, 2007). Quantitative findings from this study indicated the existence of many instances of disrespect between faculty and staff within this institution will likely discourage collaboration between these two, given that disrespectful interactions could likely be considered inconsiderate.

In contrast to staff, faculty members' willingness to collaborate was more closely aligned with the perceptions of the role and not the relational descriptors. In fact, faculty

willingness to collaborate was associated with perceptions that staff care about students and positively impacting the success markers of retention and graduation. This suggests that faculty understand the positive impact collaboration can have on student success within the institution (Kezar, 2005). Additionally, this aligns well with a prior study that emphasizes the importance of purposeful collaboration in developing successful collaborative efforts (Dale & Drake, 2005) focusing on student learning outcomes (Hirsch & Burack, 2001) or efforts that work to solve real problems (Steffes & Keeling, 2006) such as improving student engagement, retention, and graduation to further encourage faculty participation. Positive prior experiences and enjoyment of collaborations again had more associations with perceptions of role as compared to the relational descriptors.

This divergence between faculty and staff further highlights the cultural differences between these two units within higher education and the expectations of those units found in a prior study (Philpott & Strange, 2003). Accordingly, while both faculty and staff play an important role within the institution, they should be approached differently in an attempt to promote and establish a collaborative experience, as these cultural differences between both units result in the valuation of different elements of the collaboration.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

There has been a continued call for higher education to collaborate between academic and student affairs in an effort to improve institutional engagement between colleges (Kezar, 2001). Findings in this study provide evidence to institutional leaders of the chasm between faculty and staff culture, understanding of each other's roles and how they interconnect, and the need for opportunities to interact or communicate. Leaders may work with units more commonly known to collaborate or more closely related to help educate both faculty and staff of the roles served by those counterparts, how they connect and provide opportunities for those individuals to build positive relationships that can support a collaborative effort in a respectful environment (Florenthal & Tolstikov-Mast, 2012). Additionally, negative perceptions lead to tension between faculty and staff which needs further attention. By providing or requiring common meetings and events in which both faculty and staff can engage, learn, and build trust, leaders could foster a stronger willingness to work together and, in turn, build more positive relationships.

The lacking perception of institutional support for collaborative efforts should be concerning to leadership throughout the university. Leadership should make efforts to promote and advertise the value they see in collaborations and support those

conversations with actions that may include building collaborations into annual evaluations and promotion processes, assisting in initiating and clearly articulating the purpose and goal of these efforts, providing increased opportunities for faculty and staff to engage and interact with one another, and allowing release time for faculty to participate as these factors were shown to make individuals much more willing to collaborate. Institutions should look at varied opportunities for collaboration, such as intervention programs, academic advising protocols, housing and learning communities, academic bridge programs, and career programming (Dale & Drake, 2005).

Once collaborative efforts have been established, institutional leadership should make purposeful efforts to provide equal distribution of work and ensure that both faculty and staff have equal voice within the endeavor. A clear explanation of the collaboration's purpose and goals can assist in promoting this, as well as consistent discussion of tasks and their distribution. Leadership should check in regularly with these efforts to ensure that voice and responsibility remain equal throughout the process and address instances of inequity when they are evident. Therefore, collegiality needs to be maintained to uphold equity in the shared voice of responsibility and workload distribution (Koskenranta et al., 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research could be beneficial to better understand disconnect in faculty and staff relationships, how they are addressed, and the impact they have within a collaboration. Additional studies would allow a deeper analysis of the dynamics between faculty and staff through the expansion of the current findings. Additionally, further research is needed to examine the voice and power that both units have within the various arenas of higher education. Those interested in further studying the area of collaboration in faculty and staff relationships may wish to consider using a qualitative approach, and the researchers suggest obtaining responses via open-ended questions to determine if there is a disconnect between survey responses and the actual thoughts of participants. This will allow for the inclusion of a discussion of strengths and challenges to collaboration within academia.

While this study found support for both faculty and staff involvement in shared governance, staff support for their own involvement in the process is lower than they indicated for faculty despite complaints of faculty having more power and voice than staff. This study looked at how faculty viewed both faculty and staff and compared it to how staff viewed both faculty and staff. Future studies may instead compare faculty

thoughts on staff to faculty thoughts on faculty. Similarly, staff perceptions of faculty could be compared to staff perceptions of staff. This may help further identify disconnects between the two groups as it would highlight ways in which both units view faculty and staff differently and help identify areas in which education and training can be provided to address any implicit bias that may exist between the two units.

Although the study attempted to examine the relationships between faculty and staff perceptions, the researchers are interested in future studies addressing the concept of microaggressions and incivility within faculty and staff interactions. Additionally, further research is needed to better understand if there are differences between perceived respect given from faculty to staff and staff to faculty, in turn, alluding to the existence of microaggressions. This may be best captured through semi-structured interviews within focus groups to facilitate discussions between groups. Future research may include potential research opportunities to train faculty and staff on microaggressions within the workplace to help better identify, address, and avoid potential microaggressions, as well as understand how these interactions impact relationships (Young et al., 2015).

LIMITATIONS

The lead author of this study is currently employed as the Director of Advising within the selected institution. This represents a limitation in this study as this role may have resulted in unintentional bias toward staff and/or advisement in the analysis. Additionally, it may have influenced participants' decisions to participate for fear of identification or retribution since the researcher supervises some of those being asked to participate. This is important to mention as a limitation because it helps the reader understand the over-represented presence of advisors in our study participants. The researcher formally worked as a staff member within an academic college at the institution. This may have resulted in higher participation rates within that college due to those existing relationships or may result in less participation for fear of judgment. In order to address these concerns, the researcher collected all data anonymously through an online survey to help protect participants.

The researcher assumes that participants honestly responded to questions in the survey instrument. In order to promote honesty in responses, the researcher anonymously collected data using a web-based instrument. Additionally, survey questions were developed to reduce social desirability in responses to further encourage honesty in responses (deVaus, 2014). Finally, the

researcher assumes all identified employees received the invitation to participate in the study, and those who did not participate chose not to do so. All institutional employees have an assigned email account through the university; this email address acts as the official means of communication for the institution, and institutional employees are expected to check this account within their job responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

While calls for collaboration between faculty and staff have been prevalent across the years, work still needs to be done to successfully implement these collaborative efforts within the institution examined. Both faculty and staff perceived collaborative efforts to have a positive influence on student success in terms of graduation and retention, and both indicated a willingness to collaborate with one another. While both faculty and staff indicated enjoying collaborative efforts and having positive prior experiences, evidence showed that staff has less enjoyment and less positive prior experience working with faculty as compared to their faculty counterparts. Additionally, findings suggested a need to educate both faculty and staff of the importance of both units (i.e., academic and student affairs) and the roles they serve.

This study concludes that while roles and relationships are important to

collaborative efforts, they are demonstrated differently between faculty and staff. Administrators seeking to successfully promote collaborations between these two units must take a two-pronged approach. Faculty seek collaboration with staff who are perceived as caring toward students and in roles that they perceive to have a positive impact on student success in terms of graduation and retention. Educating faculty of staff roles should assist

in gaining faculty participants. Staff members conversely value the relationships with the faculty and less their role. As such, it is the responsibility of both academic and student affairs units to make a priority of improving the relationships between faculty and staff and ensuring the elements of incivility and disrespect perceived by staff are not the norm but rather the exception.

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