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Two-Year College Faculty Perspectives On Developmental Student Persistence: A Case Study

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TWO-YEAR COLLEGE FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON
DEVELOPMENTAL STUDENT PERSISTENCE: A CASE STUDY

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Educational Leadership

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Abstract

This study sought to understand the perspectives of two-year college composition faculty concerning the persistence of students in their developmental composition courses. Research has shown that developmental students are a population at risk for leaving college before completing their degree programs and that students are more likely to persist to reach their goals when they've built meaningful connections with faculty. Many factors affect faculty ability to connect with developmental students such as faculty history, teaching preparation, and work load.

This study answered four research questions: 1) how do faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist? 2) How do faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students? 3) How do faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students? 4) What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions do faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

The researcher conducted interviews of thirteen developmental composition faculty at a two-year college using the qualitative case study method to determine how faculty perceived their efforts to help developmental students persist. From this case study, four major themes regarding

faculty perspectives emerged: 1) faculty workload impacted experience and engagement with developmental students, 2) faculty placed high importance on hands-on training, 3) faculty history influenced their professional practice, and 4) faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support.

From these themes, the researcher determined the following recommendations: consider ways that developmental composition faculty can better support student persistence when building professional development opportunities for the department; develop more in-depth pre-service programs and mentoring opportunities for developmental composition instructors, especially for new teachers and adjuncts; re-examine placement and possibly co-requisite “studio” approach for developmental students scoring just below the college level cutoff in placement tests; when hiring new faculty, weigh their teaching experiences and motivations as heavily as their graduate degree specialty and publications; advocate for policy changes at the state, college, and department level that support the success of developmental students; encourage opportunities for classroom discussion regarding race, class, gender, and educational equality in support of social justice and equitable change in the college and surrounding community. This study adds to a growing body of research connecting faculty working conditions and teaching preparation with student persistence.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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"If you're not hopeful and optimistic, then you just give up. You have to take the long hard look and just believe that if you're consistent, you'll succeed."

-John Lewis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Faculty at two-year colleges have often been tasked with adapting to policies and program changes that they didn't choose. These changes have stemmed from large-scale policies involving college completion, benchmark study recommendations, and college-specific reforms with the goal of encouraging student persistence (Dowd, 2007; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009) and have been based upon national surveys with data showing that developmental students were most at risk for leaving programs without graduation or transferring to four-year schools (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009).

Many studies have explored the implications of Astin (1984) and Tinto's (1993) conclusions on student involvement and student persistence. Both determined that high quality faculty-student interaction was linked with student development and students' educational persistence. Astin (1984) found that students developed themselves and their learning on a deeper level when they were involved in their educations and that "the effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement" (p. 298). Similarly, Tinto (1993) posited a link between student involvement and perception of quality interaction with peers and faculty, meaning that stronger connections between students and the campus community are more likely to result in student engagement and persistence.

While ample literature exists on student persistence (Nora & Rendon, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983), studies remain primarily quantitative, showing correlation between faculty-student interaction and persistence using data generated by student surveys and college persistence rates. While these studies have shown that faculty-student interaction can lead to

greater student involvement and persistence, they have primarily focused on four-year institutions and have not necessarily reflected the reality of what two-year college faculty report from the trenches of their daily teaching experience.

Open-access two-year colleges have faced increasing need to prepare large numbers of students for college level coursework (Attewell et. al., 2006). This expectation has meant that many English departments have necessarily reexamined the effectiveness of placement tests and developmental course sequences in an attempt to balance data on student success with resources such as classroom space and cost to the institution (Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009, Edgecombe, 2011). However, little research exists on how two-year college English faculty perceive their experiences teaching developmental students and encouraging their persistence.

A position statement concerning the principles for teaching two-year college composition explained that effective writing instruction supports student persistence and “depends on frequent, timely, and context-specific feedback from an experienced postsecondary instructor” and that effective instruction “is provided by instructors with reasonable and equitable working conditions” (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2015, p. 1). Since developmental composition students are often unfamiliar with the habits practiced by successful students, the pitfalls of higher education’s hidden curriculum, and the benefits of quality faculty-student interaction, a college administration interested in student persistence must consider the ways that faculty are helped and hindered as models of a democratic education and whether or not the college is aiding faculty in providing their students a solid foundation for equitable learning outcomes.

As a developmental composition instructor teaching in a two-year, open-access college English department, the researcher sought to further understand faculty experiences with helping students persist through developmental composition coursework. The researcher was

also interested in examining any areas of incongruence in which faculty-student interaction could be further supported by college administration or departmental change in support of developmental student persistence.

Problem Statement

Two-year college administrations have focused on data generated from student learning outcomes and student satisfaction (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2012), but have not consistently invited faculty into honest conversations about how their background preparation and current working environment might affect their ability to assist student completion of developmental composition. In order for two-year college programs to be as effective as possible at increasing student persistence, the college as a whole should be committed to faculty success and faculty must be supported through an institutional culture that values faculty efforts to support developmental students. This stance would require that an administration recognize the significant time commitment faculty have invested in student persistence while juggling multiple other duties such as advising, committee work, and preparation for teaching upwards of five to six courses per semester. A change of this nature would also necessitate the hiring of additional faculty to balance the redistributed workload. A larger faculty pool would require additional funding that many schools are unable or unwilling to invest under their current budget constraints.

Despite the need for institutional policies that support faculty as they encourage student persistence, faculty have not often been asked how they understood and made meaning of their behind-the-scenes roles in the larger scheme of democratic education (Lovas, 2002; Hassel & Giordano, 2013). Issues such as heavy course loads, limited faculty development opportunities, and differentiated learners with a variety of education backgrounds have been obstacles to faculty effectiveness (Horning, 2007). While these courses have served as a student's introductory experience with higher education and a second chance at college

preparation, they also act as a barrier to full college admission (Perin, 2006; Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). It has become increasingly important to examine how faculty perceived their experiences with developmental students and how they understood the impact of faculty-student interaction. Researchers designing studies focused on student persistence have failed to tell the whole story when only examining data related to students, such as student surveys. Lovas (2002) argued that “You cannot represent a field if you ignore half of it. You cannot generalize about composition if you don’t know half of the work being done” (p. 276). By examining the experiences that faculty have had with developmental students, researchers might begin to outline strategies that encourage the necessary conditions for meaningful, productive faculty-student interaction in order to better support faculty needs and more effectively increase student persistence (Giordano & Hassel, 2013). By making clear the connection between faculty preparation and student persistence clear through examining faculty perspectives, researchers might better make the case for sustainable working conditions and teacher preparation that support faculty support of student success.

While many two-year colleges were designed from the start as open access institutions (Provasnik & Planty, 2008), unless their policies are consistent with outcome equity for the diverse groups of learners they enroll (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Dowd, 2008), two-year colleges will continue to be gatekeepers for students needing the time, support, and flexibility that two-year college faculty are often unable to fully provide. Researchers noted that “to give students access without support to achieve their desired outcomes is a shallow promise” (Bragg & Durham, 2012, p. 109). Especially in considering that “the most common faculty experience in teaching English is at a two-year college” (Hassel & Giordano, 2013, p. 119), examining faculty perspectives on developmental student persistence can illuminate factors affecting faculty effectiveness and identify recommendations for two-year college reform.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore ways faculty described and perceived their experiences in encouraging developmental students to persist in their composition courses. Research has shown that faculty have often reported conflicting experiences in their efforts to encourage developmental student persistence (Kinzie et. al., 2008). Issues affecting faculty and students at two-year colleges have often been quite different than at four-year institutions, though four-year schools have more often been the sites featured in research about student persistence. Differently educated developmental students who come from traditional K-12 and divergent educational backgrounds, need a wide range of interventions that require the time and mental focus of faculty. What faculty perceive about their effectiveness in helping students reach their goals can lead in varying degrees to feelings of success or failure that students often have perceived as faculty concern or indifference toward successful student outcomes (Grubb, 1999; Outcault, 2000; Bragg & Durham, 2012; Cuconato et. al., 2015).

This case study sought to inform developmental program leaders of ways that faculty reconciled institutional expectations with firsthand experience in teaching developmental composition students. College leadership knowing more about faculty beliefs and experiences has been shown to be especially important in designing professional development supporting faculty efforts and the college's democratic mission to promote developmental student success (Grubb, 1999; Outcault, 2000; Cuconato et. al., 2015).

Research Questions

The essential question guiding this study was:

- How do faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist?

Secondary questions were:

- How do faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students?
- How do faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students?
- What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions do faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

Conceptual Framework

Shields (2010) asserted that transformative leadership research included a deep understanding of history and power structures. Shields showed that transformative leaders enacted leadership in real situations and produced new frameworks for study. An increasingly diverse population of differently prepared learners has sought a second chance at college readiness through placement in developmental coursework designed to prepare students for entry into GED, certificate, career programs, transfer degrees, or to brush up on basic skills (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Along with the open-access mission, developmental coursework has allowed students from previously marginalized and underrepresented academic populations an opportunity to achieve their goals in higher education. However, access hasn't necessarily meant outcome equity and these students have often been at risk for early departure from college programs (Nora, 1993; Rendón, 2000; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Bensimon (2007) pointed to the abundance of quantitative data on marginalized student populations and transfer/completion rates, but determined the “lack of scholarly and practical attention toward understanding how the practitioner-her knowledge, beliefs, experiences, education, sense of self-efficacy, etc. -affects how students experience their education” (p. 444). This lack of insight into how two-year college instructors perceive their experiences has been a missing link in determining policies and program changes that could benefit developmental students and the faculty who serve them. Bensimon (2007) further proposed that:

If our goal is to do scholarship that makes a difference in the lives of students whom higher education has been the least successful in educating (e.g., racially marginalized groups and the poor), we have to expand the scholarship on student success and take into account the influence of practitioners-positively and negatively. (p. 445)

Many factors have been found to limit a student's ability to persist at the two-year college: being a first-generation college student, low socioeconomic status and financial aid burdens (Cofer & Somers, 2010), having to take multiple developmental courses, and feelings of isolation from other students and faculty (Nora, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Fike & Fike, 2008; Schnee, 2014). Student socioeconomics and first generation status were not determined to be factors within faculty control.

However, some factors including how supported faculty were in aiding developmental students and how interested program leaders were in acting as advocates for a supportive teaching environment have been determined to be instrumental in encouraging student success (Bensimon, 2007; Fike & Fike, 2008; Scott-Clayton et. al., 2014). Researchers have noted the need for further study into best practices and into the factors affecting the actual work faculty did to support student persistence, especially when attempting to improve outcomes for developmental students at risk for early departure from college programs (Sullivan, 2015).

Researchers (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1984; Wirt & Jaeger, 2014) have argued the importance of faculty-student interaction on student persistence and that students who had greater faculty interaction had higher GPA's and were more likely to be involved in other areas of the college. Increased engagement was found to be instrumental in decreasing isolation that first-generation and other historically marginalized students often cited as a reason they decided to leave college without program completion (Tinto, 2004; Arnold, 2006). Conversely, many researchers in developmental composition (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Calcagno & Long, 2008; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012) concluded that students who scored just below college

level on placement exams “do not benefit from additional developmental coursework” (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014, p. 248). Bensimon (2007) argued that what these students, especially those “with a history of social and educational marginalization attribute successful outcomes” needed was “the formation of supportive relationships with practitioners” (pp. 464-465).

Forming these positive relationships with faculty was found to be a deciding factor in why students chose to stick out tough times and otherwise difficult situations. These interactions took time and effort on the part of faculty, but made a major difference to students at-risk for early departure. Astin (1984) considered that many college administrators believed in a resource theory of student involvement; that if highly qualified (published, highly visible) faculty were hired, students would directly benefit. However, various factors such as course loading and lack of faculty preparation to teach developmental students were obstacles for program leaders designing composition programs with a goal of increasing student persistence (Adams et. al., 2009). When creating policies and programs to help students persist, asking faculty about what they felt they were able to do well and what incongruent aspects, if any, of their working environment they might change, could provide insight into ways the college could better serve faculty and students alike.

hooks (1994) stated that “one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice” (p. 40). The goal of this study was to examine faculty perspectives on developmental student persistence through the voices of faculty, themselves. The researcher was especially interested in better understanding experiences faculty had in promoting access, maintaining high standards (gatekeeping), and encouraging outcome equity and how their teaching preparation and work environment played a role in their perceived success (McNenny & Fitzgerald, 2010). This study used a transformative leadership framework (Shields, 2010) and case study methodology to consider factors that influenced

faculty attitudes/beliefs and what effects (if any) individual faculty attitudes had on the effectiveness of their teaching and advising developmental students.

Assumptions

Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) included a list of assumptions in their introductory chapter outline, “based on certain premises that may either hold up or be shown to be unwarranted” (p. 66). Researchers generally approached their study by identifying several issues concerning their topic that the researcher believed true. When a researcher was able to identify possible assumptions, this allowed them and their readers to determine what underlying beliefs shaped the researcher’s thinking as they came to conclusions at the culmination of their research. The researcher of this case study assumed that faculty would answer the interview questions honestly and to the best of their ability. To support this assumption, faculty were asked to participate voluntarily and in a confidential manner. It was assumed that faculty had varying beliefs about democratizing higher education and various experiences teaching in as the practice of social justice. It was also assumed that the responses of faculty interviewed were not representative of all developmental composition instructors. It was also assumed that themes or patterns present in interview responses would help shape the process of recruiting faculty to teach in the developmental composition program and that findings would be used to develop a set of best practices for English Department faculty teaching developmental students.

Limitations

One possible limitation to the study was the subjective quality of faculty responses. When interviewed, faculty might have perceived that it was politically incorrect to share negative opinions of developmental students (for example: thinking that developmental students should not be in college). A second limitation was that faculty might have been reluctant to discuss working conditions and preparedness that could play a negative role in

teaching effectively. Another possible limitation was that little literature was found regarding faculty perspectives on student persistence in a developmental composition program. As this study included a small sample from one two-year college, it was difficult to generalize findings as they could not be determined to indicate similar findings across a larger population of faculty teaching developmental composition students or faculty teaching at other two-year colleges.

Scope

In selecting a site and group of participants for qualitative case study, Creswell (2013) recommended using a purposeful sampling approach including choices made regarding participants, types of sampling, and study's sample size. The study site was limited in scope to two main campuses and a small satellite campus at a large, diverse, two-year open enrollment college in a small city in the American South.

The sample size was limited in scope to participants who were adjunct and full-time faculty at the two main campuses and satellite campus (urban and suburban) housing the college's English department. Fulltime faculty were invited to participate by the researcher and were purposively selected by the English department's scheduling coordinator as having taught at least two and ideally three sections of developmental composition across Spring 2015 and Fall 2015. Adjunct faculty were identified as potential study participants by the developmental course coordinator and purposively selected by the researcher with the criteria of having taught at least two, preferably three sections of English 100 across the Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 semesters.

The purpose for selecting this group out of the larger group of English Department faculty was that departmental policy dictated that all full-time faculty (22) must teach at least one section of developmental composition per calendar year. Fulltime faculty who chose to teach more than one section of developmental composition per year were often more involved in

conversations regarding developmental composition practices and were thought to have a richer depth of experiences to reflect upon. Faculty who chose to participate were interviewed in a location of their choice (usually their office) by the researcher in January and February of 2016.

Rationale and Significance

Developmental students have often faced a variety of personal and educational challenges while enrolled in a two-year college. Socioeconomic concerns, housing and food insecurity, first-generation student status, family caretaking issues (especially for single parents and for students with ill or aging family members), varying levels of prior education, significant gaps in time between prior education and current enrollment in which technology and methods changed exponentially, and widely varying diagnosed and undiagnosed mental and physical disabilities were just a few factors that weighed on the preparedness and persistence of students (Tinto, 2004).

Due to college prerequisites, students have often been barred from taking courses for which developmental reading and writing were first required. Students testing into developmental coursework often found they lacked the ability to immediately enter a program to which they had just committed a significant amount of time and money, because they first had to enroll in pre-college remedial courses. A tremendous amount of pressure weighed upon students and put them at risk for leaving college before they completed their first year if they did not successfully integrate academic and emotional habits, often practiced through positive faculty-student interaction (Tinto, 1993; Kuh et. al, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Researchers found that if a student left college prematurely with a negative attitude toward their experiences in higher education, this negative experience could be compounded by and conflated with their lasting financial aid debt. Without a degree to qualify the student for work opportunities, this unforgiveable debt has hampered students' upward mobility and produced

negative educational effects for the next generation who might be influenced by their parents' attitudes. Cumulatively, students who had negative experiences at two-year schools have spread their distrust toward higher education to the larger community. This has produced negative community views toward college and has hampered the possibility of new educational and career opportunities for those living within affected communities (Tinto, 1993; Roberts and McNeese, 2010).

In composition courses, students who were formally or otherwise educated often found that the K-12 education that they have always been told would prepare them for college actually underprepared them for the rigors of academia. Despite the variety of issues students have had with content knowledge and hard skills practice, persistence for these students was not simply a matter of catching up on content. Complimenting content skills, students also needed soft skills practice to help them succeed (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Adams, 2013).

In the "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing," a white paper published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project (2011), the organizations identified eight "Habits of Mind" that college students needed to develop for successful learning outcomes. Culminating the list of successful habits, "metacognition was defined as "the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge" (p. 1). The researcher in this study examined faculty perspectives on their work with developmental students. By exploring instructors' strategies and processes in their work focused on student persistence, the researcher sought to highlight faculty commitment to student success.

Freire (2000) determined that "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (p. 55). By nature of their position, faculty have committed to work toward positive outcomes for developmental students. By examining ways in which faculty effectively integrated their dual responsibilities as advocates for student

persistence and as institutional gatekeepers, a small but significant contribution might be made to the literature in transformative education, student persistence theory, and in developmental composition studies.

Researchers have noted that increased scholarship in this area would help colleges to realistically assess how well current policies and systems supported learning and persistence (Hassel, 2013; Hassel & Giordano, 2013). Whether faculty saw their experiences as realistically supportive of the college's democratic mission and whether they believed that the institution was supporting their efforts or potentially hampering them could be a small step in furthering the college conversation of what constitutes a supportive environment for composition faculty and developmental students.

Definition of Terms

Developmental- At open-access institutions that offered pre-college coursework, students who tested just below the college level cutoff in their placement exams generally placed into developmental coursework that had to be completed before enrolling in any course requiring college level writing. Calcagno & Long (2008) determined that college placement score cutoffs varied widely from college to college and were weakly predictive of student success in first-year composition courses.

Open-Access- colleges whose mission provided entry into higher education by admitting students who were not fully prepared for college-level coursework and required them to take developmental courses as a prerequisite to earning college credit

First-Year Composition (FYC) - a sequence of first year composition courses that students were expected to take in their freshmen year to provide a foundation for their college writing and research skills. Students tested into basic writing, developmental composition, or college composition as their first course in the sequence.

Faculty Workload – Defined as the total “amount of time spent on teaching, research, and service” (Mupinga & Maughan, 2008, p. 18) and included factors such as number of courses taught and students per section (course loading), time spent during office and other hours grading, preparing courses, and responding to student communication, other college duties such as advising, committee work, and professional development.

Persistence- successful progress of a student through a sequence of courses, certificate, or degree program.

Gatekeeping- a college’s maintenance of an open-access mission while requiring students to test into college level coursework (generally in math, reading, and composition) or enroll in developmental coursework, whose successful completion determined admittance to credit-bearing coursework; similarly, courses whose successful completion were a prerequisite to credit bearing coursework were called “gatekeeper” courses.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine faculty perspectives on their experiences in encouraging developmental student persistence. Faculty involvement played a key role in increasing the numbers of developmental students who continued through their first-year courses (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004). A lack of study and focus on faculty preparedness and work environment told from their own perspectives is the true importance for this study, as further study in this area might validate faculty experiences with helping students persist in developmental coursework as well as shed light on potential disconnect between political and administrative policies and actual faculty work with students. Researchers in two-year college English studies have called for greater attention to factors affecting faculty effectiveness in supporting outcome equity and student persistence (Kommarju, 2010; Wirt & Jaeger, 2014; Hassel & Giordano, 2013).

English faculty are often developmental composition students' first classroom contact in a higher education classroom. In order for a developmental composition program to effectively increase student persistence, directors must know how faculty have perceived their experiences in the current program so that additional professional development, faculty recruiting, and a set of best practices might be put in place for support. Findings of this study will be used to determine future action such as departmental professional development opportunities, new recruitment practices, a development of best practices, and data to potentially support changes in faculty workload to increase faculty preparedness and effectiveness.

The conceptual framework for this case study employed developmental composition studies and student persistence theory. The chapters in this study were based upon the five-chapter qualitative study model outlined in Bloomberg & Volpe (2012), Creswell (2013), and Roberts (2012). Chapter 2 explores the literature related open access, current trends in developmental composition reform, faculty working conditions, and factors found to influence student persistence. Chapter 3 details the case study methodology and how it was used to determine how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 analyzes the data, and provides an overview of themes that emerged from the study. Chapter 5 concludes the study, and makes recommendations for future research and action.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

This literature review employed Callahan's (2014) snowball method in which research was gathered from major studies conducted throughout the previous five to ten years, as well as from foundational studies from key researchers in developmental composition and student persistence. Correspondingly, Shields (2010) determined that in order to enact change, transformative researchers should identify running themes, frameworks, and previous change efforts, focusing their study on "liberation, democracy, equity, and justice" (p. 562). Research was gathered from major studies conducted throughout the previous five to ten years, as well as from foundational studies from key researchers in the areas of open access, the democratic mission of two-year colleges, access equity and student persistence, conflicting perspectives on developmental composition, placement, and faculty perspectives on working conditions.

The purpose of this study was to examine developmental student persistence using an integrated framework that considered the role that college faculty have historically played in encouraging student success (Dixon, Cayle, and Chung, 2007; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004). A second purpose was to explore the importance of gaining faculty perspectives on student persistence at the two-year college in order to better understand how faculty working conditions were perceived to affect their work with developmental students.

Callahan (2014) stated that an integrative literature review should "encompass a broad array of scholarly literature" (p. 272) including empirical, mixed methods, qualitative studies, as well as working papers, theses, and theoretical literature. By reading various studies with a variety of theoretical lenses, Callahan determined that a researcher could better identify gaps

in existing literature and if “the existing literature is lacking in some way with respect to the specific question that guides the review” (p. 273). While numerous studies exist regarding two-year college student persistence (Nora & Rendon, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983), the lack of qualitative studies examining faculty perspectives on student persistence denotes a gap in the research that has evidenced need for further study. The literature reviewed showed need for further studies on how faculty preparedness and beliefs might influence their teaching practice and corresponding outcomes for students (Grubb, 1999; Outcault, 2000; Cuconato, du Bois-Reymond, & Lunabba, 2015).

Developmental Courses and Open Access

Two-year colleges have long played a central role in providing increasingly diverse populations access to higher education (Nora, 1993; Rendón, 2000). Two-year colleges have appealed to “the principles of democratic education” (Dowd, 2007, p. 2) and have maintained open-admission policies and articulation agreements with four-year schools to provide their students with a variety of degree options. Two-year colleges have offered college-prepared students an increasingly broad range of continuing education courses, certificates and associate degrees, while readying underprepared students for college level coursework through developmental programs and access to support services such as counseling and tutoring (Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Cohen, Cohen & Brawer, 2014; Bragg, 2001).

Goldrick-Rab (2010) determined that developmental coursework has a long brought a democratizing function to higher education, as its very existence has provided access to higher education for “substantial numbers of poor and minority students [who] leave high school without a diploma and even more often without developing strong writing, reading, and math skills” (p. 438). Developmental composition instructors have served an essential, gatekeeping role at the two-year college in effort to ensure that students who moved on to college composition were academically prepared and set up for success in subsequent writing courses.

Developmental composition instructors have also functioned as agents of social justice and have provided students from historically marginalized populations access to hidden curriculum, often spending significant time helping students from divergent educational backgrounds learn strategies and expectations to help them successfully persist in their college courses. Rahman (2013) defined college's "hidden curriculum" as the "unwritten rules, regulations, standards, and expectations that form part of the learning process in schools and classrooms specifically taught to students through the planned or open curriculum or the content" (p. 660). As institutions based upon middle-class values, colleges historically assumed that students were aware of and had long practiced the hidden rules involved with being a successful student, such as asking for help when needed. However, Rahman (2013) maintained that these "rules" that were often ingrained in middle class children were not necessarily practiced by working-class and poverty-class families, requiring teachers to take the time and effort to help these students learn the behaviors and habits to help them succeed.

Helping developmental students navigate the big picture of course sequences and helping them understand the purpose for their placement into developmental coursework has aided in "making visible the relationships among knowledge, authority, and power" (Giroux, 2011, p. 155) that has helped students feel like they were valued and cared for at the two-year college. Yet, developmental composition instructors' perspectives on their experiences with making these processes visible have not been the subject of much research. Accordingly, many studies in student persistence have identified the need to gain faculty insight about the issues affecting their ability to help students persist (Roderick, Nagoaka, & Coca, 2009; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Grego & Thompson (2008, p. 39) determined that providing developmental students with a democratic writing space in which higher education was open for critique, made "the particulars of the institutional setting more visible" for students. Applying "theory to those

who live at lower or beginning levels of the institutional hierarchy; thus composition's prestige [was] dealt a double whammy." Developmental composition benefitted students by regarding their work as "real" and worthy of respectful consideration just as the work of students at the four-year level has been validated and critiqued. Faculty teaching developmental students encouraged students to take risks in their writing, asked them to view writing as a messy process, and coached them to believe that they had a valuable contribution to make to the professional conversation in higher education. By scaffolding assignments to help students build skills and the confidence to find their voice as writers, developmental composition faculty engaged students in their learning and helped them discover the relevance of taking a foundation course.

Sullivan (2015) supported the need for developmental composition faculty to encourage students to explore the ways that college access and equity were connected. The researcher connected "education, reading and writing, and literacy, of course, but it is also about class, gender, and race, and inequality and poverty. It is about freedom, social justice, and the ideals of a democracy" (p. 332) as part of the larger picture in helping developmental students succeed in their coursework to help equalize higher education for students who historically have not had access such as students of color, first generation college students, students with disabilities, and low-income students.

Freire (2014) echoed Sullivan's connection between education and social justice, declaring that "if students are not able to transform their lived experience into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowledge" (p. 19). However, to Freire and other critical theorists, developmental educators were indispensable tools in helping students "confront" and "act on" the opportunities and obstacles they faced in the higher education system which was built on open-access, but has also fraught with questions

about outcome equity for students from marginalized groups. Especially for non-traditional, first generation, low-socioeconomic, and minority students, faculty teaching developmental classes have provided students with hope, inspiration, and assistance needed to be successful throughout their college careers (Schreiner et, al., 2011).

Democratic Mission and Open Access

Since the *Truman Commission Report* (1948) declared that “free and universal access to education, in terms of interest, ability, and need of the student, must be a major goal of American education,” (p. 35), two-year colleges have provided a portal for the flood of students who did not previously have access to higher education (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bragg, 2001; Levin, 1994; Dowd, 2007). While the influx of two-year college students in the 1940’s was not an especially diverse population, still consisting predominately of middle-class white males using the G.I. Bill to gain access to higher education (Bragg & Durham, 2001, p. 93; Beach, 2011), student populations have increased tremendously in terms of racial diversity and have become increasingly “stratified by ability and socioeconomic status” (Dowd, 2007, p. 2). Two-year college students today are much more likely to be older, first generation, and attending college part-time (Bragg, 2001; Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2006). Spellman (2007) reported that almost half of two-year college students were aged 30 and older, while most students enrolled in certificate programs were over 30; non-traditional and at risk for early departure, as corroborated by multiple studies (Hanson, 2006; Horn, 1996; Coley, 2000).

Hanson (2006) determined that two-year colleges served a much wider demographic of students than did four-year schools and their democratic mission reached much farther than learning subject content. Non-traditional students often juggled competing priorities and worked through competing personal narratives as they rewrote their life stories. For these students, two-year colleges have had “a larger responsibility of changing students’ self-

concepts or identities,” and the democratic mission of two-year colleges has had the goal of “preparing citizens to fill long-term social and political roles within our communities” (p. 134).

Spellman (2007) compared Horn’s (1996) definition of non-traditional students with Coley (2000) who determined that there were seven common traits of students making them at-risk for early departure at the two-year college. The seven traits that both Horn (1996) and Coley (2000) identified were: a) delayed enrollment, b) part-time student status, c) being financially independent, d) working full time, e) having dependents, f) being a single parent, and g) not holding a traditional high school diploma. Any number of these factors was determined to put a student at higher risk for early departure, but many students had several of these factors at work in their lives, making them less likely to persist in two-year college programs without the support of faculty during the limited time these students had on campus between work and other obligations (Johnson, 1997).

Despite the two-year college open-access mission, student placement in developmental and college level courses has historically been related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. African-American and Hispanic students comprised 14 and 15 percent respectively of the total student population at two-year schools compared with 12 and 8 percent of students attending four-year schools (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). When only half of students at two-year colleges persisted to their second year of coursework, with two thirds of students at four-year schools persisted to year two. The disparity in student outcomes between the two types of institutions has led researchers to question whether or not two-year schools were really increasing opportunity equity for the low-income and minority students they served (Rouse, 1995; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Bragg & Durham (2012) contended that differences in completion rates did not take into account differing goals between students at two-year and four-year institutions. Goldrick-Rab

(2010, p. 439) noted that despite lower completion rates at two-year schools, “one function of education is to increase students’ ambitions for further education, and therefore college attendance itself may enhance educational expectations,” while Dowd (2007) determined that effects of attending even one class were positive for students. Even when students took only one course at a two-year college, it showed them that they could learn something new and step outside the boundaries of their previous expectations for themselves. These students were more likely to see higher education in a favorable light and were more likely to transfer that positive attitude toward college to other family members, cumulatively, having a positive effect family and community outlook toward higher education.

Developmental Education: A Growing Need

As two-year colleges have widened their community access, the importance of maintaining high educational standards for accreditation has conflicted with colleges’ open-door policies (Tinto 1993; Arnold, 2000; Perin, 2006). Colleges have continued to debate the need for developmental education, especially when so many students starting at developmental level never complete degrees (Bailey, 2009; Crisp & Delgado, 2014). As greater numbers of students arrived underprepared for college level coursework, developmental programs have increased their function as a bridge to college level writing. Programs have shifted focus from just content to including college preparation curricula as developers increased awareness that students were starting off at “a gate below the gate” (Shor, 1997, p. 94).

The increased use of lengthy developmental course sequences to supplement insufficient secondary learning led to an ongoing debate about the conflicting utility and ideology of gatekeeping and equity. While developmental courses have served to help students manage expectations and build writing skills, programs often lose students once they realize the time it will really take them to complete a “two-year degree” (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Anderson, Alfonso, & Sun, 2006). However, researchers determined that when students

believed that faculty truly cared about their interests, student persistence increased (Braxton, Doyle, & Hartley, 2013). Developmental faculty have played a major role in how students viewed developmental coursework and how likely they were to persist, yet little research exists on faculty perspectives on their role in developmental student persistence.

Access, Equity, and Persistence

Focus on the role of two-year colleges in providing community access to higher education (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Bragg & Durham, 2012; Hassel et. al., 2015) has led to a growing debate over equity of student outcomes. Two-year college students once considered two-year colleges a “point of access” for four year schools and an efficient path to a career (Dowd, 2007, p. 2), but more recently have faced three or more years of struggle to earn a two-year degree and upwards of six years to earn a four-year degree (Levin & Calcagno, 2008). As a result, attrition rates have soared. This led to increased pressure from policy makers and accrediting agencies that examined student persistence to increase retention. One outcome was that colleges sought to limit the time students spent in pre-college courses and to encourage instructors teaching developmental courses to implement success strategies as part of their curricula (Arnold, 2000; Anderson et. al., 2006).

Conflicting Beliefs about Developmental Coursework

Many researchers have asserted that developmental coursework has long been a contentious issue (Shor, 1997; Attewell et. al. 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Adams, et. al, 2009). Though developmental composition has provided an access point for underprepared and differently educated students to enter into higher education, Shor (1997) famously called developmental composition, “our apartheid.” Shor’s essay questioned the fairness of mandatory college composition and whether it acted as a gatekeeper to discourage developmental students as an “added sorting-out gate” (p. 92) that prevented underprepared students (and generally more diverse students from divergent educational backgrounds and

social classes) from entering higher education. Shor considered that college would lose its “elite” status without a “containment track” at the two-year level (p. 94).

Other researchers concurred that the movement of developmental composition to the two-year college level meant that colleges could adopt policies to provide open-access while still presenting a barrier that students would first need to cross by passing developmental composition. Attewell et. al. (2006) posited that “the notion of open access is a hoax perpetrated upon academically weak students who will be unlikely to graduate” (p. 887). Students who took multiple pre-college level courses only to fail subsequent courses at the college level often left school in debt, with a negative view of themselves as students and with a negative view of their college experiences at that institution (Crisp & Delgado, 2014).

Research has shown that two thirds of the students who began developmental composition coursework failed to pass the first college level English course (Adams et. al., 2009). In one study, only 17% of students who enrolled in two developmental courses before taking a college composition course ever graduated (Parks, 2014, p. 7). Researchers have assessed the impact of placement on students who scored just below the college level cutoff score and enrolled in in a developmental composition course (Bettinger & Long, 2009), finding that the students who persisted did as well or better than the students who tested into college level coursework. Complicating this issue is the lack of a standard cutoff score from one college to the next. Attewell et. al. (2006, p. 887) maintained that “there is no agreed objective or generally agreed upon cut-off below which college students require remediation.” Students may test into developmental coursework at one college, but not another due to varying testing methods and cutoff scores, leading to “shopping” for a school that allows them to avoid taking developmental coursework (Moltz, 2009). Some students were simply allowed to take the Compass or Accuplacer tests as many times as it took for them to move to college level. Issues related to placement testing have led faculty to question the validity of scores and for

researchers to wonder if the scores used the right criteria for placement in the first place (Calcagno & Long, 2008, p. 34).

Researchers have considered that the controversy over placement took root soon after legislation that developmental coursework moved to two-year colleges (Attewell et. al., 2006; Calcagno & Long, 2008; Bailey, 2009; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014). Researchers pondered whether or not developmental coursework even made a significant difference in first-year student success, noting that their findings contrasted with public opinion that remediation lowers standards by allowing unprepared students access to higher education, arguing to the contrary that “college remediation functions partly as a second-chance policy” (Attewell et. al., 2006, p. 916). Other researchers also found that developmental coursework didn’t hinder student success. Bailey (2009) found that students who took remedial coursework were more likely to persist than students of similar background and scores who didn’t take remediation. These studies furthered the understanding that developmental coursework provided students who did not test well a second chance. This dual function of providing access to higher education and maintaining high standards continued to challenge researchers who remained unable to fully understand the larger implications of developmental coursework and student persistence without examining faculty perspectives on the dilemma.

Hodara & Jaggars (2014) concluded that two-year colleges protected the graduation rates at four-year colleges by attracting low-income, underprepared students through open access policies and student placement in developmental courses. Two-year colleges worked to maintain institutional standards while developmental students worked through pre-college coursework when just one third of two-year college students earned a credential within six years. Research has shed light on the disparities in this system where two and four-year colleges profit from student enrollment, but a disproportionate amount of two-year college students earned a degree (Hassel et. al, 2015). Open-access, itself, did not denote equitable

outcomes for students at-risk of leaving their degree programs without graduation or transfer. Jaggars & Hodara (2013) argued that faculty in gatekeeping courses compensated for potential loss of student retention by working to “maintain rigorous course standards without failing a large proportion of students” (p. 557). Balancing this burden took a tremendous amount of effort on the part of faculty and students, increasing the risk of burnout for both groups.

The Problem with Placement

Starting in 2008, researchers began to focus on the impact developmental coursework had on retention and completion rates as programs began to consider adopting accelerated models (Calcagno & Long, 2008; Fike & Fike, 2008; Adams et. al., 2009; Jenkins et. al., 2010). Research continued to focus on retention and completion. Bailey (2009) examined whether developmental education could truly make up for student under-preparedness and whether completion rates rose as a result of students taking developmental courses. Colleges became more interested in this question as retention became increasingly tied to college funding.

A factor in student misplacement has been the use of challenge testing on college placement exams. Calcagno & Long (2008) found “multiple sources of bias” (p. 34) in college placement scores, such as colleges allowing students to retest multiple times and having seemingly arbitrary cutoff numbers that did not accurately predict student success in college level coursework. Schools varied in their cutoff score and Calcagno & Long (2008) found that students could test into developmental composition at one college and test into college composition at another. A result was that students shopped for schools that did not require developmental coursework, finding their way around taking a foundation course. The researchers determined through this study that developmental composition did not raise completion rates for students scoring just below the college placement cutoff score, varied as

those scores were from one college to the next. The researchers used their difficulties in conducting this study with so many variables as a call for further inquiry into testing policies, classroom teaching strategies, and student support services to examine their effects of developmental composition placement on persistence for high-level readers.

Jenkins et. al. (2010) found that college placement score cutoffs were an arbitrary predictor of student success in first-year coursework and that students who were moved into college level English with a co-requisite writing lab were more likely to persist through their first year composition courses than students who enrolled in developmental composition first. Cho et. al. (2012) studied the effects of acceleration on student persistence and found that smaller class sizes and more time spent in contact with faculty led to an increase in persistence for all students, but especially for African-American students. Subsequent research (Parks, 2014) centered on streamlining the developmental sequence and the use of transformative learning in the accelerated classroom.

While studies on developmental composition and student persistence have produced conflicting findings, research has indicated that the distinction between developmental and college-level students has mostly been arbitrary, as standardized assessments placed students at various levels, but did not predict student success across the course sequence or otherwise determine college readiness.

Hodara & Jaggars (2014) determined that prior data analysis related to placement only showed part of a larger picture. Students were often under-placed through “weakly predictive” placement tests and then withdrew before reaching credit bearing coursework (p. 248). Fike & Fike (2008) determined that retention predictors (such as test scores) traditionally employed at four-year colleges did not predict student retention at two-year colleges, but access to student support services, at least one parent graduating college, and passing developmental coursework correlated positively with student persistence. In addition, Strauss & Volkwein

(2004) concluded that campus environment and students' experiences in the classroom were significant predictors for student persistence at two-year colleges. Faculty have played a major role in creation of classroom environment, but Strauss and Volkwein's study, like Fike & Fike and Hodara & Jaggars, all focused on student perspectives and quantitative data, overlooking faculty perspectives.

Developmental Educator Perspectives

Sullivan (2015) maintained that open admissions two-year colleges historically reflected faculty "commitment to social justice and equal opportunity" (p. 333), such that faculty positively impacted students who were "often the most marginalized, least affluent, and least politically connected members of our communities" (Sullivan, 2015, p. 329). Lacking funding for outside researchers, developmental composition faculty began researching their own programs, often presenting findings that risked loss of funding to existing programs (Adams et. al., 2009). Developmental composition faculty continue to make a convincing case for developmental reform in their work as teacher-scholar-activists and institutional change-agents (McLeod, 1995; Adler-Kassner, 2008; Sullivan, 2015).

Hassel et. al. (2015) noted that faculty have been "frequently charged with expediting such reform and are often asked to make decisions about program redesign with little time for study and reflection (p. 229). Faculty were then tasked with providing quick turnaround and little opportunity to provide their perspectives on how effectively they could implement these changes, while the successfulness of such programs and the success of developmental students was squarely on the faculty (p. 227).

In order to investigate the attitudes and perspectives that foster critical consciousness, social justice, and transformative learning, researchers began turning to qualitative studies and seeking out faculty voices to examine faculty roles in maintaining high standards and providing educational opportunities for their students. Grubb (1999) examined two-year

college instructors' teaching philosophies and practices, finding that many instructors used the language of critical pedagogy, but failed to follow through in their teaching practice, so that "the lack of adequate discussion and professional development that would allow them to develop a critical understanding of teaching" (p. 171) was eclipsed by feelings of isolation, fear of failure, and expressions that some of their developmental students were "not college material" (p. 171). These attitudes just served to reinforce the insecurities developmental students often came to college carrying and reinforced inconsistencies and negative attitudes of faculty toward developmental students.

Grubb (1999) concluded that schools should focus greater efforts toward faculty development in order to ensure more effective outcomes for underprepared students and noted that examination of professional identity and roles within the institution would allow for education leaders to provide targeted and ongoing professional development opportunities. These opportunities could ensure that faculty concerns were deeply understood and addressed before making program changes or adding more work on already overwhelmed two-year college instructors. Outcault (2000) maintained that faculty isolation, departmental reliance on adjuncts, underprepared students, and inadequate funding for meaningful professional development opportunities presented obstacles for examination of faculty perspectives and philosophies. However, Outcault (2000) and Grubb (1999) both determined that through resource sharing, faculty could work toward a more collegial environment that worked toward identifying a shared set of values, beliefs, and best practices to employ as a framework for helping students succeed.

While few studies of American two-year college faculty perspectives have been published (Dowd, 2007), researchers in Europe recently conducted a study of secondary educators' professional identities related to their roles as gatekeepers and opportunity makers (Cuconato et. al., 2015). The researchers found that faculty perspectives influenced whether they

confirmed students' low ambitions, encouraged students' career plans, or outright discouraged students from having higher career goals through their interactions with students during teaching and advising. While this study was conducted in Europe where there has been stronger focus on academic tracking and early career planning due to strong focus on vocational training in many European school systems, it should be noted that teachers' strategies corresponded with their perspectives of their roles as teachers of content and methods and their beliefs about whether they should encourage students to have meaningful lifelong learning experiences.

Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2013) stated that a theoretical framework “is a guiding perspective or ideology that provides structure for advocating for groups or individuals” (p. 505), while Merriam (2009, p. 66) defined it as “the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame” that informs a study. The theoretical framework for this study was represented by: transformative leadership theory and critical pedagogy.

Shields (2010) explained that transformative educational leadership “begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others” (p. 559). Shields defined the scope of transformative leadership as “education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded” (p. 559). This study stems from the practice of developmental composition faculty who have worked for equal outcomes for their students who traditionally have not had the same access or outcomes as students at four-year colleges. Shields maintained that transformative leadership critiques the fairness of college policies and initiatives and looks for disconnects in mission and practice that can affect a marginalized population and might preclude positive outcomes of social justice and enhanced opportunity without some kind of intervention. Transformative

educational leadership has been used interchangeably at times with critical pedagogy and other theories and practices used to promote equality and opportunity.

Critical pedagogy was derived from the work of Paulo Freire who believed that people must recognize the causes of their oppression. Freire taught that education, itself, was practicing freedom and increasing self-awareness of an individual's situation. Freire (2014) explained that "in order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of their oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (p. 49). Developmental composition faculty have worked to help students become more aware of how language and power shaped their society and have helped students move into academic conversations by removing the mystique of hidden curriculum. In turn, this has helped students become advocates for their own educations and for their communities.

Giroux (2011) maintained that while many college administrations advertised education as career preparation and were concerned with churning out workers and keeping up numbers for student retention, colleges have had a more important democratic mission. This goal involved allowing students to explore what fulfilled them and to help them forge a stronger sense of self and what they could contribute to strengthen their communities through gaining literacies. Giroux explained the benefits of higher education beyond career preparation (2014, p. 154-155):

Literacy was not a means to prepare students for the world of subordinated labor or "careers," but a preparation for a self-- managed life. And self-- management could only occur when people have fulfilled three goals of education: self-- reflection, that is, realizing the famous poetic phrase, "know thyself," which is an understanding of the world in which they live, in its economic, political and, equally important, its

psychological dimensions, pedagogical context, students learn how to expand their own sense of agency, while recognizing that to be voiceless is to be powerless.

Developmental composition faculty have worked to help students become more aware of power structures and conversations so that students can grow more critically aware of how various writing genres have historically been used to include and exclude groups and for what purposes. By helping students examine underlying meaning of and access to the hidden curriculum implicit in higher education, faculty have helped students become more aware of their options and have encouraged students to become more empowered to persist through their degree programs.

Summary

Shields (2010) asserted that transformative leadership research must include a deep understanding of history and power structures (p. 567) in order to enact leadership in real situations and produce new frameworks for study (p. 572). Researchers called on faculty to conduct similar research on their roles as teacher-scholar-activists and change agents in developmental education (Patrick, 2015; Hassel et. al, 2015). They have also noted the need for a “more effective and extensive body of scholarship that offers research-based best practices that are relevant to the daily work they do” (Lewiecki-Wilson & Sommers, 1999, as cited in Sullivan, 2015, p. 341-342).

Grubb (1999) stated that gaps in the literature on faculty perspectives on student persistence warrant further study. Without understanding what roles faculty perceive for themselves as educators, program reform “remains limited and idiosyncratic” (p. 56) and mandating program change without faculty input has limited continuity and assured that problems “will be individually resolved, sometimes well and sometimes badly” (p. 354). In order to effectively encourage developmental student persistence, further study is needed about faculty experiences on the front lines of education. Two-year college leaders need to

hear faculty tell their stories in their own words to gain a more dynamic understanding of factors that affect the quality of faculty-student interaction and to appreciate the work that faculty do to encourage student success.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case-study explored how faculty teaching within a developmental composition program in an open-access, two-year college English Department perceived intersections of their teaching preparation and their college working conditions. It also sought to better understand how these intersections impacted faculty encouragement of student persistence in developmental composition courses. By exploring faculty perspectives, the researcher hoped to more fully understand how faculty have experienced their role in “gatekeeping” at the two-year college and how they worked to provide equitable opportunities for developmental students through faculty-student interaction and in their teaching practice.

The conceptual framework for this case study was drawn from research on developmental composition studies, transformative leadership theory. A case-study approach was selected to better understand how faculty perceived professional development and workload intersecting with the college’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) goal of increasing student first-year student persistence. The primary question guiding this study was:

- How do faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist?

Secondary questions were:

- How do faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students?
- How do faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students?
- What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions do faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

These questions were created from gaps in the existing literature on faculty perspectives of developmental student persistence and helped the researcher to remain focused on faculty perspectives during the study. These questions shaped and helped narrow the interview protocol questions.

A case study model was selected for this study. Merriam (2009) noted that “case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 44), while Roberts (2010) noted that the purpose of qualitative research was to “uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known” (p. 143). There exists little literature that explores how faculty perceive their work with the unique challenges that arise in faculty-student interaction that may directly or indirectly influence a student’s decision to persist (Komarrju et. al. 2010). While a rich body of literature exists on student persistence, little is known about how faculty perceive their experiences encouraging students to be persistent while working with conflicting institutional factors such as heavy course loading and widely varying preparations.

Setting

The research for this study was conducted in an English Department at a large, public, diverse, two-year college in the American south that offers career, degree, and continuing education courses to approximately 30,000 students annually (White, 2013). For the purpose of anonymity, the college in this study was referred to simply as a two-year college. The college offered over 100 degree and certificate programs and core courses as one the 16 two-year schools within a state system of higher education. Two large, diverse campuses of the college were chosen for this study where approximately 60% of students enrolled in at least one developmental course (College, n.p.). The English Department served 884 developmental composition students in Fall 2014 with 54 sections of developmental composition taught by full time and adjunct instructors. Faculty had varying content specialties and teaching and

educational experiences (Nelson, 2014). Full time instructors normally teach a Fall/Spring/Summer course load of 6/5/4, and rotated so that they taught developmental composition at least once per school year, with the option of teaching multiple sections of the course.

Participants

Upon approval from the University of New England, the researcher interviewed thirteen full time and adjunct faculty who taught at least one developmental composition course in the 2015-2016 school year who taught at least one developmental composition course in prior semesters. Faculty were purposefully selected for the study having been previously identified by the developmental composition coordinator as having interest in teaching multiple sections within the developmental composition program in subsequent semesters. It was especially important to interview faculty who taught multiple sections of developmental composition in order to better understand the experiences and perspectives of seasoned faculty who might be beneficial for developing targeted training and support for adjuncts and new hires to the developmental composition program and in other college composition courses.

Stakeholders for this study included full time and adjunct faculty at the two main campuses featured in the study, as well as at the college's smaller campuses. New faculty who have not experienced teaching developmental composition may benefit from the results of this study, as results will be used to create professional development workshops covering various themes that emerged from the findings. Students who place into developmental composition may benefit from participants' self-reflection and the researcher's recommendations for best practices used to help increase faculty attention to student persistence. Faculty at this college and at other two-year colleges in the state system have recently considered reforming their developmental composition programs by allowing developmental students to enroll in college level coursework with a co-requisite lab. Developmental composition reform is a major

change being undertaken by many two-year college English departments and instructors in developmental programs have sought more effective ways to address developmental student persistence, such as looking to faculty for guidance on reform. This study examined faculty perspectives and encouraged faculty input on areas that may affect the future quality of faculty-student interaction, retention of qualified faculty, and ultimately, student persistence.

Data

Creswell (2012) determined that “one on one interviews are useful for asking sensitive questions and enabling interview to ask questions or provide comments that go beyond the initial questions” (p. 384). Data collection for this case study consisted of individual interviews with faculty using a semi-structured format as a means of capturing a wide variety of answers. This interview protocol was analyzed for various themes and was also used as a means of preserving confidentiality, since all faculty answered the same basic set of questions.

Merriam (2013) explained that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88). As perceptions are unique to individuals, it was impossible to conduct observations on how faculty perceive their experiences considered student persistence. Instead, semi-structured interviewing began with more open-ended questions and then moved toward more specific, “theory-driven” questions (Galletta, 2013; Merriam, 2013).

Interview protocol consisted of sixteen questions in a semi-structured format. The first question addressed the length of time faculty have been teaching at the college. This question clarified whether faculty were correctly selected for the study, as faculty participating should have taught at least two years of developmental composition courses at the college. The second question addressed the levels of students previously taught by faculty and the settings in which they taught. This question was used to assess length of time in the profession, as well

as what prior teaching experiences faculty had with teaching various levels of students. This helped the researcher determine follow-up questions to ask about other experiences that may have helped shape a participant's views on student persistence. A third question that helped establish participant experiences in general asked faculty to describe their experience in teaching developmental students, which moved the questions from more general to more specific and set up the next set of questions focused on prior training and education.

The next set of questions focused on faculty training and professional development. They helped the researcher determine faculty preparation for teaching developmental students. The next two questions asked what formal and informal training faculty had that they felt had prepared them for teaching developmental students. These questions helped the researcher assess faculty preparedness for teaching in the developmental composition program and factored into assessing whether faculty felt supported by their prior experiences.

A third set of questions moved from more general to more specific topics and addressed the factors faculty thought were involved in first-year student persistence and in students leaving the college without a degree or transfer credits. Questions in this set started with the factors in general that faculty perceived as connecting to persistence and early withdrawal. They moved on to what faculty experienced in helping developmental students persist in their courses. Questions addressed faculty-student interaction and the kinds of interactions that developmental composition faculty considered to be influential in helping developmental students persist.

A final section of the interview contained questions regarding course loading, faculty workload, professional developmental opportunities, and other factors that influenced the amount of time and effort faculty were able to spend in helping developmental students succeed in their courses. Questions considered whether faculty felt they were supported by the

college in their work with developmental students, while a final question asked if faculty had anything else to add about their experiences and any potential recommendations.

Analysis

Stake (1995) determined that in a case study, “the case serves to help us understand phenomena or relationships within it, the need for categorical measurements is greater” (p. 77). This study analyzed patterns that emerged in the data and coded them into four major themes. Themes were determined by patterns observed when transcribing interview responses. The researcher chose to conduct the study using qualitative inquiry to capture the widest possible range of faculty perspectives to not limit responses and to promote thick descriptions. Data was coded and obtained from transcript responses to interview questions, but was also directly interpreted from the interview responses (Stake, 1995).

The data was reviewed and triangulated with department and college memos, policies, and reports to validate interview findings (Roberts, 2010). Interviews were recorded using a Sony digital recorder and interviews were saved as MP3 files and played back using Windows Media Player with a transcription pedal device. Transcripts were recorded by the researcher and were typed and saved onto the researcher’s home laptop. Member checks were conducted by emailing the interview transcripts to the participants’ home emails. Only transcripts approved by participants were used in this study. Participants were assigned numbers after the researcher conducted member checks and the key was shredded to protect participant confidentiality.

Participant Rights

Participation in this study was on a voluntary and confidential basis. Participants were given the opportunity to sign a notice of their informed consent. Explanation of the interview and study purpose were provided to participants via email, as well as information on how the

data was used disclosed. The researcher assured participant confidentiality by keeping all interview data on a locked flash drive at home and by assigning numbers to the interviews and deleting participant names (Roberts, 2010, p. 38). Faculty were given the opportunity to opt out at any point during this study.

Potential Limitations

As the primary source of data was faculty perspectives on their experiences at two main and one satellite campus, findings may not be generalized to the larger population of English Department faculty within the college or across other colleges. Faculty were possibly reluctant to disclose negative experiences with college policies or their own teaching preparation due to perceived repercussions. While the researcher is also a member of the English Department faculty, interest was based solely in improving faculty-student interactions and potentially using findings to build future workshops to support faculty efforts.

Another limitation to this study was that only one college's English department developmental composition faculty was interviewed. Colleges have varied widely in policies and in faculty perspectives on developmental students, so this study may not be indicative of faculty perspectives at other colleges and further study at other schools in various states and regions would be needed in order to make any generalizations about the study findings.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the use of a qualitative case study to examine faculty experiences with encouraging student persistence. The researcher included specific research questions guiding the study (see Appendix A) as well as a description of the participants and research setting (see Chapter 4). The participants were selected purposively because they were developmental composition instructors who taught a student population most at risk for early departure at the two-year college. The researcher outlined data collection and analysis

techniques, as well as participant rights and potential limitations to the study. The findings of this study can be found in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore ways faculty described and perceived their experiences in encouraging developmental students to persist in first-year composition courses at a two-year college. In conducting this case study, ten full time and three adjunct faculty teaching developmental composition in a two-year college English department were interviewed to better understand how their background education and professional practice factored into their views on the needs of developmental students.

This study also sought to better articulate faculty challenges in teaching developmental students, highlighting strategies that faculty used to motivate developmental students to increase student persistence in developmental composition courses. This study also attempted to identify professional development needs of developmental composition faculty and sought to note any issues in their current working environment that faculty perceived as being counterproductive to their abilities to help students succeed.

The primary question explored in this study was:

- How do faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist?

Secondary questions were:

- How do faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students?
- How do faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students?
- What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions do faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

Faculty interviews were conducted asking participants to articulate their understanding of and preparation for meeting student needs and the challenges and opportunities they perceived in

faculty working conditions. The goal of this study was to identify potential professional development opportunities and possible changes that could be made in departmental and college policy to further support faculty efforts in encouraging student persistence in developmental composition courses.

Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) maintained that, prior to analyzing participant data, a researcher should revisit their conceptual and theoretical frameworks to help them “prioritize which themes to develop in the analysis” as prioritizing is one of the “key functions” of a study’s framework (p. 142). This chapter will first revisit the study’s theoretical framework as it applies to data collection. Next, the researcher will provide a description of participants before moving into a detailed summary of the major themes evidenced in participant responses and culminating in an analytical discussion of the study results.

A case was chosen for study for the purpose of understanding faculty experiences with developmental student persistence in a two-year college English department at an open-access institution in the South. A case study approach was chosen because developmental composition faculty were studied as a group representing a bounded case. Of most interest to the researcher was how faculty described and understood ways that their working conditions, personal backgrounds, educational preparation, and their approaches to meeting student needs intersected with their perspectives on how effectively they were helping students persist in their developmental composition courses.

Revisiting the Theoretical Framework

When conducting research using a transformative leadership framework, Shields (2010) maintained that researchers should consider how and why power structures influenced the ability of participants to lead and to effectively produce new frameworks. Faced with serving increasingly diverse groups of students, two-year colleges increased focus on student persistence. However, providing students access to developmental coursework hasn’t

necessarily translated to outcome equity for underprepared and at-risk students. Researchers have studied the challenges of schools faced with a growing problem of students leaving programs early without reaching their goals (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

While much research has attempted to discern and determine the reasons students leave college without completion or transfer (Nora, 1993; Rendón, 2000; Rendón, L., & Jalomo, R. & A. Nora. 2004; Goldrick-Rab, 2010), in order to better serve developmental students and faculty, researchers have called for additional studies in faculty perspectives on their support of student persistence and into faculty perspectives on their preparation and their working conditions. Student isolation from fellow students and faculty and frustration at not progressing quickly enough for expectations has led many students to lose motivation and give up on their college aspirations (Nora, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Fike & 2008; Schnee 2014).

In an effort to add to the growing body of literature on developmental student persistence, researchers have called for additional studies on the ways that faculty support student persistence and the roles their working conditions have had on the effectiveness of their practice (Bensimon, 2007). Tinto (1993) and Wirt & Jaeger (2014) argued that faculty-student interaction had the power to improve students' GPA and engagement with other areas of the college. Bensimon (2007) determined it especially important for historically marginalized populations, such as students of color, immigrants, and first generation college students, to encounter supportive faculty who cultivated encouraging relationships. If researchers were to explore how colleges support faculty and the roles faculty educational background and teaching experiences have had in faculty effectiveness, this could lead to better understanding of the time and effort faculty have put forth in addressing student persistence. A better understanding about actual outreach efforts faculty have accomplished with limited resources could lead colleges to a better understanding of how to support faculty.

Astin (1984) found that while multiple factors affect a student's persistence in their college program such as student finances, family support, and K-12 educational background, faculty had a major impact on student persistence and engagement. However, Adams et. al. (2009) argued, faculty are often restricted by factors such as workload and preparation for teaching developmental students that demand a significant amount of time and mental space to teach.

By providing faculty an outlet to voice their concerns and celebrate their triumphs, hooks (1994) determined that school leaders could work toward a stronger development of community and a more democratic mission. This understanding, in turn, could lead to increased student persistence and increased administrative understanding of ways the college could improve its service to students and faculty alike. Insight into the ways the system as a whole has worked and where faculty perceive incongruences could inform leaders and stakeholders about how community colleges can become more democratic systems.

Participant Information

Selected participant demographics are shown below in Table 4.1. Each of the 13 participants was assigned a number to protect confidentiality. Participants included ten full-time instructors and three adjunct instructors. It is important to note that, similar to other two-year colleges, many of the full time instructors previously served as adjunct instructors both at their current college and in previous two-year college positions.

The total years teaching reflected a participant's years teaching developmental students at any level, not just within their current two-year college English department in a further effort to protect anonymity. The inclusion of prior teaching settings denoted faculty experience at multiple levels, both in traditional K-12 school and community teaching settings. The years of faculty experience in teaching developmental students ranged from 6 to 43 years.

Prior teaching settings included other two-year colleges both public and private, four-year universities, K-12, and within various community non-school settings in-state, nationally, and

abroad. Faculty race and gender were not included in the descriptive statistics table to further protect anonymity of study participants.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of case study participants

Participants	Total Years Teaching	Prior Teaching Settings
1	6	Two-Year Public College
2	6	Two-Year Public College, Four Year Public University, Community Writing Program
3	11	Two-Year Public College, Two-Year Private College, Four-Year University
4	7	Two-Year Public College, K-12 Public Schools
5	42	Two-Year Public College, Four-Year Public University, K-12 Public Schools
6	43	Two-Year Public College, Two-Year Private College, Four Year Public University, K-12 Public Schools
7	23	Two-Year Public College
8	20	Two-Year Public College, Four-Year Public University
9	15	Two-Year Public College, K-12 Public Schools
10	7	Two-Year Public College, Community Writing Program, K-12 Public Schools
11	10	Two-Year Public College, K-12 Public Schools
12	40	Two-Year Public College, Four-Year Private College, Four-Year Public University
13	16	Two-Year Public College, Four-Year Private University, Community Writing Programs

Overview of Study Themes

After interviewing the thirteen developmental composition faculty who participated in this study, the researcher transcribed interviews alongside a digital recording of interview sessions, making notes and categorizing data using open coding. Creswell (2013) instructed the researcher that codes could be collapsed in a fluid process of “labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” using “inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes” (p. 243). Upon further examination, four major themes and several subthemes emerged from the data that highlighted the factors that faculty perceived as affecting their ability to help developmental composition students persist in their courses.

Table 4.2 Interview Themes

Themes	Subthemes	Descriptors
<p>1. Faculty workload impacted experience and engagement with developmental students.</p>	<p>a. higher course loading, roster loading, and overall increased workloads led to faculty burnout</p> <p>b. Mixed success connecting students with campus resources due to “silo-ing” (isolated/fragmented/inefficiently decentralized departments)</p> <p>c. Faculty reported the inability to take a holistic approach to student success.</p> <p>d. Total faculty workload negatively impacted ability to help students succeed</p>	<p>“Silo-ed” departments, overloaded, exhausting, burnout, course loading, roster loading, students lack time, troubling, piled on us, drain on time, size of class, feedback, office hours, missed Thanksgiving, more sections, where do we send students?</p>
<p>2. Faculty placed high importance on hands-on training</p>	<p>a. Formal training was not as useful for faculty as hands-on learning</p> <p>b. Faculty used a hands-off approach to encourage student development of a classroom community</p>	<p>Classroom experience, hands-on, ad hoc, prior knowledge, holistic approach, winging it, individualized instruction, best practice, no idea what I was doing, challenging, feeling like a fraud, like a bad first date, teaching practicum, modeling, conferences, on the job training</p>

<p>3. Faculty history influenced their professional practice</p>	<p>a. Faculty identified an experience or specific teacher that led them to teaching developmental composition.</p> <p>b. Professional practice was influenced by a negative educational experience.</p> <p>c. Faculty used personal experiences to help students set realistic goals and expectations</p>	<p>Rewarding, being realistic, challenges in lifestyle, colorful and good, tremendous challenge, no parental support, working-class education, ticket out, good student, share experience, modeling after practicum teacher, special teacher, told they couldn't do it, parents were inspiration, high school English teacher, not wanting other students to feel discouraged, kids like them didn't go to college</p>
<p>4. Faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support</p>	<p>a. Faculty reported successful engagement with developmental students using assignments with built-in cognitive skills practice.</p> <p>b. Faculty helped students demystify hidden curriculum.</p> <p>c. Faculty noted that students who lacked family support tended to exhibit resistance to change and challenge.</p> <p>d. Faculty promoted frank conversations about race, class, and gender equity</p>	<p>Processes, guided, flexible, treating them like a college student, responsible, managing the workload, communicating to them my respect, be truthful and help people understand, teach by example, scaffolding, transferability, nonthreatening group work, out of the box, no magic assignments, consistent, metacognition, community spirit, incentivize, support</p>

Theme 1: Faculty workload impacted experience and engagement with developmental students

“I keep trying to wrap my mind around how this can be fixed and you’re either a person and you’re going to fail or you’re a robot and you don’t sleep because you care so much more about your students than yourself...”

The first theme that emerged from participant interview responses was faculty concern over workload and how it impacted their ability to engage with and help developmental students persist. As the course load was raised administratively over time from five classes in the fall, five in the spring, and four in the summer to a 6/5/4 schedule, faculty indicated the fall especially as a term when they had little time for students, let alone for themselves; and the spring as a term when they were trying to catch up, so that they spent the summer developing courses for the following fall with little time for recuperation.

Faculty expressed feelings of frustration and apprehension about a workload that kept them in “survival” mode, teacher burnout and mental/physical health was a concern, especially for adjunct faculty and those with families, long commutes, or community obligations. As one participant noted, “I don’t know how much longer I can do this. My doctor told me I need to slow down or I’m going to get sick.” Participants reported problems with fragmented or “silo-ed” departments where students and faculty alike were unsure where to go for assistance with student resources. Growing from that concern, faculty felt they were unable to take a holistic or team approach to helping students and that their isolation negatively impacted their ability to help students succeed.

Subtheme a: Higher course loading, roster loading, and overall increased workloads led to faculty burnout

In many developmental composition programs, workload has increased as a byproduct of increased course load (sections taught per semester) and increased roster load (raising the cap on the number of students permitted in each section). Participants clarified that this has meant as many as twenty-two developmental composition students were routinely enrolled in each section, at times with roster overrides as high as twenty-three students. Faculty explained that as a result, their stress levels have increased significantly with less time available for thoughtful feedback on student work and on making critical choices in curriculum development. Overall, participants determined that the effects of increased workload meant that their morale had decreased. Faculty indicated a negative toll taken on family relationships, sleeplessness, poor eating habits, decreased exercise, and increased physical pain and other ailments. The researcher found it significant that faculty also indicated great concern for the quality of their interactions with students, choosing to focus altruistically on tackling the workload and supporting students instead of focusing on their own needs and other responsibilities. As one participant indicated:

My personal standard is that I try to give pretty engaged feedback about major writing assignments...I have ninety-six students...Ninety-six three-page essays that all get turned in in the same couple of days. I like to have them back in a reasonable amount of time. It reduces the input in each one. It just has to. I stayed at home from Thanksgiving. My family went to Thanksgiving and I stayed and graded essays and I had hundreds of pages to read. It was not the experience I wish that those students would have had in my class...or that I would have had.

When considering the effects of increased course loading, another participant corroborated the sentiment of being pulled in two directions of wanting time with their family and feeling dedicated to their students, stating of the impact:

The way the course loading impacts me is more emotionally and so after about mid-semester to say maybe week ten, I know that my patience begins to wane as I'm staying up later grading.

Yet another participant indicated that an effect of course loading increasing faculty workload was that their own health began to suffer repercussions and caused them concern about how sustainable their teaching career might be due to chronic illness and how other faculty possibly managed their stress levels:

I fear that what [course loading] invites more often than not is if people are going to look out for themselves, then they're going to do quick fixes to get the job done. It's to the students' loss. What it's done to me is to nearly kill me, because I can't seem to quit. With feedback or communicating with students and particularly those who I really want to turn around sometimes, I really want to have them wake up and see what's ahead of them with joy and with excitement and things like that. I'm evangelizing all the time. With the course load before, I often had course releases which helped, but with the full six course load, it's almost an impossible schedule...I won't [stay home] and let the students miss out, but it's at a great toll, a physical toll, a personal life toll.

Another participant considered the effects of the increased workload on their own and on student morale and their determination not to cancel class when they felt ill due to their dedication to helping their students succeed:

When I want to be there, they want to be there, usually [laughs]. It's that I'm tired of being there, so it has a bigger effect than I thought [originally] and I didn't think it'd be that bad because I used to teach seven classes when I was an adjunct and trying to scrape by. But that was before I had any real responsibilities outside of teaching. And

so if I didn't have a family, I could teach six classes and do what I need to do, but I do [have a family].

Thus, many faculty indicated negative effects of course- and roster-loading on their physical and mental health. Participants apologized for “complaining” and three indicated that K-12 teachers “have it much worse, so I shouldn't say anything.” Regardless, participants were hopeful that the college would someday realize the detrimental effect the heavy workload was having on faculty longevity with the college and on student evaluations of faculty, especially at the end of a six course semester.

Several participants indicated that while they believed a lighter course load would help them consider more individual interventions for at-risk students, they were uncertain if faculty who were used to cutting corners to get by under the heavier load would use the time for differentiating interventions or if they would find another way to fill that time:

I know that if I had less papers to grade when I went home and therefore I could deal with more students in a more individual way and then I could have some time to work with them. A 4/4 [course load] would be awesome... I mean, obviously in theory, if I had less classes to teach, I could be more effective with the students that I have.

The participant wondered whether other faculty would be more innovative and intentional with their teaching if given a lighter work load or whether they would “go to the lake” in their extra time instead, as “that's each person's personal integrity, right there.” Another participant admitted their concern that faculty might have already started cutting corners in student interactions, grading feedback, and in course preparation to save time and effort under a heavy course load. They considered the relationship between course loading's effects on instructors and administrative policy issues that affect developmental student success, asserting that:

I worry about anybody who would be teaching these students who didn't care enough.

Because, this is the perfect excuse to cut corners when you have the [increased] course

loading. These students need so much of our intervention and communication. To me, it's a policy issue directly related to the student outcomes.

Five participants indicated that to some extent they were concerned that faculty weren't calibrating grades properly in their courses and that when they themselves had been out sick or felt that they had skipped over or not fully explained a topic, they were more likely to "give students the benefit of the doubt" on drafts and not include as much feedback as they felt they might have with more time. Some faculty mentioned that while they hoped that students would take advantage of their office hours for assistance, they would sometimes see a draft for the first time when turned in as a "final for now" in the online course dropbox. One participant mentioned that:

I used to require individual conferences in my office or mini-conferences at some point during the course. While I hope students still come to see me, I haven't made it mandatory in the past few semesters because I simply don't have time to meet with everyone one on one effectively. I know that's awful, but I just don't. I encourage students to ask questions in class, I might read over part of a draft while they're working on it, and I encourage them to take peer review seriously and take their paper to the writing tutors before they turn it in.

This participant, along with several others, indicated feeling increased anxiety when grading work they haven't seen before a student turned it in and that their number of "caught" plagiarizers had decreased as number of student papers increased, "possibly because I can't fine tooth comb every paper every time. I'm sure somebody's gotten away with something somewhere."

Several participants indicated additional concerns with administrators overriding pre-set course roster caps to increase the roster load in developmental classes, though department chair policy was that they wouldn't override course caps. Several faculty indicated dismay

that their course roster load often moves from 22 to 23 students in a developmental course just before the semester starts, seemingly at the last minute. One participant pointed out that:

The class size of developmental classes should be much smaller than what it is here and I know there are studies that we can point to and everything. Because we don't honor those ... I think it's supposed to be around 15 or something, I think it makes it really difficult because there's not enough time to do everything you really need to do with them.

The impact of class size on faculty ability to effectively reach developmental students was also expressed as a stress point in classes which are often taught by the least experienced and least connected adjunct faculty, as faculty qualifications for employment aren't as stringent in the developmental courses as they are in hiring for college level courses. While class size was a factor affecting faculty workload and ability to successfully reach all students individually in a developmental course, some participants indicated that they ignored the numbers when they get their course rosters, especially in beginning to teach an overloaded course, because they knew a number of those students might not show up, might withdraw, or overcut classes at the beginning of the semester and be withdrawn from the course per department attendance policy:

I've taken to accepting that it is what it is here and I don't even fight it or think about it. I guess it's discouraging to start thinking about it too much. We've all had times where we've taught a ten week or a five-week class...or we've ended up with 8 or 9 students and it's so different. It would be nice to spend more time with students in different capacities and give them more attention for sure.

Connected to the impact of course loading and roster loading on faculty workload and the quality of their interactions with students, faculty pointed to several other issues which they felt may be negatively impacting student persistence, such as the time spent advising and in

other department- and college-wide duties. Faculty concern included not just course- and roster loading, but duties outside of teaching such as advising and committee work, and student time and transportation issues preventing access to campus resources such as faculty office hours, tutoring, and the computer labs if students needed to visit these offices outside of their scheduled class time.

Subtheme b: Faculty reported mixed success connecting students with campus resources due to “silo-ing”

A subtheme emerging from faculty workload was that workload affected faculty experiences and engagement with students related to helping students access campus resources. Faculty indicated that student resources were scattered and often difficult to pinpoint across the multiple campuses, creating a silo effect for faculty and students who worked out problems best handled by other departments due to being unsure who to call for guidance and if a student would actually be helped in that office or sent away confused. Many participants expressed that while they didn't have the time or expertise to help a student dealing with a family or financial aid issue, they felt an obligation to do as much as they could for that student rather than leave it up to somebody else who might send the student to other places on campus because they weren't “the person who handles that.”

As one participant noted of their own experiences with attempting to get answers for a student, if they couldn't figure out who to call as a long time faculty member familiar with college services, they couldn't expect students to successfully navigate the same system. They summed up the convolution, “I think that's something the college has got to look at in terms of student persistence. It's like we'll make them go forward through the most poorly designed maze on earth.” Participants implied that due to fragmented resources, a confusing college directory, and faculty not knowing the duties of staff members in various offices, it was a strong possibility that students who were already pressed for time and feeling “the run

around” might “just go home” rather than making multiple stops around campus looking for someone to help with a pressing issue.

A major concern described by participants about fragmented resources and silo-ing was that students were assumed in many cases to have the schedule flexibility and internet connectivity needed to complete needed transactions and processes on campus during 9-5 hours or on their own off campus. As one participant explained:

With the checking things out at the library, using the tools, using the skills...our college closes early on Friday and is not open on the weekends. I think that's a real problem for student persistence. I think that the different divisions of the college silo themselves, so while we may have tools available through student development services, students go there and they say, ‘You can check [online].’...Then they have to go to [the tutoring center] do that, so the students get shifted from one place to another. That may seem trivial to someone who's working here all day, but it's not trivial to a student who's got to get to work in half an hour. They don't have time to get from one place to another place and have another person lecture about something. I think that silos are a problem for a college that's a commuter college.

Subtheme c: Faculty reported inability to take a holistic approach to student success

Another participant noted that faculty were rarely privy to a holistic view of their students:

I feel like sometimes, it feels we're a very solitary island with them, and we're not. There are other people who come in contact with our students all the time, but we don't have any way really that we could communicate with each other and make a plan for a student and say, okay, I'm going to take charge of this part, you take charge of this part, you communicate this with them. We can't really holistically approach our students...I don't know how other instructors are handling the student. Is my student

struggling in English only? Are they struggling in math class? Are they struggling in history? What is the history teacher doing? Do you have an idea of how I can reach the student? Have you been successful in some way? We don't really have a way to sort of come at it together and I think that that could be a valuable thing that I don't know how I would make that happen.

Faculty indicated that this holistic approach could help students see the larger picture of their academic success and could take less pressure off of faculty to diagnose and treat the diverse student needs in the small amount of time they have in class, moving the care and support of individual students to a larger, more compassionate and focused, team effort:

To be compassionate, that's the key to developmental students persisting. They need someone reaching out to them, like most students after that can work their way up but English 100 students need someone to reach down. To reach down without looking down. To be there for students.

This sentiment of students and faculty wishing to connect with familiar face was echoed by another participant, who stated that:

Doors are not open like they used to be either. I know some of the offices have moved to the (suburban) campus. Many of those doors used to be open and now, either nobody's in the office or the offices have changed, because I don't even recognize some of the programs reflected on the doors.

Adjunct instructors, especially, indicated that they have felt the brunt of departmental siloing and issues with connecting students to campus resources, especially as they reported teaching mainly evening classes at the satellite campus locations with little to no on-site access to some of the college resources most critical to helping developmental students succeed.

Subtheme d: Total faculty workload negatively impacted ability to help students succeed

These logistical challenges, course and roster loading and departmental silo-ing, along with limited time on campus for faculty-student interaction, have led faculty to relying on technology and working from home as a main mode of communication outside of class. However, the increased “connectivity” to students has led some students to become unrealistically reliant on faculty availability. As one participant recounted, “To have all of them be successful, it's a 24-hour job. Last year, when my daughter was home, she said, ‘Mama, you're on the computer all the time.’” Participants reported that their increased reliance on digital communication produced unreasonable expectations as a result of their increased online presence. One participant mentioned that while an online teaching platform “is a lifesaver,” faculty needed to carefully set boundaries out of fairness to themselves and to students, reminding developmental students that, “It doesn't mean I can respond to you as soon as you email. I'm not going to leave my computer on 24-7 just to hear it ding and run to it.” Another participant responded, “For students who say, ‘well, I emailed you,’ and you look at the time of the email, it's ridiculous. All of this is on me, because I didn't respond.” Thus, participants described negative student reactions to their “off” time and that while technology helped them maintain contact with students, it was also seen as an addition to their workload that followed them home.

Despite recent training in which faculty and staff were asked to consider ways of diffusing student frustration through timely and caring interaction, many faculty expressed that while they have begun relying on emails to students out of logistical necessity, often those emails reflect the rush that faculty reported at wanting to provide well-timed feedback, but lacking the energy and mental space they needed to do so when there are so many other competing tasks:

There's a girl who was having some mental health issues and she stopped coming to class. I wanted to email her and make sure it was an email that was supportive. It was

important to me and it would have taken me hours to write. So, ok spend hours trying to craft this so she knows I'm here if she needs somebody...or grade this stack of quizzes over here. Which one do I need to do, I mean this one's more relevant right now and I still haven't emailed her. I feel horrible every time see her desk.

Other participants agreed that time spent in other areas of the job description, such as in academic advising, preclude the faculty abilities to work individually with students during time previously reserved for their "own" students enrolled in their courses, especially during office hours and that administration might consider the amount of hours faculty were spending working from home to support students in order to accommodate advisement and other duties during work hours:

Nobody really wants to look at what they're asking us to do, because they can't afford to hire that many more of us to reduce our load. I think that's the reality. We're in the same pinch that our students often are. Got to do it, but don't have the time. We don't have the money.

With an increased emphasis placed on two-year college advisement and transfer and limited funding resources, the college added additional academic advising duties to assist students within an instructor's degree division with their two-year, four-year, and occupational goals. This added twenty-four hours of advising time per fall/spring semester and twenty hours of advising time to the summer semester for full-time faculty, who reported that this addition has noticeably impacted their ability to work one on one with developmental students during advising periods.

Due to time constraints and availability, many faculty began scheduling their mandatory four hours per week of academic advising time during their eight office hours per week, effectively cutting availability by half to the students enrolled in their courses. As one

participant noted of diminished faculty-student interaction in both advising appointments and meetings with their own students:

I think students who do come in completely unprepared, it starts getting frustrating and unfortunately there are instructors even here who will just scoot people along. I sometimes feel like I need to do that because I don't want to break anybody's spirit, but I think they aren't ready...I do wish there was some way to connect better with students and trying to do that with how many students the school serves...it's just a big mess and I just think people are overwhelmed... We're overwhelmed teaching them for heaven sakes. We don't have enough time for [advising] them.

Other faculty expressed distraction related to multitasking and the necessity of providing all students with timely feedback while taking time to meet the individual needs of others as “constantly thinking about all the stuff I need to be doing, so that when a student is in my office, I sometimes can appear distracted or literally be distracted, and so I might be shorter with them than I would if I didn't feel the burden of all the grading.” While distractions and multitasking were major concerns of participants who expressed that they could never fully devote their time to one complete task such as course preparation, so that at times, connecting with the diverse writing levels of developmental students felt like a “bad first date,” some faculty explained that there are benefits coming out of the increased workload.

Although many faculty participants indicated that advising duties take up the majority of their non-class related work time, some considered the benefits of advising and that serving the college community in another capacity and learning more about ways to help developmental students could benefit both faculty commitment to serving the community and faculty-student interaction leading to students better understanding faculty role in their learning:

Just conversations with the students is the biggest [benefit]. Getting to know their struggles. Hearing out their stories, hearing out their reflections on what helped them and what didn't help them, so all of that conversation. Working together with them to hear about their life experiences and know how the college is either meeting up with that or failing to meet up with their [expectations].

While many participants considered other facets related to diminished faculty-student interaction including students and faculty being, as aforementioned, overloaded with school and work obligations, childcare and elder care issues, and transportation, several indicated the need for these services to be offered as part of a greater effort for the college to invest in the community.

Despite hardships and emotional strain, faculty were interested in providing a more holistic approach to student success such as encouraging departments to work as teams across divisions services in support of at-risk students and in pursuing digital means of faculty-student interaction when students and faculty were unable to meet face to face due to schedule constraints. Against all odds, faculty continued to show concern for students despite their own heavy course-loads, the logistical challenges of departmental silo-ing, and the diminished quality of faculty-student interaction due to competing duties. Many faculty recounted seeing a former student succeed in a community setting as one of the most rewarding things about their job and part of what keeps them coming back every year. As one participant concluded:

At the end of the day, I am exhausted but it's very therapeutic for me to help people. I enjoy it very much. I've met students before that I've taught years ago who still remember me. I don't quite remember them sometimes but I've seen them around and around. Little things like that really encourage me and I really do enjoy my job.

A participant explained that being able to help students learn and grow was a labor of love worth the tolls on their time and health. They always ended each semester with a personalized

note to each student explaining how the student had grown as a writer and learner, which many students had come back to thank them for over the years:

What I find keeps me going from one semester to the next is...at the end, I try to always sum up, as optimistically as I can, all the ways that I see they've grown and all the way I'd like to see them continue to grow, so that they know...I want them to feel that getting to know them enabled me to get to love them...I try to always leave them with a message at the end that sums that up, so that whatever went wrong or went right, they know at the end, that I ended up caring deeply about them. I'll send those messages at the end as my parting. I'm handing you over now. Because I do see it as that's what keeps me going when I'm worn out.

This participant reported regret that they may not be able to send students their notes at the end of the current semester due to time constraints.

Theme 2: Faculty placed high importance on hands-on training

“What I’ve done as an inter-disciplinarian is to know together how all of those theories overlay each other. I apply to writing the same things I learned about language acquisition, dialogue, constructing meaning, semiotics...To me, it’s fascinating stuff, but it all connects. I don’t see them as separate disciplines...I have not trained in comp and rhet and I did not train in education.”

The participants in this study acknowledged an outdated assumption that formal training from a graduate program has been more important than hands-on experience. When interviewed, study participants indicated that though formal training was needed in order for faculty to be content experts in English composition, faculty placed higher importance on hands-on or on the job experiences and pointed to specific instances that helped them grow as teachers and learners.

Subtheme a: Formal training was not as useful for faculty as hands-on learning

Some participants described their hands-on experiences as “challenging,” while others explained that their learning in the classroom as “ad hoc,” reporting that they often turned to course coordinators or other instructors for support and guidance and regularly attended conferences to learn from faculty at other institutions. One participant recounted the following:

On the one hand, I wish that I had had some formal training. I wish that I had had some starting concepts. On the other hand, some of what I have figured out about this job, I had to learn on the job. How to interact with students in particular is a thing that you can maybe talk about theoretically in a classroom setting with a bunch of other instructors, but until it’s actually happening and you realize, oh I should have said that differently, or, oh I did a really good job that time and you start to compile all those experiences, there’s not really anything that can replace that...Some of that stuff, I felt really unprepared for and I’ve had to sort of wing it.

Other participants corroborated the sentiment of “winging it,” admitting that often, they didn’t know exactly what they were doing, but experimented with new methods of instruction or attempting to replicate what another instructor had done without having a clear grasp on why it worked:

I’ve seen some phenomenal results from colleagues and talk to them a bit about it. I still feel as if I never got quite in sync with or real information about how they were able to get those results. That’s something that I really wish I could have gotten over the years is to see that kind of extraordinary response from someone getting the same results I was getting and the same students everyone else is getting. For some reason, this particular faculty just got phenomenal results out of their classes. Clearly, it was something the faculty were doing and it wasn’t a matter of luck.

While some participants pondered what went right in specific courses, others concluded that there wasn't any formal or experiential training that could encompass all of the challenges developmental composition instructors might face in the classroom with the diverse groups of students they served.

Participants explained that their best experiences involved early diagnoses of writing concerns and developing the course as the semester progressed dependent on the prior experience, needs, and interests of the students within that individual class. They explained that:

I don't think there is any training. How can you guess what type of students are going to end up in your class? For example, in my [classes] last fall, I had students who could barely get a sentence out and this semester, I had students who I thought with a little bit of work, you're going to be great in 101. So, I don't know if there can be any formal training.

Though some participants described teaching developmental composition as "flying by the seat of your pants," others referenced multiple opportunities put together by course coordinators and with other colleges such as conferences, workshops, and informal discussions that they felt had supported their learning as instructors and better prepared them for teaching developmental composition.

In particular, participants mentioned professional development and having informal conversations with other faculty members as two of the ways they stay connected to the college's larger mission and as a way to update their pedagogical methods to better reflect changes in technology, student population, and trends in the profession. One participant mentioned a combination of self-study, coordinator support and professional development workshops. They stated, "I have been able to do a bit of research on my own...I've spent time

following the coordinator around. I've gone to some kind of workshops... but nothing really formal. I've never had any education classes."

Another participant explained that hands-on experience was especially beneficial to their work with developmental students and though many colleges first look at faculty degrees and formal training, "Teaching is a lot different than knowing. We graduate with our PhDs and our master's degrees and years and years of training of content. We don't get but very little content delivery, very little instructional how-to unless we do that on our own." Thus, they expressed that a master's or Ph.D. program geared toward teaching at the four-year college level did little in terms of two-year college teaching preparation.

Another participant explained that while in college, they had worked in a community reading program for underprivileged children. The participant remembered that at times, the children would act like they didn't care about the lessons because they had never felt "allowed" to enjoy the experience until something they were reading sparked their interest and they "went wild over it." The participant was able to link this memory back to their work in the developmental composition classroom when students often act disinterested as a way of hiding their feelings of being a "fraud" as a student. They recollected, "I would say, for sure, [this program] impacted me in terms of looking at things from other people's perspectives, and not writing someone off and saying, 'Well, they don't care, so perhaps I shouldn't.'" The participant remarked that they often recognized similar responses from their developmental composition students and that their hands-on training in the community reading program was, to them, more helpful in "recognizing why" students responded certain ways than their formal training at the university had been.

One participant recalled drawing from their community theatre experience when they wanted to encourage student engagement:

In theatre...it's all about that golden want, or that golden desire as we talked about it in acting. It's all about finding what you want in that particular moment, looking at your audience or your objective...so a lot of the examples or things that we would talk about in acting, I sometimes shift that over into class too.

By attempting to draw students in to the discussion and “sell” the assignments, several participants used language from sales and marketing, explaining that they needed to be animated for students to “buy in” to the lesson.

Other participants found their experience in linguistics to be an interdisciplinary benefit when helping developmental students take pride in their home speech communities. Several faculty noted that their backgrounds in linguistics allowed them to help students recognize the legitimacy of dialects traditionally viewed as “less educated” at the college level, such as dialects spoken by students who used African American Vernacular English (AAVE), students who spoke English as a second language, or who used other localized Southern dialects. By taking the “shame” out of community speech patterns, and instead, praising the mastery of its use in context, faculty helped students realize their interest in student background experience and increased student buy-in. As one participant explained:

It was all my linguistics training...What I was particularly interested in was socio-linguistics. What I did and what I know other linguists have done here is to find the theoretical approaches from socio-linguistics [that] overlay completely many of the theories that other disciplines hold, [such as] education, for example.

Participants supported their understandings of language as action and that when they helped students gain mastery over words, they saw it as an act of empowerment. One participant explained this process:

I think [students] look at [language] as largely expressive, and they have to have a transformation to looking at it as instrumental and then later [as] academic. Moving

beyond language as communication...language as a way to get things done, as an instrument or a tool, I think it's been very helpful...Language is more how we do things with words, not just social genres. It's an instrument. In that sense, it is a social genre, but we look at pragmatics or communicative competence as simply accomplishing an act. You know, I think of it in terms of *speech act* theory more.

Many participants believed that a background in linguistics or another training often seen as being “out of the content area” of developmental composition, faculty helped their students gain confidence to engage in academic discussions by first acknowledging competence in students’ home dialects. They then encouraged students to move through a process of recognizing their writing as useful and as empowering action.

Subtheme b: Faculty fostered student development in the classroom community by encouraging soft skills practice through collaboration and student-driven learning.

Study participants were clear that no formal training or even hands-on experience could encompass all they need to know about student persistence, faculty pointed to three competencies that they had developed via hands-on experience: a) They solved potential behavioral problems early on, b) They supported meaningful class discussions and small-group interactions, and c) They developed a repertoire of technology-based assignments to support rhetorical awareness and encourage information literacy development.

Many faculty found that in learning by experience, sometimes their best resources were their own students. One participant responded that a most successful approach to technology skills development was that they allowed students to help each other instead of coming to their rescue. They felt this “hands-off approach” fostered communication practice and emergent technology skills, decreased student reliance of their instructor as a “sage on the stage,” and allowed students to showcase their abilities with one another while practicing interdependence. This participant asserted that effective faculty should encourage students to:

Develop some sympathy for what's going on and of course, [students] can help each other a lot. You know we always see that in the classroom: sharing of devices, sharing of information. The students that can help somebody else troubleshoot a problem on their laptop which they bought for a couple hundred dollars, but they don't have all the software and they don't know how it works. You know, I find students in class can really help each other a lot that way...so that they do continue to have that kind of bond with each other to help each other out.

When it came to hands-on learning and hands-off teaching, many participants mentioned the significance of just stepping back to listen as a guide to students who could then experience hands-on learning, themselves, as the development of professional practice.

Theme 3: Faculty history influenced their professional practice

“Somehow, she would be able to open up the class discussion in such a way that everyone felt comfortable talking about their feelings. She had some students... came to her at the end of the semester and had changed their thinking...as a result of the class discussion.”

When asked about how participants found their way to teaching developmental composition students at the two-year college, most indicated that their background history played a major role in their motivation to support developmental students. Some participants pointed to a special teacher who encouraged them or could pinpoint an experience that led them to their current roles such as being a non-traditional student without family or financial support or having a negative educational encounter that made them determined not to let other students have the same experience.

Subtheme a: Faculty identified an experience or specific teacher that led them to teaching developmental composition.

One participant responded that their K-12 practicum teacher's modeling of effective instruction played an influential role in their practice, “Just seeing her model instruction and

we both have, obviously, a love for English, but just actually watching her interact with students...was what helped me the most.” Another participant indicated that a college instructor acted as a role model for what a teacher “should” be. They responded, “I knew I wanted to be a teacher since I was young and just observing teachers at a young age...Just watching [my professor], I modeled my style after him in the classroom.” Another participant felt that their high school English teacher inspired them to make a difference in students’ lives:

There’s certain teachers that just change you and how you respond to others...There was this particular teacher in high school. She had an outrageous amount of personal energy and she brought such an enthusiasm to English and literature that you just couldn’t help but love what she loved.

Subtheme b: Professional practice was influenced by a negative educational experience

While some participants pointed to a particularly inspirational teacher, some pointed out negative experiences with high school or college educators in which they vowed to do the opposite. One participant recounted that while they never struggled with English, the struggles and humiliations that other students by an unsympathetic professor made a significant impact on the participant’s teaching practice:

I saw people struggling with this and I saw them feeling like they weren’t valued or heard. One of my saddest feelings about college was noticing at some point that in this class...I remember the instructor visibly changing her way of interacting with us whereas when she would decide that she needed to call on one of the students who wasn’t contributing or something, it was like her face would change. You could tell that there was a sort of sense of disappointment and sort of like rolling her eyes...It was really disappointing and sad.

This participant went on to explain how this experience inspired their encouragement of developmental students:

Part of why I like working with developmental students is that at least I know in my classroom, they're...not going to feel like I'm bored with them or that I'm disappointed in them or that I'm discouraged by them. My hope is that they feel encouraged at all times and I know that that's something possible in every classroom so it's important to me that they feel that way in my class.

Much like the previous participant, three other participants expressed that they were especially motivated to encourage under-prepared and first generation college students as a result of their high school encounters with guidance counselors and teachers who discouraged them from enrolling in higher education because of a lack of family or financial support. These participants reported having to combat a sense of "not belonging" in higher education as a result of "not being good enough." Participants concluded that there were lasting effects of these interactions on their self-esteem and their willingness to face academic challenge.

More than one participant considered their own educational "scars" when interacting with students who had disclosed similar life experiences. As one participant recounted, "I was actually told by a guidance counselor that people like me never made it in college so I needed to figure out something different to do with my life." This participant, like several other faculty interviewed, expressed that they had been discouraged from going to college due to financial hardship and a family that didn't support their education. Instead of giving up, they chose to use that negativity as a challenge to succeed against the odds. They bring this experience to their teaching as a way of sharing with students from similar life circumstances, recognizing that the support their college professors gave them was what helped them succeed, so now they need to help the next generation:

I think understanding that [students] are people. I think understanding that they're not stupid. Yeah, they didn't just go right into 101, whatever. They're not stupid, and I think just understanding that people come from different backgrounds...that helped me reflect back on my youth because I think if I wouldn't have had that support, I might not have made it...I was lucky. Factors, I guess, just came together so I could run away from home, but I try to let [students] see that I'm a person, you're a person and if it doesn't work out, then that's ok. You can do a thousand and one things that are even better than writing an essay, you know.

This participant and four others expressed determination to never let developmental students feel that they were "less" because they were under-prepared or unsupported in their academic backgrounds and that they would be at least one person students could come to for guidance.

Subtheme c: Faculty used personal experiences to help students set realistic goals and expectations

When asked whether or not their backgrounds factored into their work with student persistence, participants mentioned that they often used examples from their own experience to help students set attainable goals and form a realistic plan for success, such as disclosing their work and educational history or their struggles with providing for their family at a young age. Many faculty included small research assignments in their units such a career exploration using the *US. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook* and other career resources to delve deeper into potential occupations and to help students realistically consider their career goals:

Having them understand what our education is all about, even just a little bit of history, you know, for those who might be interested and those who are not, and then of course you just tie the writing in because they will have to take notes, and then

[they] write just a little blurb. Certainly, understanding “why I’m here,” that’s important.

Many participants indicated that providing students with a history of the two-year college was beneficial to students who then saw where they fit in to the larger community picture as a student and future professional.

Several participants stated that helping students find their vocational calling was one of their major goals even if it meant that students may change majors or abandon pursuit of the degree they came in seeking. Participants concurred that sharing their own academic paths including teaching K-12, waiting tables, working elsewhere in the private sector and serving in the military, helped students validate their own widely different career paths. Faculty encouraged students to make realistic self-assessments and have frank conversations about attitude and aptitudes.

Participants considered that they were doing students a service that had been done for them in the past, as it was especially important to make students aware early on that if they weren’t applying themselves in their courses, they should not expect to succeed in their educations and be taken seriously as professionals should they graduate. One participant explained frank conversations with students over career goals. A small group of students had missed multiple classes and several assignments and attempted to play on their phones or talk daily during class, effectively “tuning out” the instructor:

Some of them want to be nurses, and I just tell them, ‘You know, I wouldn’t want you to be my nurse,’ point blank. Just letting them find out what it is they want to do, not what Mama and Daddy said you should do, or what your friend is doing, but what are your strengths, what are your interests?

Though many participants indicated that their background experiences either through an encouraging teacher, a discouraging experience, or their own inclination toward English led

them to be developmental composition instructors, most participants explained that their goal is to guide students to seek and explore as lifelong learners and to be resilient in the face of life's challenges. To sum up this theme, as one participant disclosed:

I guess the bottom line is if you know what you want, you're going to work for it, and I always say, I should not stand in your way, whatever I say to you, or whatever grade you get on the paper should motivate you even more... You should look at us in this way. If I say something that disturbs you, then you should take that as a challenge... If you take that stance, then you will keep moving on, and moving on, and moving on.

Theme 4: Faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support

“Whenever I think a student feels like there is a person, a singular human being on this campus who knows my name, who cares about what’s happening in my life, who is aware of me as a person, it makes it a lot harder to leave.”

A final theme that arose from the data is that faculty indicated that their goal as instructors was to provide developmental students with emotional and cognitive support in their transition to college as a means of helping students learn, mature, and persist through their degree programs. Participants were quite aware of the unfamiliarity many developmental students faced when first coming to college. They indicated that students often expressed feelings of being a “fraud,” or a student who shouldn’t be there.

Subtheme a: Faculty reported successful engagement with developmental students using assignments with built-in cognitive skills practice.

Participants felt that they needed to build up student confidence and support development of students’ cognitive processes, as this would help students succeed in subsequent coursework. One participant explained the importance of supporting critical thinking and collaboration:

The kinds of things we teach in terms of critical thinking and reading about topics so they can talk about things that are issues for them...some classroom connections with me and conferencing with their [fellow] students...maybe some group work and peer review and reflection...I would think are definitely what would help them to persist.

Faculty also expressed starting with small steps and helping students acclimate to college demands, while gradually increasing rigor in assignments and maintaining high expectations from day one to set a professional tone and support student accountability:

We start off very simple, with something very simple. From there, we build on it. The very first night of class after the diagnostic, we write an email. I actually have them write out an email to a homeowner's association asking permission to have a basketball goal in their yard. Then, from there, we talk about persuasion and audience awareness and tone. Usually, for each unit, we start off with something relatively simple and then we build on that. Building on it, though, they do have to be present in class. Absences are a deterrent. Just working with them one-on-one as much as possible and meeting with them, emailing ... Sometimes that can be very time-consuming but if they're willing to meet me fifty percent of the way, I'll meet them the other fifty percent.

Participants frequently responded in similar fashion when asked about processes and procedures they use to support student persistence. Key response phrases included “supporting cognitive development,” “promoting situational awareness,” and “encouraging growth mindset.” Faculty referenced texts they had read at as a group for departmental professional development book talks including Dweck (2007) *Mindset: The new psychology of success*, Yancey (2004) *Teaching literature as reflective practice* and Keller (2014) *Chasing literacy: Reading and writing in the age of acceleration*. Departmental focus on student motivation and cognitive development strategies, as well as on the Council of Writing

Program Administrators' *Framework for success in postsecondary writing*, showed an intense focus on using findings of recent psychological studies and official positions of professional organizations to reinforce educational practice in support of developmental student persistence.

As one participant explained:

If you they're truly interested in doing something, they're going to have to buy into the idea that higher orders of cognitive processing are going to be required and also to understand the whole path and the whole picture. Not to think of it as course by course, week by week, semester by semester, but keep track of the bigger picture, that kind of goal setting [is important.]

Participants reported that they helped students examine this “bigger picture” using higher order thinking skills, which they turned into a series of connected and carefully scaffolded assignments where students analyzed, then evaluated an argument before creating their own. This scaffolded process encouraged students to see the bigger picture of how the assignments fit into the course and how the course fit into the sequence of their first-year composition courses, their major, and the skills and processes they needed in the workplace and community as lifelong learners.

Subtheme b: Faculty helped students demystify hidden curriculum

Participants indicated that by helping students strengthen connections between the “how,” “why,” and look for “gaps,” in who or what wasn't included, faculty worked toward democratizing the developmental writing classroom and demystifying “hidden curriculum” for students. One participant reported that they made an effort to explain why students placed into a developmental course in order to help provide a greater sense of transparency about the college admissions and placement process:

If a student sees that what they're doing, but doesn't understand not just why they're doing it but the process of doing it...[we work towards] sort of demystifying processes. I know the department has made a big effort to demystify motivations. Have we made a big enough effort to demystify the processes? I think that is something that would be very, very helpful for students, that transparency.

By providing opportunities to examine processes and “rules” hidden in higher education curriculum and exposing students to the hierarchies present at the two-year college, faculty helped students realize the bigger picture of learning and growing as individuals, which increased opportunities to strengthen skills and build upon knowledge that students could use to better serve their communities and work towards equality in their professional practice. As one participant explained:

We write [about] what is college for. I tell them, you can't say money. I know that's what you're coming here for, but I don't want you to talk about money at all. I want you to tell me what college is for. Money is off the table. A lot of them struggle. They don't know because they're just here to get a job. Of course being in technical college, that's even more pronounced.

While attention to the bigger picture hasn't alleviated all behavioral issues, many faculty found that by explaining the reasons behind student placement and the goals for student outcomes, they noticed less anger and resistance, and instead students were grateful for time to reflect and build a strong foundation for their college writing skills.

Faculty indicated that student resentment over placement was often due to a sense of entitlement and the perception that the two-year college is “less” of an education or “should be easier” than a four-year school, so students who did well in high school should necessarily place at the college level. As one participant responded:

It offends me now that that's the perception. I think sometimes that's the perception because I think some students have that in the community coming back sometimes. But, I do find that those students who have had a privileged background, they don't feel happy or lucky to be in college at all, they're just in this place where it's like oh whatever...they're the ones who will say to me, 'yeah, well I know I've missed six classes, but I have a great excuse, is there someone over you?' And I would explain, oh yeah, my chair, but she's going to say the same thing I did. 'Well, who's over you or her?' and they have this nasty mentality of 'I'm just going to keep going over your head because I deserve it'...and I think that's the worst part.

Participants noted that student entitlement was a concern, but that explaining roles and expectations early on in the semester helped students set boundaries and become more aware of their own student responsibilities, taking the "heat" off of the instructor and administration.

Subtheme c: Faculty noted that students who lacked family support tended to exhibit resistance to change and challenge.

While participants discussed the importance of student engagement and "buy-in," to the process of becoming a successful student, they noted the challenge of motivating students who exhibited opposition to their own learning. One participant elaborated on students exhibiting a "fixed" mindset and the challenges of helping students build a "school" identity:

There's the whole mindset thing. You can't be fighting what you're trying to do. You have to buy into it. I think the idea that the college student is a transformed individual. That you're no longer just out of high school, but you have bought into that new identity of being a college student. Sort of, talking about what does it mean to be a college student as opposed to, sometimes we just talk about literacy experience? Sometimes we just talk about something that's transformative. For a lot of people they are not going to have the light bulb go off and have some giant epiphany. For some of

them, it's just going to be a slog, and they have to buy into the slog. I think that they have to accept themselves as having a new identity even if it means a slog.

Faculty made it clear that while it was not always a joy to help students through the learning process who fought them along the way, it was rewarding for faculty to help students see that their prior education helped them get as far as the placement test and now students needed to work through the difficult transition into their college level coursework but that faculty would support them along the way.

Participants believed that students fought the learning process out of fear and distrust, but also out of the foreignness of being challenged when emerging from a K-12 education that did not effectively support cognitive development and critical awareness. The hardest part for students noted by faculty was “the transition” because:

I see where they come from. I came from a high school where the lowest grade you can get is a 60 and motivation is null. I get a lot of students who want to be nurses and I say, ‘Well, good nurses have to have excellent documentation skills. How are you going to document that you gave me these pills? How do you know it's this pill I took?’ Making it about...their long-term goals instead of a rhetorical analysis wins them over quicker, but if they don't have a good attitude and if they're just there for the check, at least they can just sit there and play on the phone but at the very worst, they can become bullies in the classroom, unfortunately.

Faculty described ways of mitigating student resistance by making connections with students early on, and as much as possible, sharing personal stories about success, failure, and learning and also encouraging students to share literacy narratives that focused on what they learned and how it changed them.

One participant noted their use of personal experience with a sick parent to start a conversation about contingency plans and what students could do if they or someone in their care became ill during the semester:

I try to start the semester by sharing stories. When my mother was still living, I would let them know that...she's fine, but she's [ill and is] going to come first, and then it's 'I'm sure some of you might have similar issues with chronic illnesses.' Maybe I'll use a situation from a previous semester to say, if you're in this particular situation, then here's some things you can do. I try to be diligent about that, particularly with [developmental] students.

Participants reported helping students consider possible scenarios and using concrete examples to help students manage time and make wise decisions about juggling obligations on an overloaded schedule. While many faculty struggled with negative student attitudes and lack of accountability, most participants indicated that by helping students to build skills and also to consider multiple perspectives on social issues, students were better able to see outside of their own "boxes" and consider how their actions benefitted or negatively affected the classroom community.

Subtheme d: Faculty promoted frank conversations about race, class, and gender equity

Review of interview data indicated that faculty worked to promote discussion about social issues involving race, class, gender, age, ability etc. They found that by including readings and assignments about inequalities and social justice helped students make real-world connections that allowed them see how their professional practice could help others.

Faculty included assignments such as writing a proposal to solve a health and safety issue affecting the local population or investigations into discriminatory practices within the community. These assignments produced meaningful discussions about racial and gender

equality and these discussions encouraged faculty to reflect upon their own positions as those of relative privilege in the college community. One participant noted:

As a middle-age white woman, I feel like I can relate to my students pretty well. But, certainly I wonder sometimes how my African-American students perceive me, especially the younger ones and whether they're wondering how can that middle-aged white lady up there connect in any way with me and I think, again, that you know, as the semester progresses, I like to think that that's not an issue at all. That it's not a barrier that the kinds of things we talk about and I share a lot in the classroom. I'm pretty open about who I am and what I think about things and I hope that I make them feel like their opinion matters and they can express it in class and that there aren't right or wrong answers when we have discussion.

Participants reported engaging in frank discussions about race, class, gender, education, and power. Several participants were made aware of how these intersections affected their effectiveness in working with and gaining the respect of developmental students, because students told faculty how they perceived their interactions in no uncertain terms. Other participants did not report race or gender to be a defining characteristic in their interactions with students and it was noted that faculty who did not perceive race or gender to be an issue were both white and male.

Both African American and white female participants responded that their race and gender were issues they perceived affected their interactions with students. One white, female participant stated:

I will say I do everything I possibly can to neutralize my behavior and my dress...and my dialect...because I have found that students respond negatively to a Southern sounding woman, so I negate that. I don't even wear polish on my nails, because I've tested it. I've put on polish because I had this one student who was giving me a fit

from start to finish and I did everything I could for that student... could not reach her. I thought, 'Let me test this.' I put on polish, and it was the first thing she commented on. It was the hint of femininity, it was a hint of weakness to her...I was stunned. Not really surprised, but still shocked that she could zero in on that, and that she feels like that's a weakness. I don't get that from my male students. It's from my female students. Three female faculty reported altering their "feminine" clothing and actively downplaying "southern" mannerisms such as speech patterns, as they perceived these to be negatively received by their students.

When pressed for further clarification on dress and behavior, one white female participant mentioned that she had perceived disrespect from both African American and white female students which she considered might be a projection of these students' own low status in the social and historical hierarchy of the American south. Another white female participant indicated of classroom discussion, that:

I do think that my minority students are quieter. It's harder to get them sometimes to speak up. I will occasionally have a student who's a minority student who's like I will talk and I will participate and I will say my thing and it doesn't seem to have an impact on them but generally speaking, especially my English as a second language students, will almost never contribute in class. They're very, very quiet in the classroom.

Several faculty reported that they made extra efforts to encourage African American and Latino students, especially female students, to participate, share insights, and take an active role in small group collaboration in an effort to increase their interaction in class, which they reported was often dominated by white male and female student discussion.

An African-American female participant indicated that her community's perception of the strong black woman as an authority figure has often affected her perceived interactions with African-American students:

Let me just tell you this. Black females find me intimidating. Males, black or white, it's generally okay. White females are generally okay. As I age, in very recent years, they have understood that my mannerisms reflect my age and experience. I don't necessarily have that touchy feely [teacher] feeling that some of them are used to.

Another African-American female participant noted that:

I am very much aware of who I am and what I am to other people and know that other people have a perception of me as not an individual, but as a representative of society. So, I think engagement in terms of race and gender can certainly be, or have been...Maybe I'm too straightforward the first couple of days in letting them know it's not about liking somebody, but respect is very important.

This participant, as well as others, asserted that by including readings and assignments that explored issues of racial identity, equality, and social justice, they helped students see others including faculty as individuals, first and foremost.

One participant spoke about African-American students learning not to make the assumption that they would get "a pass" on behavior due to the instructor's race:

Sometimes I've had African-Americans students to think because I'm African-American that they can do less and I very quickly tell them that I came up in a very different society and I was given nothing. I let them know that I graduated less than one tenth of a point away from the next letter grade...that close. There was not one instructor that I could go to and ask...I would not have even entertained raising that [question].

One white male participant added that in their work to help developmental students succeed by not allowing students to “get away with” behavior, their own actions were perceived as racially motivated by several students. The participant recounted:

I noticed that here were some issues with the African-American female population particularly interacting with me. There were some cases where I had to say directly could you please put your phone away while you talk to me because they would ask me a question, clarifying something but, at the same time, they weren't giving me hardly any of their attention. That became frustrating. Sometimes I would ask those students to stay after class so that I could talk to them about their behavior.

When this instructor addressed the students individually for their distracting behavior, the students challenged the college cell phone policy, expressing that the instructor had singled them out due to their race:

They would tell me that they were being put at a disadvantage, I didn't understand them because of who they were, being African-American. I try to be just as honest as possible with everyone. These are the objectives. These are the expectations. If you want to succeed, you have to do this regardless. There was one situation in particular where I was going to have to call security even, but the student eventually left. I've had a few situations like that. Overall, I try to tell everyone that this is not about an individual specifically as far as what you look like but it's about what your goals are and what you're capable of doing and to show your capabilities. I try to be as nice as I can and be polite to people because you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar but sometimes that does not work.

While some participants expressed frustrations with student perceptions of race, many saw these interactions as teachable moments where following through with policies after setting

clear expectations helped students realize that they would not get preferential treatment and could not use race or gender as a “pass” or excuse for their own behavior.

Faculty expressed attempts to promote fairness and equality in the developmental composition classroom. Participants encouraged students to interact with their instructors and college staff to meet people from all over the world with a variety of perspectives as a way to broaden their worldviews. Participants explained that by building mentoring relationships with faculty and staff at the college, student persistence might increase. While many faculty noted inequalities in race and gender as points of discussion, other faculty considered that more recently, students have wanted to discuss issues of gay and transgender rights that have allowed the class as a whole to explore ethical standpoints and opportunities to challenge prior assumptions:

You're likelier in [developmental composition] to have that far ranging diversity of each race, ethnicity, and I will say, gender. Because it's never just the male/female split. It's never just the heterosexual, it's not even just the heterosexual, gay split.

Because I've had transgender students in my classes too and it's posed a really interesting opportunities for growth on everybody's part. I see developmental composition as a chance for students to overcome any assumptions they had about each other and begin to bond in group work, begin to respect...their humanity and to discover it in others.

By helping students make these connections, faculty encouraged students to challenge stereotypes and assumptions, which benefitted all members of the college and larger community who students would eventually serve in their professional practice.

Review and Analysis of Themes

In participant interviews, four major themes emerged from the data: Faculty workload impacted faculty experience and engagement with developmental students, faculty placed

high importance on hands-on training, faculty history influenced their practice, and faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support. These four themes all indicated the high importance faculty place on strategies to help developmental students succeed in their courses and persist until they achieve their goals. While faculty indicated that workload negatively impacts their abilities to help developmental students persist, they maintained that they placed student needs ahead of their own and continued to try their best to provide their students with consistently rigorous coursework and scaffolded instruction.

Summary

It is important to note that faculty did not place blame on the administration and certainly not on the students they serve when discussing the effects of the increased workload. Instead, they expressed concern that course loading, roster loading, advising duties, and departmental silo-ing and fragmentation caused a negative effect on their efforts to help students persist. One participant's concern was that, "if the work's piled on us with very little sympathy it's easy to turn around and do the same thing to students." Participants were aware of potential impacts of their workload on students and attempted to alleviate any negative experiences students might incur as a result of faculty strain.

Faculty noted that hands-on experience was more useful for them than their formal training. While many participants drew from experiences in their content areas, their more applicable experience involved working with students directly in the classroom and during office hours. Participants also indicated that a teacher or experience led them to teach developmental students as a means of following by example or potentially righting wrongs that faculty encountered in their own pasts so that their students had greater opportunities for success.

Lastly, faculty participants indicated that in providing students with emotional and cognitive support, they supported student learning. Faculty helped students set clear goals and manage expectations. They also considered potential intersections of demographics in faculty-student interactions to help students gain better understanding of a wide variety of experiences and worldviews.

This chapter reported participant responses to faculty interviews concerning their experiences with developmental student persistence. The following chapter will include analysis of findings, implications and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future study and action.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

This study sought to understand the ways that composition faculty described and perceived their experiences with developmental student persistence at a two-year college. Throughout this case study, four research questions were posed and explored. The essential question guiding this study was:

- How do faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist?

Secondary questions were:

- How do faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students?
- How do faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students?
- What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions do faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

This case study was guided by a literature review in the areas of developmental composition, access and equity, faculty perspectives, faculty-student interaction, and developmental student persistence.

The thirteen full time and adjunct English faculty interviewed taught for at least two years across multiple campuses at a two-year public, open access college in the American south. Full time faculty taught multiple sections of developmental composition per semester along with first year composition and second year literature courses, while adjuncts taught up to five developmental composition sections at a time. Both full-time and adjunct faculty taught a heavy course load that had increased first to five fall, five spring, and four summer courses and then to six fall, five spring, and four summer courses with additional duties for full time faculty that included twenty-four hours of advising appointments and multiple department and college wide service obligations. Adjunct faculty interviewed also taught the full course load, but with no additional benefits such as sick leave or positional permanence. Additionally, due to budget constraints, course roster loading had steadily increased to upwards of twenty-two students in developmental composition courses. Roster loads far exceeded recommendations from professional organizations supporting college composition faculty, such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators and Two-Year College English Association.

Participant interviews

Developmental composition faculty were interviewed to better understand their perspectives of and experiences with student persistence. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen faculty participants. These interviews consisted of questions related to faculty perceptions including their understanding of course loading, roster loading, and additional factors affecting faculty workload, faculty preparation for teaching developmental students, and factors that influenced faculty motivation in encouraging developmental students to persist.

Saldana (2008, p. 8) explained that coding an interview was a “cyclical act” that moved a researcher from data to a larger, thematic meaning. In analyzing data from interview transcripts, four major themes emerged from participant responses. The researcher categorized these themes through a process of “descriptive coding” (Saldana, 2008). Codes were collapsed into themes representing the stated and implied main ideas of participant responses. What follows in this chapter is a discussion based upon findings related to the four major themes that emerged from interview coding. Chapter 5 will also address implications of these findings, recommendations for further actions and research, and finally, the conclusion of this study.

Research findings

The purpose of studying developmental composition faculty experiences was to better understand their own behaviors that participants identified as affecting their students’ persistence. Most studies in student persistence have looked at the topic from the perspective of students who haven’t seen behind the scenes in their instructors’ daily work lives. Developmental students have unique and diverse needs and require targeted and timely interventions to help them succeed. These interventions take the effort and the expertise of highly qualified instructors who must often take the time to seek out campus resources and come up with solutions to complicated issues as they arise.

Faculty experiences, preparation, and working conditions are all factors which affect the ability of faculty to fully engage in their work with developmental students. In order to better understand the issue of student persistence, it was important to examine the issue from the perspectives of composition faculty who work closely with these students. Upon analyzing participant responses related to the research questions considered throughout this study, the researcher’s findings were as such:

Question 1. How did faculty describe and perceive their experience in encouraging developmental students to persist?

Overall, participants reported positive experiences in encouraging student persistence in their developmental composition courses taught by the faculty who were interviewed. Faculty expressed a strong desire to help developmental students persist in the courses faculty taught and they described rewarding feelings when they felt that they had played a role in their students' academic success. Participants determined that small student successes were extremely rewarding and that they attempted to differentiate instruction so that the largest number of students benefitted in their own ways.

Participants considered experiential learning more useful than their formal training in dealing with the variety of challenges posed to them in teaching developmental composition students. Participants employed concepts from rhetorical genre studies, sociolinguistics, and cognitive psychology frameworks to help students develop rhetorical awareness of genre self, as well as establishing a growth mindset.

Faculty considered their hands-on classroom teaching experience as key in learning to be flexible and reflective teachers concerned with modeling professional practice for developmental composition students. Participants modeled their practice on course coordinators' and their former teachers' methods, often adopting an experimental approach and repeating what worked to duplicate results.

Faculty countered resistance from students by treating students fairly and holding them to high standards. They encouraged students to set goals and make realistic, obtainable education and career plans. Faculty set boundaries for student communication and encouraged students to meet with them outside of class during office hours and to use campus resources such as the tutoring center instead of relying solely on faculty for help with revisions in time consuming emails or taking up class time to help students who have been absent catch up on missed

work. Faculty considered their work to be an overwhelming commitment of time and effort. They identified several activities that took a significant time commitment such as: grading and effectively responding to student work, answering student emails, helping students who were behind technologically, lesson preparation and updating the course for relevancy and accessibility, making course accommodations for students with disabilities, and academic advising, but that ultimately, it was rewarding to help students succeed and know that they made a difference in student success.

Though faculty went to great lengths in their teaching efforts, they also experienced feelings of guilt that they couldn't reach all students and that some students simply disappeared off their rosters after numerous efforts and interventions. Participants expressed anxiety over saying the right thing when reaching out to students and recounted significant time spent composing carefully worded emails and in calling students when concerned that they might withdraw from the course. They stayed up late and woke up early to get student work back to them in time for the feedback to help students improve on the next assignment, which participants said led to feelings of fatigue and ineffectuality despite great efforts.

Question 2. How did faculty recognize and understand the needs of developmental students?

Participants indicated that they recognized and understood the needs of their developmental students in a variety of ways. Developmental students were identified as being diverse learners from a wide variety of life and work experiences and educational backgrounds, with students being both traditionally and other-educated. Faculty considered that the needs of developmental students included encouragement, support, structure and consistency, gaining trust in themselves and others, considering other perspectives and broadening their world views, demystifying processes and concepts hidden within college procedures, developing communication and technical skills, and building upon rhetorical

awareness, information literacy, and reflecting in metacognitive analysis of their learning process.

Participants reported that, to understand the needs of developmental students, they needed to consider their own ability to be flexible in teaching methods and writing assessments and use “outside the box” thinking. At times, a non-traditional or experimental approaches were used and many participants considered how and why strategies worked so that they could be duplicated. Several faculty noted connections they had made with other faculty and course coordinators over the years and that these colleagues were an invaluable resource when understanding the needs of developmental students. Participants discussed borrowing ideas, lessons, and other course materials from more experienced faculty and the excitement they felt when new faculty shared innovative ideas that other composition programs used. Participants expressed gratitude that the English department kept an easily accessible online repository of shared course materials and that faculty were so open to work together in adopting course textbooks and developing new materials, which saved time and effort and promoted idea sharing between faculty. This also allowed faculty to share teaching strategies and to listen to others’ experiences, which promoted compassionate practice.

Participants noted that the number one quality faculty needed in order to successfully understand developmental students was compassion. They recounted that sharing compassionate stories of students’ successes and failures with other faculty encouraged the faculty group as a whole to further develop a compassionate teaching practice and to share their struggles and successes with other instructors to help them see the bigger picture of who they were helping and how much their teaching practice mattered to others in the college community. Participants expressed a sense of belonging in the department and described their appreciation for other faculty who helped them through trying times and allowed them to vent

frustrations about their teaching effectiveness, while still remaining positive and focused on helping students successfully pass developmental composition.

Faculty noted the importance of understanding student needs such as the obstacles many students dealt with, reporting that childcare availability, home internet connectivity, student work situations, student health, and transportation were all barriers to student success. Faculty considered that what students needed most to be successful was for their instructors to balance accountability with flexibility and to show students their humanity along with their professionalism. Many participants reported that they worked extra closely with students who disclosed difficult circumstances, such as the death of a parent, a sick child or a documented disability. Faculty reached out to these students and still required their work to be held to a high standard, but were more flexible with deadlines and revision time. Participants attempted to maintain a balance between preparing students for the unforgiving nature of work deadlines in their future careers and understanding that this was often the first college course for many students and that students needed a chance to understand their own learning processes and to develop habits to help them succeed. Several participants believed that the diagnostic essay topics and asking students to write on their own without instruction provided a low stakes opportunity for students to consider how they had approached past assignments and to encourage openness to learning more effective writing techniques in the course.

Faculty felt that providing substantive and carefully worded feedback on students' first graded assignment helped set the tone for the time students needed to take in developing future assignments. Faculty spent time teaching students how to read their feedback and what to do with it by encouraging students to provide one another with effective feedback in structured peer review sessions. They also provided students with multiple opportunities for reflection, including a mid-semester assessment of "self-defeating behaviors" in which

students were encouraged to think about how their behaviors were affecting their learning and what specifically they could do about it in the future.

Overall, faculty indicated that their work with developmental students was challenging, yet rewarding. They helped students through developing assignments collaboratively in which the readings encouraged students to think about their own educational and career opportunities. Assignments provided students with opportunities to practice setting goals, navigating the steps of the writing process, gaining feedback from peers, revising using feedback, and reflecting on their own effectiveness. By encouraging students to plan ahead, think critically, and write recursively, faculty helped students develop the skills that students could transfer to other college courses and into their professions.

Question 3. How did faculty understand their preparedness for teaching developmental students?

Participants reported overwhelmingly that their graduate degree programs enhanced their preparation to teach college in general. Three participants reported using training from degrees in linguistics and foreign languages to inform their professional practices. Others responded that their training in a subject other than English composition helped them be interdisciplinary thinkers who could help students equate the skills learning in college writing courses with real world application in their professions. Two participants felt that their advanced degrees in education and teaching English as a second language were more useful when teaching developmental students than a degree in literature or linguistics might have been.

Though their college degrees and content specialties informed their teaching practice, it is significant that when evaluating their preparation for teaching developmental students, all faculty interviewed considered that their informal training such as their experiential learning while teaching developmental students or their prior experience as writing tutors was the most

beneficial preparation they could have done. Faculty who were more recently hired responded that they felt underprepared for teaching developmental students but were eager access more resources and learn new strategies. Faculty who had been teaching at the college for several years responded that they were constantly learning to update teaching methods and add new resources to their course to benefit students. Faculty felt that when they took the time to learn new educational technology, their efforts paid off in student engagement. Faculty sought funding to attend regional and national conferences, bringing back resources for the department and sharing ideas with other departments.

When asked what formal training had been the most helpful, participants replied that there was no single degree or training that could ever prepare two-year college instructors for the challenges that they might face from section to section and from student to student. They sought to learn continuously and collected articles and resources to update their teaching over breaks and during the summer when they felt they had a more reasonable course load.

Question 4. What factors (if any) in regards to faculty working conditions did faculty perceive to affect their ability to help developmental students persist?

Faculty reported an overwhelming workload and that they were often, due to time constraints and other simultaneous obligations, unable to assist the students they had identified as most needing their support and guidance. Faculty felt that the amount of time they put into developing their courses completing projects such as grading and providing feedback, communicating with students, teaching during scheduled class time, advising, tutoring during office hours, and completing reports and other managerial tasks far outweighed monetary compensation. Many participants estimated their workload to be upwards of fifty to sixty hours per week during peak grading times. Faculty explained that this overtime was necessary in order to teach developmental students effectively and that online communication and assignment dropboxes helped them communicate more timely, but also

encouraged them to do more work at home. Faculty felt that work encroached upon their family time and that during the semester, they had a hard time managing time at home away from their computers. Many participants had downloaded grading applications on their tablets so they could take their work with them to family functions and on conference trips.

Departmental silo-ing was another major concern for participants who were often unsure where to send students for answers. Faculty consistently used the words “silo-ed” and “fragmented” to describe campus resources. They cited multiple campuses as a factor in the difficulty students had with accessing support services. Faculty also found that many campus resources were “housed” separately and couldn’t or wouldn’t help students with other issues. For example, one participant described a scenario where a student couldn’t access the course online from the library on the city campus. They were sent to two other offices on other campuses before anyone was able to pinpoint who could solve the problem of financial aid nonpayment that caused the student to lose access to the course. In the meantime, they missed the assignment deadline and reported back to their developmental composition instructor frustrated that nobody seemed to know who was in charge of what across various departments and campuses. Other participants noted that students, especially those without familiarity of procedures such as in advising or financial aid, often had the hardest time navigating those processes and sought the advice of their instructors for guidance.

Though participants reported that communication between offices in student services was often confusing or ineffective, faculty reported working closely with library, counseling, disability services, educational technology, and the tutoring center staff to support their instruction through question and answer sessions, trips to the library that corresponded with a specific assignment, and help with technology. Faculty worked to ensure that students could recognize a familiar name and face, as they found that students were much more likely to use campus services when they could ask for a specific person and knew what to do when they got

there. Faculty often required that students who were struggling with various assignments attend tutoring sessions use the computer labs housed in the tutoring center to gain familiarity with the setting and help them remove the stigma associated with needing a tutor.

Participants serving as adjunct faculty described isolation within the department and unfamiliarity with college services or professional development opportunities. All three expressed their desire to academically advise students in an official capacity and expressed dismay that many essential services that their students needed were not available to students taking classes at night or on the satellite campuses. They reported that their students were probably the least likely to be connected to campus services and that they didn't know where to send them when they did need help. Adjunct faculty all replied that while they appreciated the opportunities for professional development provided by the college and the English department, they were often unable to attend due to work schedules and felt disconnected from full time and other adjunct faculty as a result. Two of the three adjuncts stated that they were willing to attend future professional development workshops on teaching developmental composition students and all three mentioned that they would like to partner with a full time faculty member who could support them in a mentorship capacity.

While participants recounted numerous success stories, they also elaborated on their fatigue and pondered the college's ability to retain highly dedicated instructors due to concerns about faculty burnout and low pay, especially in regards to fair pay for adjunct employees. Faculty showed concern that numerous logistical challenges existed including the challenge of staying connected as a department across the multiple campuses and teaching schedules. The participants teaching in a full time capacity noted that they had formed unofficial mentorships and work groups with other faculty on their campuses both in and out of the English department and that they would often seek advice over lunch or in a small

group meeting between classes. This helped them to gain valuable insights and to lighten their situation, but also took up time during the work week.

Faculty reported having minimal time during the work week for collegial sharing and that professional development had been pushed to Fridays and evenings when faculty were often too tired to fully engage in the discussion. “Best Practices” workshops were held at the beginning of semesters when faculty reported feeling too rushed to implement the great ideas that others shared. Participants reported being dedicated to the college’s mission in serving the community, the department’s mission in preparing students for college writing, and to helping students meet the developmental composition course objectives.

A final factor participants mentioned was the need for professional development opportunities such as workshops and informal roundtable sessions to brainstorm challenges posed by teaching and encouraging an increasingly diverse group of learners while balancing a heavy workload. Faculty noted that the college’s employees as a whole did not reflect the diversity of the surrounding community and that efforts should be made to seek highly qualified, diverse candidates in future departmental faculty searches.

Thematic findings

Thematic findings included: faculty loyalty, interest in advising, and flexible timelines for students. Despite concerns related to workload, faculty expressed an intense loyalty to the community, the college, and the students. Faculty did not dwell on the negative aspects of their working conditions or complain about fair pay or poor health. One participant made a point that anyone who complains about their students’ preparedness shouldn’t teach public school. Four participants made evident great distrust of faculty and staff in departments known to cut corners or college policies that lacked student-centeredness, such as the “convoluted” financial aid process. Participants had suggestions about specific improvements to professional development workshops, such as workshops focused on compassionate

practice, on moving toward a flipped classroom, and on strategies for early interventions for struggling students.

Although they did not have advising duties, adjunct participants requested that the college add advising duties to adjunct positions (and increasing pay accordingly). Participants felt that if all instructors were trained in academic advising, they would have more knowledge of how the courses they taught fit into the bigger picture of a student's degree plan. One participant mentioned that being allowed to advise would help increase connections across campus and support collegiality. Participants encouraged campus life activities that they felt could help students more strongly identify as a college student. Several faculty mentioned that the college might host a fall festival like other colleges do, bringing in free gourmet food trucks, setting up games, or promoting a "common hour" guest speaker series on topics relevant to student life.

Faculty suggested more flexible options for students caring for family members, such as childcare and eldercare centers, and for those lacking transportation, technology capabilities, food security, or needing emergency funds. After learning how dedicated faculty were, it was only slightly surprising that some participants recounted times when they had helped students pay tuition or provided students, clothes, food, and housewares in times of emergency. Others discussed specific times when they had connected students to resources such as shelters, trauma services, volunteer opportunities, job fairs, addiction counseling, and food pantries. The extent to which faculty had given time and effort beyond job expectations was astronomical. Participants wanted to make it clear that they were "all in" when providing their students with opportunities to better their own lives and those of others in the community. Referring to students majoring in the helping professions, one participant explained that, "Someday, our students will be taking care of us."

Implications

Stake (1995) determined that “the nature of the study, the focus of the research questions, the curiosities of the researcher pretty well determine what analytic strategies should be followed” (p. 77). Thus, the research findings corresponded to essential research questions and participant responses were categorized by theme. The following four themes were identified as emerging from this study:

1. Faculty workload impacts experience and engagement with developmental students.
2. Faculty place high importance on hands-on learning.
3. Faculty history influences their professional practice.
4. Faculty provide students with emotional and cognitive support.

Theme 1: Faculty workload impacted experience and engagement with developmental students.

Two-year college faculty work to provide quality learning experiences for their students and to support developmental student persistence through timely, substantive feedback and differentiated instruction (Horning, 2007). However, when the amount of time and effort that developmental composition faculty must work to successfully address student needs outweighs the time faculty are able to reasonably spend due to a heavy workload, faculty are not able to address the issue of student persistence as effectively as they believe that they should. Participants reported feeling exhausted from attempting to provide higher quality instruction. Faculty expressed feelings of uncertainty or dismay at what they considered to be an impossible task of addressing the variety of student needs in a timely fashion. Participants noted decreased morale and feelings of ineffectiveness and stress over their ability to sustain their teaching practice.

Lamos (2016) explained the vast amount of often unseen labor necessary for faculty to build an optimal environment for student learning. This kind of mental and emotional preparatory and maintenance work, termed “affective labor,” allowed faculty to “cocreate positive affective interactions between and among minds, bodies, and contexts, both for and with their students if successful writing instruction is to occur (p. 364). Lamos (2016) also noted that college English faculty believed that the institution should support faculty efforts to help students successfully learn, but “if a central contractual pillar of these teachers’ work is felt to be easily dismissible, then they themselves will be easily dismissible” (p. 366). Participants felt that college policies such as course and roster loading were standing in the way of their ability to help developmental students, leading to frustration and concern that faculty work wasn’t appreciated. Faculty worried that they couldn’t always shield their students from detrimental administrative policies such as course loading when they returned papers late, recycled old teaching materials, or cancelled class due to illness after “burning the candle at both ends.”

Faculty noted that when students felt faculty cared it made it harder for students to withdraw from the course or leave the college. Despite this need students expressed for feeling cared about, faculty maintained that a caring attitude and democratic college mission were not being modeled well for faculty when administration disregarded the position statements of several professional publications on topics such as developmental composition class size, adjunct working conditions, professional development, and course loading. Participants argued that overloading faculty with courses and overloading courses with students while expecting faculty to do even more for the college has had a negative effect on hiring highly qualified faculty and has potentially driven away would-be hires. Several faculty questioned how long they could keep up with the workload and three stated that if it wasn’t

for the students and other department faculty, they wouldn't keep "doing this to themselves" every semester.

Despite the official position statement on the *Principles for the postsecondary teaching of writing* by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC, 2015) that "the enabling conditions of sound writing instruction" should dictate that "no English faculty members should teach more than 60 writing students a term" (, p. 1) participants reported that course loads at the college had steadily increased such that both full time and adjunct developmental composition faculty taught up to five or six composition courses per semester, meaning they taught up to 132 students per semester if sections contained a full course roster in each of the six courses. Participants perceived that the college administration put off hiring more instructors to cut costs and explained that if the college calculated how much work faculty actually did and the mental strain placed on faculty, the affective labor value would necessitate that the college significantly reduce instructors' workload, which would, in turn, increase the quality and quantity of their time spent working with developmental students and potentially increase developmental student persistence.

A second subtheme emerged that faculty encountered mixed success connecting students with campus resources due to departmental "silo-ing." Faculty noted that an additional effect of increased workload was a cross-college isolation of individual instructors, staff, and departments without clear explanation of where students should go for answers to various issues related to student success such as financial aid, counseling, and other services outside of the department. Faculty believed that they could better manage time and assist students more effectively if they knew who to delegate student questions to and where to send students for additional support.

A third subtheme emerged that heavy workloads negatively impacted faculty ability to help students succeed. An additional concern participants shared related to roster loading was that

when teaching more students per section, their ability to identify struggling students and help them formulate a strategy for course completion was disrupted. This concern was consistent with the CCCC (2015) position statement that another “enabling condition” for student success occurred when teachers provided “students with the support necessary to achieve their goals” (p. 1), and could only be expected to do so under “reasonable and equitable working conditions” when faculty were asked to teach the recommended number of composition courses (three or fewer) and at or below the maximum recommended number of students per semester, 45 developmental students (Horning, 2007, p. 19). Additionally, Horning (2007) argued that “to raise students’ level of engagement and learning, small class sizes with extensive writing are essential” and that “clearly, extensive writing cannot reasonably be assigned, read, and responded to in large sections,” at least not in the sheer volume that faculty reported in attempting to provide students timely feedback on their work (p. 12).

Theme 2: Faculty placed high importance on hands-on training

In individual interviews, faculty reported that they placed a high importance on their experiential learning such as hands-on training in the college writing classroom. Participants explained that they gauged feedback from students that included participation, reflection, and students’ understanding of the assignment to determine what other supports might be necessary to add to instructional scaffolding. Faculty learned through experience that their use of smaller assignments helped students build upon skills and themes that they could expand upon in their larger assignments. The developmental composition coordinator, as well as the department chair, encouraged faculty to write course reflections at the end of each semester in order to consider what worked well and what they might change for the following semester. Faculty, in turn, encouraged students to compose similar reflections after completing major assignments as a means of reflecting upon their process and practice metacognitive skills that

they could bring with them to their other courses and throughout their lives. Faculty mentioned that encouraging themselves (and their students) to think about why something worked or didn't helped them to better understand their teaching process and think ahead for how they could better serve students the following semester.

A subtheme emerging from the larger theme was that participants considered their formal training, such as graduate level coursework, to be not as useful in teaching developmental students as their teaching experience itself had been. Faculty had developed a "repertoire" of assignments, delivery methods, and responses that increased their versatility when presented with a variety of circumstances in the classroom. Gao (2015) asserted that "Teachers need not only to be equipped with sound pedagogies and solid professional knowledge but also need to acquire competence in dealing with shifting contextual conditions, which add to complexities of educational practices" (p. 435). Faculty expressed that both the time they had been teaching developmental students and the number of sections they had taught factored into their feelings of preparedness. Gao (2015) discussed the importance of experiential learning for faculty development:

These opportunities are specifically designed to enrich pre-service teachers' education by widening their horizons. They also help develop their knowledge and skills through direct application of academic knowledge to solve real problems in authentic contexts. These authentic contexts are usually different from schools where they undertake teaching practice so that they offer valuable learning to pre-service teachers in addition to regular professional practicum. (p. 436)

Faculty felt that there was no substitution for time spent in the classroom, but that they lacked support that could be provided by a faculty mentoring program or by pairing new faculty with seasoned developmental composition instructors. By providing faculty with opportunities to observe, co-teach a class, or participate in more frequent professional development workshops

designed to help faculty engage with students, participants determined that they would be better able to help developmental students persist.

Theme 3: Faculty history influenced their professional practice

Faculty believed that both their personal and professional history influenced their professional practice. Participants reported being strong writing students, often despite adverse life circumstances such as prejudice, family issues, and financial burdens. They felt that this pushed them to make a difference in the lives of their students and to be an inspirational teacher who might be the difference between a student giving up or persisting through their college coursework. Faculty pointed to films such as *Stand and Deliver*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Freedom Writers* and to inspirational teacher-writers such as the late authors, Pat Conroy and Paulo Freire as providing them with inspirational tales when they were just getting started in their teaching practice. Several faculty were from “education families” with parents who taught college or were administrators at local schools and expressed a desire to teach from an early age. Other faculty didn’t know they’d teach college until they taught for several years at middle and high school levels before recognizing a desire to transition to higher education. Many faculty expressed hardships of working with young families, navigating higher education without family support, and of being the first in their family to graduate college or a graduate degree program. Faculty felt that being on their own or conversely, being pushed by a parent to succeed because the parent didn’t want them to do manual labor, helped participants recognize the struggles first generation college students often go through and faculty expressed a great deal of compassion for students “going it alone.”

A subtheme that emerged within faculty personal history was that participants identified a very positive or negative educational experience or a particularly inspirational teacher that led them to teach developmental composition. Participants often mentioned a teacher or other

school official who reached out to them upon recognizing some potential for their success in academia. Whether because their teacher was so engaging and inspirational or they were an example of what not to do, faculty felt that their teaching practice was the sum of their previous experiences in their high school and college courses. Many participants drew from examples used by their previous teachers and reported often channeling their inspirational teacher's positivity and attempting to be as energetic and engaging when introducing students to difficult or less enthralling readings. Often, faculty pointed to a mentor who had encouraged them throughout their education and who they remained in contact with years later. Faculty felt that these bonds were significant in helping them navigate their professional practice and inspire students to continue despite major obstacles.

Theme 4: Faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support

A final theme emerging from the data was that faculty provided students with emotional and cognitive support. Faculty reported providing students methods and practice to help them build study skills. They supported students emotionally by listening when a student was frustrated, but they did not allow students to complain about their colleagues or about the outcomes of other courses. Faculty reported academically mentoring students on several occasions when students expressed interest in teaching or in majoring in English. Faculty checked in with students they deemed to be "at risk" of withdrawing from their courses in an effort to engage them in a conversation and to help them find ways to alleviate their problems instead of giving up. Many participants responded that developmental students especially were unfamiliar with the rigor and time commitment of college coursework and that they were simply working too much and taking too many courses to be successful in any of them.

Faculty reported helping students find a balance in their work and school lives by encouraging

them to set priorities that would help them be successful instead of overloading themselves with a full time course load and two, part-time jobs. Faculty often group advised students during class, providing them with scenarios for how many courses they might take and which ones could wait until the following semester. They provided students with readings and small group collaborations on topics such as “college stress” and “sleep deprivation” as a way of encouraging students to develop positive habits and to consider the health implications of overloading themselves with work.

One subtheme emerging from the larger theme were that students who lack family support tend to exhibit resistance to change and challenges. Faculty reported students lashing out upon earning a less than desirable grade or that they shut down when challenged, refusing to do the work because it was “too hard” or accusing the instructor of being unfair. Participants encouraged students to talk and write about how they were feeling and often engaged students in discussions about the difficulties associated with learning and the messiness of the writing process. Several participants mentioned students talking back or acting aggressively when asked to be accountable for their actions. Several faculty determined that this was a result of being told they could do and be anything without being taught about the hard work that went along with it. Other faculty maintained that many students had never been told that they could do anything successfully and therefore they gave up easily on difficult tasks. Some faculty felt that this was due to race, class, and gender inequality and living in communities with few positive role models and poor financial and educational outcomes. Some students had been taught through observation of their families and peers that the education system was stacked against them and that college was for people with more money or from a different neighborhood. Some participants discussed helping their students dismantle the myth that there is only one type of college student and that anyone regardless of age, parental status, disability, or other perceived difference could be successful with a growth mindset and hard

work. Faculty explained that it was important to connect students with stories about people who had overcome adversity and achieved success such as Malala Yousafzai, The Tuskegee Airmen, and Sherman Alexie. They discussed choosing textbooks that embedded success stories into assignments as a way to help students make connections to positive role models.

An additional subtheme that emerged was that faculty reported successful engagement with developmental students using assignments with built-in cognitive skills practice, and that faculty promoted frank conversations about race, class, and gender equity. Faculty pointed out that some students perceived interactions with their instructors to be racialized or gendered based upon prior educational experiences. Faculty mentioned African American female students the most when it came to questions being raised about fairness, race, and gender. Faculty also mentioned that white, male students especially tended to dominate class discussion and impart a sense of entitlement that faculty did not see in other groups of students. Faculty noted that they addressed these issues in their classes through reading, discussion, and reflection, but that African American female students have also historically been at the bottom of the power hierarchy in the social structure of the American south and that white, male students have historically been at the top of that hierarchy.

Participants worked against this disparity by providing students with a variety of readings on education and social justice from authors from many race, class, and gender experiences. They encouraged students to work in groups that rotated so that students go to know classmates as individuals with diverse life experiences and unique sets of knowledge to contribute to the class. Faculty also modeled respectful interaction for their students. Some participants referred to the college's code of civility before discussing controversial issues as a class. Others allowed students to adopt a set of agreed upon classroom guidelines to encourage respectful interactions and accountability.

Implications of thematic findings

One major thematic finding was that faculty just wanted a chance to share their stories because they wanted to share their students' stories. Stake (1995) maintained that "the interview is the main road to multiple realities" (p. 64), and that the purpose of interviewing case study participants was to gather descriptions to better understand "ordinary ways of making sense" (p. 72). Faculty reported that they were eager to share their perspectives and experiences because no one had ever really asked them to sit down and make sense out of years of intensely emotional work. Several participants spoke of students with extremely adverse life circumstances and how badly it hurt them that they couldn't do more for those students.

Despite the time commitment and (at times) adverse health effects that teaching caused these faculty, several reported crying after their students said goodbye at the end of each semester and described a feeling of euphoria in reflecting the ways they were able to help students succeed in seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. In learning how strongly study participants felt that they had made a significant contribution to the local community, the researcher was no longer surprised to find that faculty were strongly committed to equality and to outcome equity for their students.

Limitations and recommendations for further study

While significant steps have been made toward increasing the body of research on faculty perspectives of their teaching experiences and on their working conditions, and there exists a growing body of literature on developmental student persistence at two-year colleges, there remains a gap linking faculty perspectives on their teaching experiences and working conditions with their views on developmental student success at the two-year college. Further research into faculty perspectives of developmental student persistence is needed, especially seeking to better understand how adjunct faculty perceive their ability to assist developmental students in persisting at the two-year college.

Recommendations for action:

1. Consider ways that developmental composition faculty can better support student persistence when building professional development opportunities for the department.
2. Develop more in-depth pre-service programs and mentoring opportunities for developmental composition instructors, especially for new teachers and adjuncts
3. Re-examine placement and possibly co-requisite “studio” approach for developmental students scoring just below the college level cutoff in placement tests.
4. When hiring new faculty, weigh their teaching experiences and motivations as heavily as their graduate degree specialty and publications
5. Advocate for policy changes at the state, college, and department level that support the success of developmental students. This is especially important when the college considers policy changes related to course and roster loading and in decisions about changes (especially additions) to faculty workload.
6. Encourage opportunities for classroom discussion regarding race, class, gender, and educational equality in support of social justice and equitable change in the college and surrounding community.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the importance of considering faculty perspectives, experiences, and working conditions when determining ways to help developmental students achieve their goals at a two-year college. Faculty have a wide variety of expertise and background experience that has shaped their teaching practice. Their position as guides and mentors for developmental students provides an ideal vantage point from which the college might examine the factors that are currently working both for and against successful teaching practice and student persistence. When considering ways to further support developmental students and help them persist to achieve their goals, two-year colleges could greatly benefit

from better understanding the amount of work and care that faculty provide students and what policies and procedures are detrimental to successful faculty and student work.

Furthermore, this study has shown that while faculty clearly care about their students' success, they also need support from the college in order to be as effective as possible at teaching and encouraging developmental students. Two-year colleges can move toward a more supportive and democratic practice for their students and faculty by strengthening professional development opportunities for faculty and staff and encouraging interdepartmental interaction. Giving people an opportunity to share ideas and listen across departments and administrative levels could support a more democratic campus climate and allow colleges to move forward cohesively in support of the students they serve.

Finally, this study exemplified the need for colleges to find ways to better support student success, including limiting the number of students per course to professional guidelines and creating new policies governing teaching load so that the number of courses taught per semester falls more closely in line with professional guidelines for effective teaching practice. Administrations should consider the actual amount of time faculty spend, especially in teaching labor-intensive courses such as developmental composition when considering adequate compensation, especially for adjunct faculty who teach for disproportionate pay and without benefits. These would be steps toward ensuring that students get the quality of education and interaction that will help them succeed.

In another step toward supporting positive growth at the college, administrators should seek highly qualified, diverse faculty from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds to help students and faculty broaden their own perspectives and practice and to more closely align with the diversity of the student body.

As research has shown, colleges can support student persistence by allowing faculty the time to develop highly relevant and engaging coursework, encouraging faculty-student

mentorships and faculty-faculty mentorships, and in taking the time to listen to the stories and ideas faculty have to share about their work in supporting developmental students.

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APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Related follow-up questions will be asked for clarity and understanding of faculty experience as needed due to the semi-structured nature of the interview.

1. How long have you taught developmental composition courses at the college?
2. How many years and what levels of students have you taught prior to teaching here?
3. How would you describe your experience in teaching developmental students prior to teaching here?
4. Can you describe what professional development or formal training (if any) you feel has prepared you for teaching developmental students?
5. What informal training (if any) do you feel has most prepared you for teaching developmental students and why?
6. For incoming freshmen in the fall of 2010, the college identified the following information about student persistence: a) 10 percent of students graduated within three years. B) 25 percent transferred to four year schools, and c) 11 percent were still attending the college after three years. This puts the college's persistence rate at 46 percent. What factors do you think are involved in the reasons why students choose to leave the college early?
7. What factors do you think are involved in first-year students persisting through their degree programs?
8. What factors (if any) do you think faculty can influence to help developmental students persist in composition?
9. How would you characterize your experience with helping developmental students persist in your course?
10. What factors (if any) do you think have influenced your experience in helping developmental students persist in your class?
11. Do you perceive race or gender to be a variable in how students interact and engage with you in the classroom?
12. What kinds of interactions (such as in a large group in the classroom, tutoring during office hours, pre-advising, referrals to the academic success center, counseling about goals) do you think have helped developmental students the most?
13. What is your understanding of and experience with course loading, and how it relates to your interaction and ability to assist developmental students?
14. What other aspects of your workload (if any) do you feel affect your ability to assist developmental students?
15. What professional development opportunities (if any) do you feel could make a difference in helping developmental students persist?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to your experiences with student persistence?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Faculty Perspectives on Developmental Student Persistence*

Principal Investigator(s): Mary Colleen Patterson, (803) 822-3256, mpatterson6@une.edu
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Brianna Parsons, (207) 299-3627 bparsons4@une.edu

Introduction:

- Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why Is this study being done?

- This study is being done to understand English 100 faculty experiences working with developmental students and helping them be persistent.
- The researcher will not use this study for financial gain.

Who will be in this study?

- You have been identified as a potential participant in this study, as you have taught at a two-year college for at least two consecutive school years and have taught at least two or more sections of developmental composition from Spring 2015-Fall 2015.
- Approximately 10-20 full and part-time faculty members have been invited to participate in the study.

What will I be asked to do?

- Participants will be asked to participate in an interview approximately 45 minutes to an hour in duration.
- During the interview, participants will be asked about their experiences with working with developmental students and helping these students persist in developmental composition.
- The researcher, M.C. Patterson, will administer the interview, which will be part of a case study on developmental composition instructors' experiences with student persistence.
- Participants will not receive any reimbursement for the interview.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study? :

- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

- Participants may benefit directly from the opportunity for self-reflection and thinking metacognitive about their experiences and teaching practices that they have used to help students.
- Participants may benefit indirectly from professional development and potential policy changes that are developed as a result of this study.

What will it cost me?

- Participants will not incur any costs related to this study.

How will my privacy be protected?

- Privacy of participants will be protected by using one on one interviews, assigning pseudonyms for participants, as well as the college, keeping all participant data and voice recordings in a locked home office, and disposing of the participant key once member checks are complete.
- This study will be shared with members of the University of New England community, as well as members of the study site community. A final copy of this dissertation will be published on Digital UNE and Proquest Dissertations.

How will my data be kept confidential? .

- Only the researcher will have access to the data. Records will be kept in a locked file of the principal investigator. Individually identifiable data will be destroyed after member checks are complete. Data will be coded and participants will be assigned pseudonyms
- The Institutional Review Board at the University of New England may review records.
- A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only the researcher will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
- Research findings will be made available to the participants upon request.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England or Midlands Technical College.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw

from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What other options do I have?

- You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

- The researcher conducting this study is Mary Colleen Patterson.

For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at mpatterson6@une.edu or (803) 822-3256

- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact the researcher Mary Colleen Patterson at mpatterson6@une.edu, (803) 822-3256 and contact Brianna Parsons at bparsons4@une.edu or (207) 299-3627.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature or
Legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.



Researcher's signature

12/4/2015. _____
Date

Marv Colleen Patterson

Printed name