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**ADJUNCT FACULTY SENSEMAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF A STUDENT SUCCESS
INITIATIVE AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

by

Denise-Marie Coulter

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
March 7, 2016

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Monica Kerrigan

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Dedications

To my parents: Dolores J. Coulter and William M. Coulter. Thank you for loving me, leading the way, and letting me be the person I am.

Acknowledgements

Composing a dissertation can seem like a lonely process. You spend long hours in isolation, reading and writing, and friends, family, and coworkers get used to not asking you to go out or to join in because they know you are just going to say you cannot; you need the weekend to work on your dissertation.

The truth of the matter is a dissertation is a collaborative effort, one that requires the input and help of many. First, I want to thank the members of my family who encouraged me to pursue this degree and supported me throughout the process. They saved me from distraction, made sure I was fed, listened to me ramble about my ideas, and lifted me up when I was discouraged. I am eternally grateful to them for the role they played in helping me reach this goal.

Next, I want to thank Dr. Monica Kerrigan, the chair of my dissertation committee. Her wisdom, guidance and time were vital to my success in framing my study and composing this document. She is an exceptional teacher and scholar, a model for others to follow. I also want to acknowledge the other members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Steven Rose and Dr. Carol Thompson. Their feedback and enthusiasm for my research were invaluable to my process.

I am grateful to my supervisors and colleagues, both past and present, for the support they showed to me as I pursued this degree. Most crucial to my study were the participants, and I regret that I cannot name them here, but they know who they are. Had they not graciously agreed to sit with me and to share their views, this document would not have been possible.

Abstract

Denise-Marie Coulter
ADJUNCT FACULTY SENSEMAKING IN THE CONTEXT OF A STUDENT SUCCESS
INITIATIVE AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2015-2016
Dr. Monica Kerrigan
Doctor of Education

Now that community colleges are being pressured by external forces to improve student completion and transfer rates, it is important to determine how adjunct faculty are conceptualizing change and implementing it in their practice. Part-time faculty comprise the majority of the teaching staff at these schools, so they are a vital component in ensuring comprehensive change. I undertook an embedded case study to examine how adjunct faculty teaching Composition I make sense of the shift in mission to emphasize one school's commitment to improving student success and whether or not their understanding of this change is impacting their pedagogy.

Data were collected from documents, participant observation in relevant committee work, interviews with eight institutional leaders, interviews with and classroom observations of nine adjunct Composition I faculty, and a survey of 16 adjunct Composition I faculty. In the process of analyzing my data, two main themes emerged: adjunct Composition I faculty are not part of the formal discussion about institutional change and adjuncts have a secure sense of teacher identity.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

My study examined how adjunct Composition I faculty are making sense of the recent shift in community college mission toward emphasizing their commitment to improving student success. It also looked at how they apply their understanding of this alteration in mission to their pedagogical practice. My study's purpose was to determine the internal and external factors contributing to adjunct Composition I faculty members' sensemaking process in regard to the aforementioned change in community college mission; what understanding these instructors are reaching as a result of that sensemaking process; and how they are applying their understanding to their pedagogical practice. Employing an embedded case study methodology, I collected and analyzed data to determine the internal and external factors adjunct Composition I faculty used to shape their sensemaking of the shift in mission, the resulting understanding from that sensemaking process, and the impact of that understanding on their practice.

Background

In recent years, college completion rates have become a national concern, a worry that is linked to the financial health of the United States. Large amounts of public and private money have been invested in higher education without satisfactory evidentiary return, and because many believe college completion rates are connected to the country's economic performance, there is a concern all will suffer if the number of degree-holding citizens in the country is not increased ("Not What," 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2006; United States Senate, 2012).

As I undertook this study, the United States ranked eleventh in the world for college completion; the national college graduation rate was 44% (Field, 2015). This has been a slight improvement since 2009, when President Barack Obama announced his interest in having the nation lead the world in college graduation rates. Only 15% of learners who begin their studies at the community college earn an associate's degree in eight years following high school graduation; six percent earn a certificate (Bailey & Morest, 2006, p. 9). The poor completion rates of low-income and minority students are even more pronounced.

Most conversations focused on this issue call for colleges to invest greater attention to "student success." This term is ambiguous, taking on different meanings for different audiences. For many situated outside of the higher education setting, improving student success means significantly increasing the number of timely learner completions at a given institution of higher education (Humphreys, 2012, p. 10; Rhoades, 2012, p. 18). According to the federal government's Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) data requirements, community college students should reach this benchmark in three years.

Others -- still espousing the idea of having more learners earn college credentials in a timely manner -- also recognize student success is a far more complex concept than what is mentioned by policy makers, business leaders, private foundation directors, and some post-secondary educators. They are concerned quality of student learning is either glossed over or omitted from the national discussion about student success (Schneider, 2012, p. 5). They call for "more comprehensive frameworks for defining -- and collecting data on -- the quality of

student learning” (Humphreys, 2012, p. 15). Critics have also raised a concern about the accuracy with which completion rates have been reported by IPEDS, which only focuses on the progress of first-time, full-time students, not returning students, not part-time students.

For years, the primary community college mission was to provide access to higher education for all learners, especially first-generation students coming from low-socioeconomic backgrounds or traditionally marginalized groups. As pressures increased in the institutional environment during the 1990s to increase the number of student completions, community colleges revised their mission to emphasize their commitment to improving student success through degree attainment, certificate attainment, or transfer of earned credits to a four-year institution (Bailey & Morest, 2006, p. 247). This phenomenon is evidenced in the alteration of the mission at my study site, East Coast Community College. Prior to a recent revision of language, the institution’s mission explicitly mentioned a commitment to providing superior programs, centering attention on the student, serving community needs, facilitating lifelong learning, promoting responsible citizenry, and embracing diversity. The terms “student success” and “completion” never appeared in the earlier version of the college mission. In 2012, the college introduced a revised mission statement which lists “maximizing student success” as the number one goal of the institution. This goal is further explicated in the school’s strategic plan, where a commitment is made to assess the quality of existing curriculum and programs for the purpose of improving institutional performance. Pledges are given to increase the progression rates of first-time, full-time students through developmental classes

to college-level classes by three-percent annually and to develop and implement a comprehensive completion program for first-time degree and certificate-seeking students with the aim of increasing educational goal attainment by 25%.

East Coast Community College's administration designed a comprehensive student success plan to address the needs of a variety of students. Membership in Achieving the Dream (ATD) is only one component of many in that plan. ATD is an American nonprofit organization focused on improving student retention and completion at community colleges. According to ATD, success can be measured in several ways. Though the most ambitious goal may be to have students earn a degree, obtain a certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution, ATD also states success can be measured by the rate at which learners complete "gateway" courses. Gateway - AKA "gatekeeper" - classes are entry-level courses marked by both high enrollment and failure rates. They are viewed as potentially hindering student progress toward earning a degree.

Though it is commendable for ATD to telescope its concern from the macroscopic view of degree and certificate completion to specific problem areas - for example, "gateway courses" - when I began my study, the language in the organization's documentation focused primarily on making "evidence-based" decisions in developing methods for helping students reach "benchmarks." Within the network, member colleges share effective strategies relative to helping students succeed. No doubt, this is important; however, there is little mention of quality of instruction and learning in relationship to student success. Another limitation of ATD is that its initiatives tend to focus on remediating student needs in the early

part of their academic lives (Mayer et al., 2014, p. ES-12). Mindful of this, the administrators at East Coast Community College initiated a Student Success Cross Functional Committee to formulate strategies for retaining students at all levels of their academic career.

The role of faculty in student success. Though faculty are the focus of my study, it is important to note a student's education is a collaborative effort, a responsibility shared by the learner, teacher, and all community college employees. Though students have periodic interactions with representatives from admissions, finances, student affairs, the library and any other number of offices that serve their needs, their most immediate and steady connection to the institution is through the teachers in their classes. The actions undertaken by faculty in that setting are likely to have a significant influence on whether or not a student will remain in school (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. 19; Chang, 2005, p. 790; Tinto, 2007, p. 5). Unfortunately, community college teachers continue to either be marginally involved or completely uninvolved with college success initiatives (Achieving the Dream & Public Agenda, 2011; Mayer, et al., 2014, p. 5; Tinto, 2007, p. 5). Of particular concern is the absence of adjunct faculty from institutional efforts to improve student success.

Why pay specific attention to the role of adjunct faculty? According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) approximately 70% of faculty employed at public two-year colleges are part-time instructors. The instructional line of community college budgets continues to account for the largest portion of its expenses. As state and local funding of public two-year institutions decreases,

schools are challenged in keeping tuition affordable for their learners, especially those who come from low-socioeconomic and traditionally marginalized groups. Colleges increasingly depend upon contingent faculty to deliver courses in the interest of conserving finances. Adjunct faculty are paid comparatively modest salaries in comparison to their full-time counterparts, receive few or no benefits, and are employed at will, so if course offerings are reduced in response to low enrollment numbers, the school has no obligation to retain these teachers.

The institution relies on large numbers of adjunct faculty to preserve the affordability and accessibility legs of its mission; at the same time, studies suggest this practice may compromise the school's commitment to improving student success. Scholars have revealed a possible relationship between student enrollment in adjunct faculty classes and poor student retention, completion, and transfer rates (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason & Lutovsky Quaye, 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009, Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011; Umbach, 2007). In attempting to explain this phenomenon, researchers have drawn a connection between poor student performance and poor pedagogical practices: part-time teachers tend not to employ active and collaborative learning techniques, spend less time preparing for class, and have lower expectations for students (Schuetz, 2002, p. 41; Umbach, 2007). Best pedagogical practices for making students succeed advocate teachers employ active and collaborative learning techniques in classes (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kinzie, 2005). They also call for teachers to clearly express high expectations for learners (Bickerstaff, Barragan, & Rucks-Ahidiana, 2012, p. 18;

Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2010, p. 8; Tinto, 1999). According to several studies, part-time faculty have less contact than their full-time colleagues have with students external to formal class meeting time (Cox, et al., 2010; Eagan and Jaeger, 2008; Umbach, 2007). Research has shown faculty help learners reach their goals through interactions that result in student acquisition of mores and values, strategies to overcome academic challenges, means to navigate an unfamiliar bureaucracy, and a plan for their future (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 75; Kinzie, 2005, p. 3; CCCSE, 2010, p. 14).

Why focus on adjunct Composition I faculty as study participants?

Adjunct Composition I faculty were identified as the focus of this study because community college English departments tend to employ part-time teachers to deliver this “gateway” course. The training provided in this class is fundamental to the student’s positive performance in successive college-level courses, regardless of his or her intended major. The learner gains important practice in reading, writing, and critical thinking while enrolled in Composition I. If students are not placed into remedial classes, Composition I is likely to be one of the first courses degree-seeking learners will enroll in because it satisfies a state general education requirement for communication. Hassell and Giordano (2013) categorize it as a “high-contact” course not only because it is broadly required of degree-seeking and transfer students, but also because pedagogical practice in this field requires teachers to regularly interact with individual students via discrete feedback and conferencing about their work; these are practices missing in general education courses outside

of writing (p. 126). For these reasons, the authors note, “Writing studies professionals are perhaps in the best position to stage an intervention to increase the academic success and retention of students whose only pathway to a college degree is through an open access institution” (p. 126).

Significance of My Study

Community colleges are relying largely on part-time teachers to carry out the teaching responsibilities of the institution. Research findings show a possible relationship between student enrollment in courses taught primarily by adjunct faculty and their poor progress in college at a time when institutions are being pressured to increase student completion and transfer rates (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Cox, et al., 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011; Umbach, 2007). If community colleges are earnest about improving student performance at the same time as they entrust part-time faculty with the responsibility of delivering the majority of their gateway courses, leadership would benefit from knowing how the positioning of this teaching constituency impacts the way it makes sense of the process as the school undergoes a revision of mission to emphasize its commitment to student success, and thus, the faculty’s pedagogy. Once leadership has a better grasp of this series of events, it can use this information to develop and implement a strategy for fostering faculty understanding about change to effectively facilitate innovation among this population in the future.

An instructor’s positioning in relationship to a change initiative – in this case, an alteration in community college mission to emphasize the institution’s

commitment to student success – is an important variable to consider in understanding the way he or she comprehends that change. As I note in Chapter 2, a number of studies have focused on how faculty make sense in the context of change at various levels throughout the education system (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2005; Kezar, 2012; O’Meara, Louder & Campbell, 2014). Literature about part-time faculty reflects a general sense of disconnect between contingent teachers and the settings in which they work; however, there have been no studies to specifically examine the external and internal coupling mechanisms -- or the lack of coupling mechanisms -- that are impacting the way adjunct Composition I faculty make sense and alter their practice in the face of an alteration in community college mission toward emphasizing an institution’s commitment to student success. In this study, the term “coupling mechanism” refers to a person or a device that serves to tightly link an individual to something within the organization. For example, through close, regular contact with a department leader, the coupling mechanism, and adjunct faculty member may gain a more detailed understanding of institutional expectations about student success.

Research Questions

The questions I answered in this study were:

- 1) How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?

- a. What messages is the institution sending to Composition I adjunct faculty about the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?
 - b. What information and narratives are adjunct Composition I faculty prioritizing as they make sense of the change process?
 - c. What aspects of the adjunct Composition I faculty member's identity and self interests are helping him or her make sense of the change in mission to emphasize the institution's commitment to student success?
- 2) How are adjunct Composition I faculty applying their understanding about the change in mission to their pedagogy?

Research Design

I conducted my research using an embedded, single case study design. The site, East Coast Community College, has a visible commitment to emphasizing the student success component of its mission. I employed both homogenous sampling and maximum variation sampling to select study participants. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to answer the research questions outlined above. Data gathered from participatory observation of meetings; documents; and interviews with college leaders were employed to determine the intended institutional messages being sent to the college constituency about the shift in mission toward emphasizing the institution's commitment to student success. Data gathered from a survey, interviews, documents, and classroom observations were

employed to determine how adjunct faculty made sense of change and how they were applying their constructed meaning of the shift in mission to their pedagogy.

Findings and Implications

My study's findings suggest when adjunct faculty have a strong professional identity as teachers, they recognize the important role they play in making students successful and understand and apply research-based pedagogical strategies to help learners reach their goals; however, the adjunct faculty member's receptivity to messages about institutional change is influenced by the degree of respect he or she perceives his or her teacher's identity is being shown by change agents in the educational setting. When a change initiative is designed with sensitivity toward a teacher's identity, part-time teachers hear and understand the intended messages of the initiative and are willing to apply those messages in conducting their classroom work. When change agents introduce initiatives that do not seem to respect the teacher's identity of adjunct faculty, the part-time instructor fails to comprehend the intended messages of those initiatives, and their practice is not influenced or altered by them.

The findings of my research have several implications. By signaling to adjunct faculty they are valued professionals and their views and experiences are as important as those of other constituencies on campus, leaders have the potential to capture their attention in a new way and to prime them to receive messages about change that can result in unique pedagogical alteration to benefit learners and to help the schools meet their institutional mission. In fact, my study shows the views of adjunct faculty might be privileged in regard to their unique service to learners

who attend classes at times of the day and in locations where full-time faculty and administrators rarely venture – evenings, weekends, and on branch campuses. Part-time faculty may have already developed unique strategies for helping this particular group of students find the path to success. Leadership would benefit from facilitating opportunities for adjunct faculty to serve on committees in conjunction with other college constituencies that shape change, to be consulted in the design of strategies for implementing change, and to be trained to undertake change in their classrooms.

Organization of this Dissertation

In Chapter 2, which follows this introduction, I present my theoretical framework for the study and review what the extant literature reports about the current state of adjunct faculty in higher education and best pedagogical practices for improving student success. First, I discuss change in the context of loosely coupled systems theory because it establishes how the fluidity of couplings within the educational setting can be both advantageous and disadvantageous for a school undertaking change. It also gave me a clearer picture of how the positioning of adjunct faculty influences the manner in which they are informed about and conceptualize change. Second, I discuss change in the context of sensemaking theory; this explains the process whereby an institution's employees make sense of difference within the organizational setting. Next, I review what the literature reveals about the current state of the adjunct faculty member in higher education. Finally, I summarize what the literature shows about best practices in pedagogy for improving student success.

In Chapter 3, I present my research questions and the rationale and plan constructed for my methodological design. I explain how I selected my research setting and the method I employed in sampling research participants. I discuss the strategies I used for data collection, including interviews of relevant leadership figures and adjunct Composition I faculty, a survey of adjunct Composition I faculty, and observations of classes taught by adjunct Composition I faculty. I also outline the theoretical propositions and rival explanations I have developed in the context of my research questions and present a logic model; all figure into my discussion of data analysis. Finally, I discuss how I addressed concerns about validity and ethics.

In Chapter 4, I present my study's findings. I begin with a participant demographics overview. This is followed by an audit of the study context, which is necessary for comprehending the findings of the study since context impacts participants, the manner in which they make sense of change, and the way their understanding influences their pedagogical practice (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Then, I list and discuss the two main themes, three sub-themes and findings I reached during the data analysis stage of my study.

In Chapter 5, I present a discussion and analysis of my findings, placing them in the context of my literature review. This section is divided into four parts. First, I review the two main themes and three sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis stage of my study. Second, I consider the implications of my study on theory and practice. Next, I discuss both limitations of my study and opportunities for further research. Then, I offer a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Nationwide, community colleges are responding to environmental pressures by making student success a prominent element of their missions. This is documented in strategic plans that include explicit goals for increasing student transfer and graduation rates and schools formulating committees and hiring consultants to assist in crafting blueprints and strategies for aiding students in their progress toward achievement. For example, many community colleges are becoming members of ATD or Completion by Design. While symbolic gestures and vision statements from the institutional level can be important signals of the need for change, research has shown leaders must also empower and engage followers as collaborators in order to fully implement and sustain an alteration in educational organizations (Evans, 1996, p. 17; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 2012).

Instructors at the community college are a vital component to improving student retention and success at these schools (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. 19; Chang, 2005, p. 790; Tinto, 2006, p. 5), yet research shows faculty continue to either be marginally involved or completely uninvolved with college success initiatives (Achieving the Dream & Public Agenda, 2011; Mayer et al., 2014, p. 5; Tinto, 2006, p. 5). Adjunct faculty, who comprise the largest portion of the teaching staff, are only tentatively connected with the overall organization, so it has been unclear how they have been making sense of the community college's shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to improving student success or how their understanding of this change is impacting their pedagogical practices. My

study was designed to shed light on these processes among adjunct Composition I faculty. I drew on two theoretical concepts to accomplish my aim: loosely coupled systems and sensemaking.

In choosing to examine adjunct Composition I faculty through the lens of the loosely coupled system, I gained a realistic and fair understanding of how their positioning in the institution influences the manner in which they are informed about and implement change. Application of sensemaking theory served as a means of determining how adjunct Composition I faculty are conceptualizing the meaning of change in the context of their role as teachers.

Loosely Coupled Systems

Weick (1976) observed educational systems are “loosely coupled” organizations, meaning elements within the school have some connection; however, each element simultaneously retains “its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (p. 3). This conceptualization opposes earlier ideas that organizations are rational, tightly coupled systems with an administrative team focused on ensuring the worker’s efficiency as the organization pursues specific goals.

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), the loose coupling in an educational organization results from its need to maintain the continued support of external stakeholders. Society sets expectations for schools, which influence the creation of structures and rules within the school setting (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 344; Meyer, Scott, and Deal, 1980, p. 3). For example, the structure and rules of a community

college may be shaped by governmental laws, expectations of accreditation bodies, demands of local industry, and practices of transfer institutions.

Institutional theorists posit an institutionalized organization experiences an organic decoupling between its formal structure and its daily work in response to the competing expectations of external stakeholders and the realities of the organizational setting (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, pp. 356-357; Meyer et al., 1980, p. 6). Organizational goals are purposely kept vague. There is little investment in direct supervision of employees and assessment of work. Meyer et al. (1980) observe institutionalized educational organizations are particularly unmindful of “their central educational purpose: instruction” (p. 5). Evaluation tends to be ceremonial. Employees are trusted to adhere to the rules of professionalism and expected to informally generate relationships as necessary to complete tasks (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 357). This looseness allows organizational membership the freedom to vary behavior and practices according to need without disrupting the school’s status with external stakeholders. It is also built upon a sense of “confidence and good faith” that all constituencies are competently carrying out their responsibilities (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, pp. 357-358).

Orton and Weick (1990) argue an organizational system is never really decoupled as “parts of the system remain coupled and closed” (p. 205). More recently, new institutionalism theorists have begun to recognize coupling is a more nuanced and complex process than initially conceived by Meyer and Rowan in their canonical article. Empirical studies conducted in the K-12 sector have found some disciplinary fields are more tightly coupled with institutional environments than

others. For example, state-mandated standards tend to focus on skills in mathematics and language arts rather than other disciplines; therefore, these standards have a greater influence on the manner in which teachers in those fields approach their craft (Spillane & Burch, 2006, p. 94). Scholars have also observed that institutional environments can have varying degrees of coupling with instructional practice within a single disciplinary field. To illustrate, classroom content may be tightly coupled with state and district standards; however, the strategies teachers employ to help students master content may be loosely coupled with state and district standards (Spillane & Burch, 2006, p. 94).

In many regards, loose coupling can be viewed as advantageous for operations of a community college. For example, one department can undertake a change without impacting the functions of other departments or the overall reputation of the school with external stakeholders. Various departments have enough autonomy to respond to the “conflicting demands” of the school’s environment (Scott, 1981, p. 248 as cited in Weick, 2001, p. 388). It is, however, very challenging to undertake widespread change within a loosely coupled organization (Weick, 2001, p. 388). Innovations unfurl slowly; sometimes they are not disseminated at all, and this may leave actors within the system to produce their own solutions when they face challenges (Weick, 2001, p. 390).

The members of a loosely coupled system tend to craft “individual realities” that result from each person’s unique perception, contributions to the environment and bounded rationality (Weick, 2001, p. 387). It is important to note individuals bound reality in various ways. When faced with a challenge, each might emphasize a

different portion of the problem. Overall, they have “vague understandings of what to do next” (Weick, 2001, p. 387).

The extant literature about adjunct faculty suggests they are loosely coupled with institutional initiatives intended to facilitate increased student success at the community college. Resources exist within the work setting to help them comprehend the initiatives dedicated to increasing student success and opportunities are available for them to collaborate with change agents and colleagues to make sense of them; however, since adjunct faculty are often transient employees, it was unclear whether or not the message about emphasizing the need to make students successful was reaching the adjunct faculty member through the organizational leadership and the institutional environment or some other source.

Sensemaking Theory

The early literature about organizational change presents it as a linear process originating from the leader or manager of the institution. More recently, scholars recognize successful change does not occur in a specific order of steps, nor does it take hold solely by command from the top. Instead, change can only be undertaken when it is a collaborative effort of organizational members. This involves “building a shared meaning” of change through communication. The social-cognitive model of change known as “sensemaking” posits that individuals perpetually interpret the world and reconstruct reality with the aim of establishing order and meaning from activity (Kezar, 2001, p. 47). According to the theory, an organization’s failure to change resides in the individual members’ inability to comprehend change.

Sensemaking theory recognizes organizational constituents as interested in how they are perceived through exchange with work colleagues. They are engaged in continuous “organizational circumstances” from which they derive “cues” that they rationalize upon reflection. Through sensemaking, participants within the system “enact” order into the continuous action. The order is conveyed through written and spoken language. As Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) note, “Situations, organizations, and environments are talked into existence” (p. 409) Gioia et al. (1994) observe “reading, writing, conversing, and editing are crucial actions that serve as media through which the invisible hand of institutions shapes conduct,” (as cited in Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). Human behavior in the context of organization is determined by sensemaking because the sense employees make will influence the way they view themselves and the way they act.

According to Weick (2001), sensemaking becomes more pronounced to participants when a system is noticeably different from what they recognize as normal or familiar or when they have difficulty engaging in the setting or when they find the flow of circumstances incomprehensible. The organizational participant’s first question in response to these challenges is “What is the story here?” This inquiry evokes an event. The second question asked is “Now, what should I do?” This succeeding question elicits a meaning (Weick et al., 2005, p. 410). The organizational participant hopes the meaning will enable him or her to reconnect with the continuing flow of experience and to act in the present and future.

In the first stage of sensemaking, the actor notices something other than what is normally expected and “brackets it.” The concept of “normal” is drawn from

knowledge gained through identity, employment, education, and experience. By bracketing and labeling events, actors invite other individuals within their environment to find “common ground.” Sensemaking is reflective in that labels are attached to actions after the actions have taken place. It requires actors to make connections between the abstract and the concrete. A number of social factors help actors make sense of events; for example, exchanges with colleagues and administrators. The result is a plausible story. Weick et al. (2005) observe plausibility may be measured differently among participants in the sensemaking process; for example, managers and employees may disagree with one another about whether or not a narrative is believable (p. 415).

Sensemaking is a recursive process. Workers act “thinkingly”; in other words, they “simultaneously interpret their knowledge with trusted frameworks, yet mistrust those same frameworks by testing new frameworks and new interpretations” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 412).

Mills, Thurlow, and Mills (2010) view Weick’s sensemaking design as limited because it is presented as a democratic process. The authors contend it does not account for the influences of power and context on the sensemaking process. They observe “organizational power and dominant assumptions privilege some identities over others and create them as meaningful for individuals” (p. 188). They also contend “formative contexts” can influence cues, plausibility, and enactment in the sensemaking process (p. 189). For example, an organization’s rules may serve as a “pre-existing sensemaking tool” that guides an individual to recognize a cue as significant or to see one narrative as more plausible than another (p. 190). The

criticism of Mills et al. is worthy of consideration. It stimulates one to think of authority in the context of the sensemaking process among employees in a loosely coupled system.

Sensemaking has been applied in a variety of empirical studies focused on the role leaders play in shaping the sensemaking processes of constituents (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). For example, in one case study of a university president engaged in a change process, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) observed leaders and their “top management team” are “architects, assimilators, and facilitators of strategic change,” but the act of alteration is a process of “negotiation” between leaders and followers. While leaders may initiate the alteration, both leaders and followers attempt to persuade each other to accept their unique vision of the future – a process termed “sensegiving” -- as both parties are simultaneously trying to comprehend what the other wants and make sense of it.

In further exploring the sensegiving aspect of the sensemaking process, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) discovered several motives and facilitators for the sensegiving of both leaders and followers within three British symphony orchestras. Leaders practiced sensegiving when they perceived issues were confusing or uncertain to followers or when they wanted to make sense of an issue for a broad range of constituents with varying interests (p. 77). The authors found leaders were more competent contributors to sensegiving when they were experts on an issue or when their organization was “performing effectively” (p. 76). Followers became invested in sensegiving upon recognizing the potential impact of an issue on them,

their peer group, or their place of employment. Additionally, they might engage in sensegiving when they recognize they are more of an expert on an issue than a leader (p. 77). Followers participated in sensegiving when they were perceived as an authority on an issue, viewed as “legitimate,” and given the occasion to engage in sensegiving (pp. 65-68).

Maitlis (2005) also studied the social processes of sensemaking within three British symphony orchestras. She identified two significant “dimensions” of the social processes of organizational sensemaking – “animation” and “control” (p. 44). Animation was marked by two characteristics: first, the amount of flow and circulation of information among leaders and followers, which dictates how well participants are aware of and understand an issue, and second, the length and intensity of the sensemaking process. Control was determined by the leader’s level of sensegiving in the process; the measure of formality applied to the sensemaking process; and the opportunity for private interface with individual participants of the sensemaking process (p. 30).

In analyzing the influence school administrators have on the sensemaking process of teachers as they implemented a new reading policy in public schools, Coburn (2001) made several interesting observations. Though their influence was indirect, leaders did have an impact upon how instructors learn about and implement new policy in their classroom. They were the interpreters of the policy for teachers and – based on their previous experience with reading instruction – they “privileged” certain parts of the new policy (Coburn, 2005, p. 489). Their influence was exerted during both formal meetings and informal conversation with

constituents. School leaders were also significant in determining the “social, structural, and cultural” opportunities for professional development (Coburn, 2005, p. 496).

Several empirical studies have focused on sensemaking in examining elements of higher education. Kezar (2012) examined the role of sensemaking in transformational change processes that are initiated from the bottom (faculty teams) and move to the top (administration). Her findings indicated that both sensemaking and sensegiving must be sustained throughout the change process. If it should end at the initiation stage, then faculty identities will fail to alter and significant change will not occur (p. 775).

O’Meara, Lounder, and Campbell (2014) applied sensemaking in analyzing how faculty understand a colleague’s departure from a teaching position at a university. Since the institution was large and faculty members operated autonomously, they did not have substantial information about a colleague’s decision to leave. The authors found that in cases where the sensemaker was closely linked to the departing faculty member or played a role in his or her exit, that individual had more information with which to make sense of the situation (p. 625). In cases where the sensemaker was further away, he or she had less information and typically came to understand the retreat in terms of “ready-made scripts and justifications influenced by their own identities and self interests” (p. 627). The departure of a fellow faculty member is a noticeable change in the work setting, which calls for sensemaking from peers. Though this change is different from the kind of systemic change we associate with institutional alteration – like the shift in

community college mission in the direction of emphasizing its commitment toward student success – the research from O’Meara et al. is still relevant in that it illustrates how the positioning of faculty in the context of change influences the resources they access when they engage in a sensemaking process about the change.

The findings of the aforementioned studies in sensemaking raised several issues that I weighed in studying adjunct Composition I faculty understanding and practice in the context of institutional change. What institutional elements influence adjunct faculty to privilege certain information and narratives in making sense of change? What motivates and facilitates the adjunct faculty member’s involvement in the sensemaking process? If adjunct faculty are not close to change initiatives and their agents, what aspects of their identity and self interests are helping them make sense of institutional change?

The Current Condition of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education

According to the literature, adjunct faculty are not connected to innovations related to improving student success at the community college. For example, upon its inception in 2004, ATD envisioned “broad groups” of college employees engaged in itemizing student needs, prescribing intercessions, and perpetuating improvement in student performance based upon research findings (Mayer et al., 2014, p. 5; *Achieving the Dream & Public Agenda*, 2011). In fact, research conducted on the progress of Round I ATD cohorts reflects a dearth of involvement from the faculty (Mayer et al., 2014, p. 5). Of particular concern is a reported “Key weakness” of Round I ATD initiatives: the absence of adjunct faculty involvement (Rutschow et al., 2011, p. 65).

The current lack of adjunct faculty participation in an institutional-level success initiative may be reflective of the loose coupling that has long-existed between institutional structure and the everyday work part-time employees undertake at the community college. The literature about adjunct faculty reveals how certain cultural practices of the public community college position the adjunct Composition I faculty in a way that precludes them from fully engaging with change.

Hiring practices focused on disciplinary credentials and an assumption of professionalism. Grubb (1999) questions if community colleges truly prioritize teaching as they have historically claimed. As with many educational systems, instructional improvement is not supported on the institutional level at community colleges (Meyer et al., 1980, p. 11). Many community college administrators are reportedly unfamiliar with and indifferent to classroom operations (Grubb, 1999). Part of this attitude may be attributable to the standards of the college's accrediting agency, which make "no reference to aligning faculty roles or responsibilities to research about strong instructional practices" (Kezar, 2013, p. 4).

Teachers are typically hired for their content expertise in a particular field; this is certified by a graduate degree – either a master's degree or a doctorate – in a specific discipline, earned from an accredited institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb, 1999). External stakeholders trust the work of an institution with employees who are perceived as being properly credentialed; however, while community college teachers may be well-versed in their disciplines of study, few are formally trained in pedagogy or andragogy (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb, 1999; Halpern & Hakel, 2003, p. 37; Tinto, 2007, p. 7). Motivated individuals lacking formal training

will usually resort to classroom “trial and error” and networking with colleagues to learn how to be classroom instructors (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 31; Grubb, 1999; Halpern & Hakel, 2007, p. 38). Unfortunately, community colleges offer minimal opportunities for exchange between faculty of all ranks, so the act of instruction tends to be autonomous and individualistic (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014 [CCCSE], p. 3; Grubb, 1999).

Candidates for part-time teaching positions usually do not undergo an intense screening process. Frequently, these individuals are employed based on a quick interview with a single individual – a full-time teacher, department coordinator, department chair, or area dean. Because of time constraints, potential adjuncts may not be required to give a teaching demonstration before they are placed in a classroom. Hiring supervisors trust faculty will adhere to the precepts of professionalism in carrying out their jobs.

Many times, adjunct faculty are offered a teaching assignment within days of a semester’s start (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; CCCSE, 2014, p. 3; Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 255). This hiring practice disadvantages new teachers, forcing them to “jump into the deep end of the pool” without the benefits of preparation, mentoring, and orientation. Even veteran part-time teachers, familiar with the college and secure in their skill as educators, are challenged by last-minute offers of employment or alterations to their schedules, forcing them to scurry and prepare for a class without updating materials or considering new delivery methods (Street, Maisto, Merves & Rhodes, 2012, p. 7; Thompson, 2003, pp. 42-43). Access to library resources and technology may be delayed, further challenging the newly hired

adjunct's preparation process (Street et al., 2012, p. 11). Hiring and rehiring part-time faculty on such short notice is a reflection of the setting's loose coupling; leadership believes properly credentialed individuals can be trusted to carry out their duties, but they do not understand teachers need time and resources to properly prepare for course delivery to ensure quality of instruction (Street et al., 2012, pp. 4-5).

Lack of formal orientation and integration in the campus culture. A shared vision of norms and goals among colleagues is an important element of professionalism. Numerous scholars have defined culture as "the way we do things around here." It consists of tacit assumptions and beliefs that are embraced by organizational membership and influence the way leaders and followers operate and perceive. The assumptions and beliefs are defense mechanisms learned and accumulated through a shared history of challenge. They persist because they have repeatedly and reliably solved problems for the organization.

Schein (1990) observes three levels of culture: artifacts and creations; values; and basic assumptions (p. 11). The first consists of the most visible elements of an institution's culture. It is manifested in the setting, dress, stories, and customs of the people; however, artifacts are difficult to decipher accurately unless we know how they are linked to the values and assumptions of a culture. The second, values, emerge from solutions to problems. These exist on various levels of awareness. Workers can easily identify some values that influence their performance; at the same time, they might not be able to articulate other organizational values that impact decisions and behavior. There are also "espoused" values that individuals

claim to believe but do not practice (Argyris, 1976, as cited in Evans, 1996, p. 43). The third, basic assumptions, are invisible. They are the “fundamental, underlying, shared convictions that guide behavior and shape the way group members perceive, think, and feel” (Evans, 1996, p. 43).

An orientation serves as a good starting point for socializing new faculty members to the “culture of the institution, the norms of the system, the expectations of the college, and the roles of the new members of the community” (Roueche, Roueche & Milliron, 1995, p. 61). New members of the culture are socialized to accept the institution’s assumptions and beliefs as “the correct way to perceive, think, and feel” in coping with specific organizational changes (Schein, 1990, p. 11). Last minute hiring of adjunct faculty gives them little time to become acclimated with the culture of the institution or the department. According to a survey conducted by the New Faculty Majority Foundation in September of 2011, 94% of the adjunct respondents reported not experiencing an orientation to the department or campus (54% were new to the departments and 49% were new to their campuses) (Street et al., 2012, p. 1).

Adjunct faculty are further constrained from learning the culture of the institution by their exclusion from shared governance (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 198; Kezar & Sam, 2014, p. 445). They have limited opportunities to understand the institution, build relationships with full-time peers, and undertake change (Kezar & Sam, 2014). Full-time faculty may be purposely excluding their part-time colleagues for several reasons. First, full-time faculty may view the increasing numbers of adjunct faculty as a threat to the existing tenure system. Second, since adjunct

faculty tend to outnumber full-time faculty, their inclusion in shared governance would enable them to exert greater power and influence in this arena (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 197). Third, full-time faculty may worry adjunct faculty judgment is restricted by their servitude to an administration that can hire and discontinue them at will and without justification (Thompson, 2003, p. 45).

Research shows the one place where adjunct faculty feel the greatest sense of connection is through their academic departments (Leslie & Gappa, 1993, p. 185; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010, p. 146); however, the degree to which they are integrated into this unit of the college depends upon how they are perceived by the chairperson and full-time faculty members (Leslie & Gappa, 1993, p. 185). Adjunct faculty may not be included in department meetings or made privy to messages shared with full-time faculty. In cases when part-time faculty are invited to a meeting, the location and time may conflict with other commitments – family, full-time employment, part-time appointments at other institutions – making it impossible for the individual to attend. Some adjunct faculty purposely avoid department meetings to keep from being mired in “departmental politics.” Others opt out based on the principle they are not being compensated for extra work. Whatever the cause of their absence, the part-time teacher’s lack of participation precludes him or her from contributing to syllabus design, curriculum development, and textbook selection. As a result, their professional judgment and academic freedom are likely to be constrained as they are forced to teach a fixed curriculum, outlined on a standard syllabus, and with textbooks and materials selected by another party (Thompson, 2003, p. 45). When adjunct faculty are excluded from

developing, conversing about, and administering departmental assessment activities, the results can prove meaningless and fail to provide them with the information needed to help them improve their instructional techniques (Danley-Scott & Scott, 2014, p. 37). Gappa and Leslie (1993) assert it is not a lack in adjunct faculty qualifications or abilities that threatens the quality of education at public two-year colleges; rather, it is the exclusion of this population's voice in shaping curriculum and program goals (p. 229).

The adjunct faculty member's most evident connection with the institution is through the classroom. They teach the majority of entry-level courses at public community colleges, so they serve as an especially crucial "point of contact" at the institution for new, commuting and part-time students (Street et al., 2012, p. 10; Tinto, 2007, p. 8; Thompson, 2003, p. 45). Unfortunately, their learners tend to be as disconnected from the institutional culture as they are. Personal and work commitments may preclude learners from engaging in extracurricular activities or making appointments to discuss goals and plans with counselors. The classroom is where learners are in the greatest need of information and advising, yet their teachers lack the means to assist them in navigating the college setting. For example, part-time teachers may be unable to answer questions about degree requirements, student services, and extracurricular opportunities. One study reports part-time faculty are less likely to provide developmental advisement to their students when they have been short-term employees, have insufficient support facilities, and are not integrated into the department where they are teaching (Pisani & Stott, 1998, p. 136).

The stigma of second class citizenship. Much of the literature reflects a general concern among adjunct faculty about not being viewed as equal to full-time faculty, and this undermines another precept of professionalism: social recognition among peers in the academy. Gappa and Leslie (1993) report, “For the most part, they feel powerless, alienated, invisible, and second class” (p. 180). Meixner et al. (2010) observe adjunct faculty lack “emotional” links with other employees at the college (p. 146). Their sense of job satisfaction increases when full-time colleagues, managers, and deans engage with them (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 185; Meixner et al., 2010, p. 146). Though they may have the same credentials and teaching experience as full-time peers, they are made to feel less important. If they teach outside of traditional work hours – evenings or weekends – support services may not be available to them (Sam, 2012, p. 26). They recognize symbolic gestures of disrespect such as the failure of college leaders to acknowledge them at public events or the omission of their name from course listings in the college tabloid (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 191, p. 192; Street et al., 2012, p. 2). Adjunct faculty are reluctant to assert an opinion or to voice their concerns to administration for fear they will not be invited to return to teach in the future (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 190). Some suspect the negative stigma of their part-time status impacts their relationships with their students. They are not viewed as “real” faculty. A part-time faculty respondent in a survey said, “I wonder if [my status as a second class citizen] inhibits [learners] from forming a mentoring relationship with me, through which significant learning can occur in addition to the classroom experience” (Street et al., 2012, p. 13).

Student access to teachers external to class can contribute to their engagement and learning. Studies have reported adjuncts are less likely than full-time faculty to spend time with students outside of class (CCCSE, 2014, p. 10; Schuetz, 2002, p. 42). Though, as professionals, adjunct faculty may be willing to carry out this practice without additional compensation, they simply may be constricted from doing so by lack of space and resources (Meixner et al., 2010, p. 146; Street et al., 2012, p. 11). In cases where office space is provided, the setting tends to be undersupplied and overcrowded, making it impossible for teachers to meet privately and work effectively with students (Street et al., 2012, p. 11). Colleges also make it difficult for part-time instructors to stay in touch with students from a distance. Even though some schools may provide adjunct faculty access to e-mail and voicemail accounts, they typically do not furnish these teachers with the equipment or funding to be able to access these resources from off-campus sites. Adjunct faculty often must purchase computers, tablets, phones and Internet services to be able to read institutional communication from afar. Technology can prove challenging and expensive, forcing some part-time teachers to limit their communication in the virtual world with learners external to class meetings.

Legally, adjunct faculty are only bound to the community college in their delivery of classroom instruction. In essence, “teaching is a transaction” with little expectations or pay (CCCSE, 204, p. 3). To truly understand the culture of a school, one has to spend significant time in its setting (Evans, 1996, p. 43). According to the literature, the two-year public institution does very little to foster the adjunct faculty member’s integration into the overall culture of the school. Part-time

teachers have limited contact with administrators, full-time colleagues, and other adjunct faculty. In some cases, they are made to feel like pariahs among leaders, full-time faculty, and students. A lack of space and resources discourages them from lingering on campus beyond teaching commitments. By design or by choice, they are omitted from important meetings where they can learn about the institution and provide input in shaping policy and curriculum. Considering these limitations in the context of sensemaking theory, it would seem adjunct faculty would have little opportunity to construct meaning in conjunction with other campus actors, especially change agents associated with the recent shift in mission. This is why I felt it was so vital to examine their sensemaking process in the context of this specific change.

Pedagogical Best Practices for Making Students Successful

Another component of this study focused on the relationship between the meaning making process of adjunct faculty in the face of change and how the resulting understandings impact their teaching. The literature on pedagogy in higher education suggests the future of student progression through college classes is contingent upon alterations in the teaching culture (CCCSE, 2010; Cox, 2009; Grubb, 1999; Mellow & Heelan, 2008, p. 100; Tinto, p. 2007). According to Tinto (2007), when faculty focus on improving student learning experiences, student retention and success will naturally follow (p. 9). The existing literature on pedagogical practice reflects several approaches community college professors can employ to help learners succeed academically.

Clearly stated high expectations. Good practice is made evident in a teacher's expression and maintenance of high expectations (Bickerstaff, Barragan, & Rucks-Ahidiana, 2012, p. 18; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; CCCSE, 2010, p. 8; Tinto, 1999). Expectations should be expressed on the first day of class, documented in the course syllabus, and reiterated throughout the term. Students expect college to be challenging, and they value earned successes. They do not want teachers to “dumb down” a class or to compliment them without justification (Bickerstaff et al., 2012, p. 18). Instructors should be clear about what is needed to succeed with an activity and give examples of successful work from the outset of each assignment (Kinzie, 2005, p. 2).

Teacher-student interaction. Research has shown learners are likely to remain in college if they feel a sense of connection with the institution (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 65; Tinto, 2007). For many community college learners, the one opportunity to make that connection may be through the classroom. Instructors who create a welcoming and safe learning environment where students are comfortable asking questions and interacting with their peers are contributing to the learners' sense of being valid members of the college setting (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 62). By interacting with their learners, faculty not only help them overcome academic challenges, they also aid them in navigating an unfamiliar bureaucracy, formulating mores and values, and developing a strategy for their future (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 75; Kinzie, 2005, p. 3; NCCSE, 2010, p. 14).

Active and collaborative learning activities. Active learning strategies are class activities designed to make students engage with the materials of a course and to apply higher-order thinking skills in analyzing them in the context of what they already know. Examples include discussion, case-study analysis, and service learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Collaborative learning activities are meant to facilitate cooperative learning and student interaction in the education process. Examples include pair work, peer review, and group work. When students collaborate on an assignment, they may be more focused and engage with the course materials (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kinzie, 2005, p. 2). If learners of varying skill levels work cooperatively, they gain from each others' strengths. Chang (2006) observes interaction begets interaction; if students engage with peers on issues related to academics, they may be more receptive to interacting with a teacher (p. 793).

Frequent, prompt and useful feedback. Good practice is also reflected in frequent, prompt and useful feedback on student work (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; CCCSE, 2010; Kinzie, 2005, p. 3). When students understand what they have mastered and where they need to improve, it provides them an opportunity to grow and succeed (CCCSE, 2010). In the absence of feedback, students are unable to gauge their performance in a class and are forced to make assumptions about their progress that may be incorrect (Bickerstaff et al., 2012, p. 13). Learners should be given regular formative and summative assessment opportunities periodically through the duration of the class to test their knowledge and to receive constructive responses about how to refine their knowledge and skills (Chickering & Gamson,

1987). According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) students learn best when a teacher provides them with written comments and a grade on their papers. Comments should not only be “corrective” in nature; they should include recommendations about how a student can further develop the process applied in reaching a final product (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The previous paragraphs provide an overview of research-based best practices instructors can undertake to make their students successful without compromising learning quality. As I mention in Chapter 1, the definition of student success is ambiguous. The primary concern of the institutional environment is to boost the efficiency with which a learner earns a college credential and to increase the number of college credentials earned by students. The aim of my study is to understand how adjunct Composition I faculty are making sense of the community college’s shift in mission toward emphasizing the institution’s commitment to student success and how this sensemaking process is resulting in a meaning that impacts their pedagogy.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by providing an overview of two theories, which will serve as the lenses of my study: loosely coupled systems and sensemaking. Next, I described the current state of the adjunct faculty member in the higher education system, as documented in the literature. Finally, I enumerated and discussed practices teachers can undertake to improve student success. The literature considered here not only contributed to the creation of the research questions I outline in Chapter 1, but it also played a significant role in the fashioning of

theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and a logic model that I present in Chapter 3. The latter is vital to the analysis of the data I collect for my study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

At the institutional level, community colleges are advocating for improved student completion and transfer rates. Though a student's education is a collaborative effort between many college constituencies and learners, research shows faculty can be key figures in helping students reach academic goals (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012, p. 19; Chang, 2005, p. 790; Tinto, 2007, p. 5). There are a number of research-based best pedagogical practices instructors can adopt to ensure learners achieve their educational aims without compromising the quality of their learning. These include creating opportunities for regular student-teacher interaction; making high expectations clear; employing active and collaborative learning strategies; and providing students with frequent, prompt, and useful feedback.

According to the NCES (2012), approximately 70% of faculty employed at public two-year colleges are part-time instructors. Judging from this statistic, students are likely to learn from more than one adjunct faculty member as they pursue a credential from a community college or during their preparation for transfer to a four-year college. The community college, like most post-secondary institutions, has a long tradition of trusting the professionalism and deliverables of its teaching staff. For successful change to take place, it is vital for part-time teachers and college leaders to agree on what that change means and looks like. An important first step in determining the alignment and perception between teachers and leaders is understanding how adjunct faculty are currently making sense of a change

in the mission of community colleges that reflects a greater emphasis on its commitment to student success and how they are applying it to their pedagogy. If a difference in understanding were detected between these two parties, opportunities for remediating that misalignment of perception might be pursued.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I examined my research problem through the theoretical lenses of loosely coupled systems and sensemaking. In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach I applied in conducting my research. The questions I answered through my research follow:

Research Question #1: How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?

- a. What messages is the institution sending to Composition I adjunct faculty about the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?
- b. What information and narratives are adjunct Composition I faculty prioritizing as they make sense of the change process?
- c. What aspects of the adjunct Composition I faculty member's identity and self interests are helping him or her make sense of the change in mission to emphasize the institution's commitment to student success?

Research Question #2: How are adjunct Composition I faculty applying their understanding about the change in mission to their pedagogy?

The overarching questions of the study are “how” questions; they invite the application of case study research because answering them will require consideration of an evolutionary and complex process over a specific period of time.

Design

I employed an embedded, single case study design in approaching my research. Case study methodology permits scholars to examine a current phenomenon in an authentic setting over a specific period of time (Creswell, 2013, p. 97; Yin, 2014, p. 16). According to Flyvbjerg (2006), case study allows for sophisticated learning by the researcher because he or she is situated within the circumstances of the site, allowing him or her to truly comprehend the opinions and actions of the research participants (p. 236).

The embedded, single-case study design focuses on one unit of analysis within the context of an individual organization. There are several reasons why it was appropriate for my study. First, it afforded me the opportunity to create a common case, an encapsulation of “the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation...because of the lessons it [provided] about the social processes related to some theoretical interest” (Yin, 2013, p. 52). The existing literature on community college adjunct faculty suggests a potential link between student failure and instruction by part-time teachers (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Cox, et al., 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011; Umbach, 2007). Most of the studies that report these findings have been quantitative in nature. While their recognition of a possible weakness or incongruity between institutional mission and teacher

practice is an important first step in resolving a potential problem, it is not enough. These earlier studies do not ask “how” or “why” questions. They do not examine the issue of student success and progress from the adjunct faculty member’s perspective. They do not explore multifarious influences that contribute to adjunct faculty construction of meaning about shift in mission toward emphasizing the college’s commitment to student success. My embedded, single case study approach provided me with the room, time and tools to gain a deeper understanding of how a specific group of adjunct faculty are making sense of the message about mission change and how they are applying it to their practice. It is my hope the insights gained from this research will provide leadership with a helpful new perspective that guides them as they undertake efforts to make learners more successful in pursuing their goals at the community college.

Case study methodology has been selected by a number of scholars carrying out empirical research involving sensemaking and loosely coupled systems. O’Meara Louder and Campbell (2014) employed a single case study design to weigh faculty sensemaking of peer departure because this methodology allowed them to not only examine their research problem on the individual level but also at the institutional level. Both Coburn (2005) and Kezar (2012) observe that case study methodology is useful for tracking sensemaking in the context of change, a major concern of my study. Because case study calls for the assembly of data from various sources and participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 16; Yin, 2014, p. 17), it produces substantial detail to help the researcher find answers to research questions (Kezar, 2012, p. 765). Orton

and Weick (1990) name case study research as a means of accurately capturing the multidimensional detail and movement in loosely coupled systems.

Setting

My research site was a community college on the east coast of the United States. To protect the identity of the institution, I have assigned pseudonyms to the school and its campuses. The college will be referred to as East Coast Community College. Its primary campus will be labeled Main Campus, and its branch campuses will be called City Campus and Rural Campus. East Coast Community College has approximately 7,000 students enrolled. The main campus is the oldest and most populous. It is located in a suburb. City Campus is the second most populous, and it is the most culturally diverse of the school's learning settings. Rural Campus is the newest and least populous of the campuses. At East Coast, adjunct faculty teach nearly 10% more of the overall courses offered by the institution than the full-time faculty. The ratio of full-time to part-time employees is 1:3. This is slightly less than what has been reported nationally.

Having worked in this setting for more than two decades, I am well versed in its history, leadership, and operations. As a former adjunct faculty member, full-time faculty member, and English Department Chairperson, I entered into my study comprehending the nuances of the school's internal operations in a way external stakeholders could not (Yin, 2014, pp. 116-117). This equipped me to examine how one unit of the organization – adjunct Composition I faculty – understood and contributed to the college's shift in mission in the context of the overall institution. My membership on the school's ATD Core Team further qualified me to carry out my

research. In 2004, the Lumina Foundation initiated ATD with the aim of improving the success of learners – especially those from traditionally marginalized populations and low-socioeconomic backgrounds. The organization theorizes improvement of student performance is dependent upon initiatives or interventions targeting an institution’s weaknesses. These interventions should result from the study of a school’s student performance data. The ATD core team at East Coast was responsible for crafting the vision and overseeing the implementation of initiatives relative to student success. Membership consisted of the college president, the vice president of academics, the vice president of planning, the vice president of student services, the dean of resource development, the ATD coordinator, two English faculty, one math faculty, and a sociology faculty. My service to this committee allowed me to witness the evolution of East Coast’s success initiative from inception to the present.

In the role of participant-observer, I gathered privileged information by virtue of my engagement at East Coast. I realized my perspective as an insider gave me an advantage in the process that could not be enjoyed by researchers new to my site (Yin, 2014, pp. 116-117). Simultaneously, I understood this positioning could be equally hazardous to my data collection process. I might have been distracted from collecting accurate information because I was compelled to advance an agenda or too mired in the responsibilities of my role as participant (Kanuha, 2000, p. 442; Yin, 2014, p. 117). Understanding these dangers, I exercised self-discipline, adopting an objective perspective as items were presented during meetings. I was also careful to

accept assignments that could easily be balanced with other aspects of my life and my research for this study.

Though still a member of ATD, East Coast disbanded its Core Team at the end of the third year and replaced it with a cross-functional committee for student success. At the time of my data collection, membership and charges for the new committee were still being formulated.

Sample

Study participants were selected using both homogenous sampling and maximum variation sampling. Homogenous sampling was employed in choosing leadership participants. Eight individuals were identified because of their engagement in the college's comprehensive student success initiative and their responsibility and authority in communicating change to adjunct Composition I faculty. The aggregated data from these sources helped to answer my research question about messages being sent about a shift in mission toward emphasizing the college's commitment to student success at the case study site.

Adjunct Composition I faculty were selected through maximum variation sampling to ensure various perspectives were being explored (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). All adjunct Composition I faculty who taught at least one section of the course in the year prior to and current with the study were invited to contribute to the research through an electronic survey. Survey findings were fortified by data collected during in-depth interviews with and classroom observations of purposefully selected adjunct Composition I faculty. My aim in selecting these participants was to ensure a representation of diverse perspectives. Several were

part-time instructors who commenced teaching within the three-year span prior to the period of data collection, when East Coast began its commitment to its comprehensive student success plan. There were approximately five adjunct faculty who fit this profile. I had never managed any of them in my capacity as department chairperson; I had not met them prior to this study. I selected two at random – Lilly and Chloe -- and sent them an invitation to participate. Both accepted. Other participants were long-term adjuncts who worked for several years before the institution implemented its comprehensive student success plan. Some of the candidates were recruited because they taught primarily on a specific campus; for example, Amelia and Gabriella are regularly employed at the City Campus and Hannah and Benjamin tend to teach at the Rural Campus. Other participants were selected because they had rotated their teaching schedules among multiple campuses; for example, Elizabeth, Ethan and Sophia have taught at all three campuses. The collective interview participants reflect variations in gender, age, race, knowledge, educational training and experience. Overall, I both interviewed and observed a total of nine individuals; they comprised one-half of the part-time faculty employed teaching Composition I at East Coast during the data collection stage of my study. I kept the participant pool for interviews and observations small so I could gain a deep understanding of each participant's perspective (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 174).

Data Collection

The evidence of a good case study will come from a variety of sources; no single source is necessarily better than another (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). Any

conclusions reached from a case study are made more persuasive if the study entails the gathering of evidence from many different sources (Yin, 2014, p. 120). This allows for “converging lines of inquiry” or triangulation, which strengthens the construct validity of the case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 211; Yin, 2013, pp. 119-121). For these reasons, I collected the data required for my study from many sources: institutional and success initiative documents, interviews, observations, and survey. There is no specific demarcation point for ending the data collection process in conducting case study research, so I collected data until I had confirmatory evidence for every topic considered in my study and felt satisfied I had considered rival hypotheses and alternative explanations for the phenomena being explored (Yin, 2014, p. 104).

In collecting data, I was constantly mindful of not only triangulating data sources (e.g. interviews, documents, and observations) but also participants (multiple leaders and multiple adjunct faculty members). I was also conscientious of implementing data collection procedures that did not compromise the internal validity of my case study. I carefully designed my survey instrument and protocols for interviews and observations (Toma, 2006, p. 412). I sought to avoid all possible threats to internal validity by preserving instrument consistency and retaining the same participants for the duration of the study.

Data collection occurred in three phases.

Phase I: Understanding the institutional message about mission shift.

In phase one of my data collection, my focus was to determine East Coast's perspective of the shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to student success and how that perspective was conveyed to adjunct Composition I faculty. This entailed reading ATD-generated materials and organizational documents (e-mails, the strategic plan, minutes from ATD-oriented meetings, articles in the employee newsletter); engaging as a participant observer in student-success-related meetings and professional development activities; and interviewing key leadership figures with authority to engage and direct Composition I adjunct faculty. Documents were employed primarily to verify and fortify information gathered from other sources (Yin, 2014, p. 107). For example, when a change agent said in an interview that a student success initiative had begun prior to the college's membership in ATD, I was able to confirm this through e-mail exchanges between leaders and faculty. These e-mails also gave me a richer understanding of the initiative's origin and how it eventually came to be situated under the ATD umbrella. I was also careful to weigh each document with the understanding it was crafted for a specific audience and purpose external to my case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, pp. 180-181). For instance, in reading articles about initiatives in the employee newsletter, I understood they encapsulated information and reported details in an upbeat tone for the purpose of building enthusiasm among employees for the college's shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to student success. To fully understand an initiative in the context of my study, I knew I had to

gather further detail about it from other sources. As I analyzed documents, I paid attention to both what was stated and what was omitted (Rapley, 2007, p. 111).

In the role of participant-observer, I gathered privileged information by virtue of my engagement at East Coast. I realized my vantage point as an insider gave me an advantage in the process that could not be enjoyed by researchers new to my site (Yin, 2014, pp. 116-117). While some view participation of the researcher as a valuable means of preserving the accuracy of the gathered information, others see it as a threat to good practices in social science research. For example, the demands of the participant role may eclipse data collection or the researcher may “go native,” abandoning good research practices in favor of championing a cause (Kanuha, 2000, p. 442; Yin, 2014, p. 117). Understanding these dangers, I exercised the self-discipline to avoid them.

The information gathered from organizational documents and participant-observation served as a basis for developing the draft interview protocol I developed to weigh leadership perspectives about the change messages being sent to adjunct Composition I faculty about the shift in mission toward student success (See Appendix A). Yin (2014) considers interview a vital aspect of data collection in case study research (p. 110). A properly structured interview can result in rich detail about a topic (Rubin & Rubin, 1996). Following the drafting of “main questions” related to my research question and “probes” intended to elicit additional detail from my participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1996, p. 129), I tested the protocol with a recently retired manager of the composition faculty prior to administering it to my intended participants. As I conducted my interviews, I used

my protocol as a guide to discussion because Yin (2013) advises keeping inquiry fluid and conversational (p. 110). As I posed questions, I sought to avoid the threat of reflexivity, understanding my previous experiences as a leader, adjunct faculty member and a teacher could influence the manner in which participants responded (Berger, 2015). I recorded my interviews and composed field notes during the conversations. I transcribed recorded interviews within a few days of conducting them, so details were fresh in my mind.

Participants in my study were treated as equals, regardless of their positioning in the organization. The decision to collect data from leadership before I gathered it from part-time teachers was not meant to communicate a privileging of one perspective over another. It was driven by the sequential process of institutional change. East Coast's engagement with ATD is a top-down initiative; administration and the board of trustees commenced the school's membership in this program. Following this, administrators and full-time faculty collaborated to make key decisions about what initiatives to undertake as a result of data findings about student progress. No adjunct faculty members served on any of the committees relevant to ATD, nor were they formally invited to provide input on how to shape this initiative. In order to understand how part-time Composition I faculty were making sense of the school's shift in mission, it was vital to obtain as thorough an understanding as possible about how leaders were not only conceptualizing this shift in mission, but also communicating the message about change. The data gathered from leadership provided an important context for shaping data collection tools and analysis in the next phases of the process.

Phase II: Broad understanding of adjunct Composition I faculty

perspective. Once I reached the point of data saturation about the intended messages of institutional leadership, I entered into the second phase of my data collection process, which focused on adjunct participants.

I began by drafting a preliminary online survey instrument consisting of a series of questions inquiring how part-time Composition I faculty are making sense of the institution's shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to student success and applying what they learn to their practice. As I prepared the tool for adjunct faculty, I realized it was missing questions that would permit me to collect data to help disprove or confirm my rival explanations. I inserted questions to determine whether or not adjunct faculty were employed by institutions other than East Coast (e.g. other colleges or high schools) where they encountered a parallel student success initiative that could influence their thinking or practice as instructors. I also included questions that would help me understand the participants' familiarity with the Completion Agenda and President Obama's 2020 Challenge because I wanted to ensure adjunct faculty were not making sense of the shift in mission toward student success with what they learned from reading about a broader societal educational trend.

I pre-tested the survey tool with eight former Composition I faculty – both full-time and part time – who did not qualify as participants in my study (Fink, 2013, p. 67). The results led me to make several additional adjustments to the instrument. I changed the order of my questions; for example, I moved inquiries about degree attainment and teaching certification from the end of my survey to the beginning, as

these were demographic in nature and seemed better situated at the top of the questionnaire. One test participant suggested adding a progress bar to the survey so future participants could have a sense of their advancement through the tool, and I complied. Test participants also remarked they were confused about whether or not the survey could be saved and returned to later, so I added a statement to the survey's introduction to let participants know they should plan to complete the survey in one sitting. Having averaged the completion times of all test participants, I concluded it should take an individual approximately forty minutes to finish the survey; I included this information in the introduction to the tool.

During my interview of leaders, I learned about a number of professional development events and policy changes that were intended to carry the message about mission shift to faculty. As a result of this, I added several questions to the survey to determine if participants had engaged in these events and whether or not adjunct faculty felt these resources and policy changes were influential as they constructed their understanding about making students successful.

One benefit of employing a questionnaire (See Appendix B) is that it created an opportunity for all qualifying adjunct Composition I faculty to provide primary information to my study (Fowler, 2005, p. 80). Another gain of this data collection process is that it offered participants anonymity. As noted in the literature review, fear of repercussions may cause an adjunct faculty member to refrain from publicly expressing opinion or criticism (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 190). It is likely the survey participants were more inclined to give authentic responses through the survey that

promised anonymity rather than in-person interviews or a focus group (Johnson & Christensen, 2007).

Phase III: Deeper understanding of adjunct Composition I faculty

perspective. The third phase of data collection focused on specific members of the adjunct Composition I faculty. Participants were selected to ensure a representation of diverse perspectives. Several were part-time instructors who began teaching within the three-year span prior to the period of data collection, when East Coast began its commitment to its comprehensive student success plan. Other participants were long-term adjuncts who worked for several years before the institution implemented its comprehensive student success plan. Some of the candidates were recruited because they taught primarily on a specific campus. Other participants were selected because they had rotated their teaching schedules among multiple campuses. The collective interview participants reflect variations in gender, age, race, knowledge, educational training and experience. Overall, I both interviewed and observed one-half of the adjunct Composition I faculty employed at East Coast during the data collection stage of my study. I recruited participants through e-mail, stating clearly they were not obligated to engage in the study. The majority of recruits immediately agreed to meet with me for a conversation and to have me visit their classes. Only one declined the offer to participate in the study because she was overwhelmed with personal and professional obligations. Prior to the data collection process, I had study participants review and sign an informed consent form that explained how I would protect their privacy. Meetings occurred at locations determined by the study participant; these included my personal office

space on the main campus, visiting professors' offices on the City and Rural campuses, and sundry classrooms. Participants were immediately assigned pseudonyms in all written material of the study. Collected data, analytic memos, journal entries, chapter and dissertation drafts were stored on my personal computer, which is password protected.

I designed a preliminary interview protocol for the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the adjunct participants' sensemaking process. Following the data collection from the first two phases, I added a question asking teachers to identify three specific strategies they employ to help learners be successful; this was intended to determine whether or not there were parallels in adjunct faculty thinking about best practices and what had already been documented in the literature focused on pedagogical practices teachers adopt for making students successful. Additionally, during my interviews with institutional leaders, several had mentioned the value of certain formal and informal initiatives in the context of the comprehensive student success initiative, so I added questions to unpack adjunct Composition I faculty perspectives about these initiatives in the context of making students successful. See Appendix C to view the final draft of the protocol.

The interviews were a good means of documenting the participants' perspectives of the leadership messages they received, understood, and applied; however, the content I gathered through this method offered me a limited aspect. Erlandson et al. (1993) indicate interviews provide a researcher with an initial idea of "the constructed realities" of the subject, but an observation allows the researcher to get an "independent view" of how those constructs were assembled by the subject

(as cited in Tjora, 2006, p. 430). This is why I also arranged to observe one class meeting of each of my interview participants. Each class observation lasted for one-hour and fifteen minutes.

In conducting my observations, I applied the advice of Rossman and Rallis (2003) in composing my field notes. I took copious and detailed notes, and I recorded patterns I remarked in both the obvious and subliminal actions in the settings I visited (pp. 255-256). I was also mindful of the impact my presence had on the setting. I made a point of being unobtrusive, sitting in a remote location of the room and not interacting with the students or the teacher. I employed an observation protocol (See Appendix D) for each visit which allowed me to record classroom activity along a timeline and classify it into one of the categories associated with the best pedagogical practices for helping students succeed: clearly stated high expectations; teacher-student interaction; active learning; collaborative learning; and constructive feedback.

Case study database. Throughout all three phases of the data collection period, I maintained a case study database, which consisted of not only statistical and descriptive information, but also artifacts collected from the field (Yin, 2014, p. 123). My research journal was a critical part of this case study database. It is where I recorded contemplations, assumptions, actions, and analysis, all important elements of the research process (Janesick, 1999, p. 511). This is also where I composed “new narrative compilations” (Yin, 2014). For example, I jotted down themes that stood out during the data collection process and experimented with evidence to see how it might converge to answer a protocol question of the study (Yin, 2014, p. 126).

The case study database has been a vital place to maintain my chain of evidence, which contributes to the construct validity and reliability of the case study. The purpose of this case study database is to make my process transparent and detailed enough so that an external researcher can trace my data collection process from beginning to end (Yin, 2014, p. 127).

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) indicates analysis of data is an amorphous element of case study research, and much is dictated by “the researcher’s own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations” (p. 133). Like the data collection component of this study, the data analysis portion was a multi-phase effort. Research is not a linear process; it is recursive, so my analysis began as soon as I started collecting data and assembling the case study database, and it continued until the final draft of the dissertation was built. My analysis was recorded in my research journal in the form of notes about patterns and themes that emerged as I collected evidence.

In analyzing my data, I employed two strategies recommended by Yin (2014): theoretical propositions and plausible rival explanations. My analytic techniques were an “event-listing matrix” and a logic model.

Drawing on the theoretical framework I presented in Chapter 2, I asserted two theoretical propositions to guide the analysis of my data. Each was paired with an overarching research question of my study and potential rival explanations for my findings.

Research Question #1: How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?

- a) What messages is the institution sending to Composition I adjunct faculty about the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?
- b) What information and narratives are adjunct Composition I faculty prioritizing as they make sense of the change process?
- c) What aspects of the adjunct Composition I faculty member's identity and self interests are helping him or her make sense of the change in mission to emphasize the institution's commitment to student success?

Theoretical Proposition 1: In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty have close, regular contact with institutional change agents, they prioritize the information and narratives they receive from these individuals in making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Rival Explanation 1: Adjunct Composition I faculty have close regular contact with institutional change agents, but they prioritize their identity and their personal experience in making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Rival Explanation 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty have close regular contact with institutional change agents, but they prioritize a broader

societal educational trend as they make sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Theoretical Proposition 1a: In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty have little or no direct contact with institutional change agents, they prioritize the information and narratives they derive from their identity, professional development, and personal experience to make sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Rival Explanation 1: Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, so they prioritize a broader societal educational trend in making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Rival Explanation 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, so they prioritize messages from change agents of a success initiative undertaken at other institutions where they teach in order to make sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Research Question #2: How are adjunct Composition I faculty applying their understanding about the change in mission to their pedagogy?

Theoretical Proposition 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty who work in conjunction with institutional change agents to make sense of the community

college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for helping students succeed.

Rival Explanation 1: Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, but they still recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for making students succeed.

Rival Explanation 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents and undertake no pedagogical changes relevant to helping students succeed.

Theoretical Proposition 2a: Adjunct Composition I faculty who depend upon their identity, professional development, and personal experience to understand the shift in mission at the community college do not recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and do not implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for helping students succeed.

Rival Explanation 1: Adjunct Composition I faculty who depend upon their identity, professional development, and personal experience to understand the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success understand the important role they play in helping students succeed and implement pedagogical

changes that are reflective of best practices for helping students succeed.

Rival Explanation 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty who depend upon their identity, professional development and personal experience to understand the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success understand the important role they play in helping students succeed but do not implement pedagogical changes that are relevant to helping students succeed.

The aforementioned theoretical propositions and accompanying rival explanations emerged from my review of loosely coupled systems theory, sensemaking theory, and literature focused on the current state of adjunct faculty in higher education. If change agents serve as coupling devices between their constituents and initiatives, if they are viewed as having power and influence and can control an employee's productive activities, the change agents – also known as sensegivers – are in a better position to make their perception of change clear to their intended audience (Coburn, 2001; Coburn, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Kezar, 2012; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; O'Meara et al., 2014). It is likely this message of change will help the sensemaker manifest an understanding of his or her role in the change process and adopt the best pedagogical practices to ensure student success. Though sensemakers can draw from many different frameworks in coming to an understanding of change, they will often prioritize the cues and messages they receive from sources they perceive to be powerful and righteous (Mills et al., 2010). In cases where followers are not tightly coupled with

change agents, they are left to configure “individual realities” that come from the knowledge they draw from their identities and past experience (O’Meara et al., 2014; Weick, 2001). The literature on adjunct faculty suggests the majority of these teachers are not adequately socialized into the culture of the schools where they are employed (i.e. new part-time hires may not attend orientation, adjunct hires are not included in department and shared governance meetings. See Chapter 2 for full discussion), so their sensemaking of change may be shaped by frameworks other than those that come from local change agents. The sensegivers helping adjunct Composition I faculty understand the shift in mission may be change agents at another employment site, or adjunct faculty may be drawing upon information they gained during their formal or informal educational training or learned from reading professional journals or popular news sites.

My overall analytic technique was a logic model. According to Yin (2014), this technique is helpful for analyzing organizational change because it describes the chain of events leading to the ultimate outcome of innovation; it also affords the researcher an opportunity to consider “rival” causal chains or alternate causes to effects (p. 156). The logic model of my study is a graphic representation of the cause-effect relationships I anticipated as a result of my literature review prior to my data collection process (See Figure 1). It incorporates the theoretical propositions and rival explanations I outline above. The logic model was the overarching framework against which I weighed the empirical findings of my study, and this guided me in drawing conclusions (Yin, 2014, p. 155).

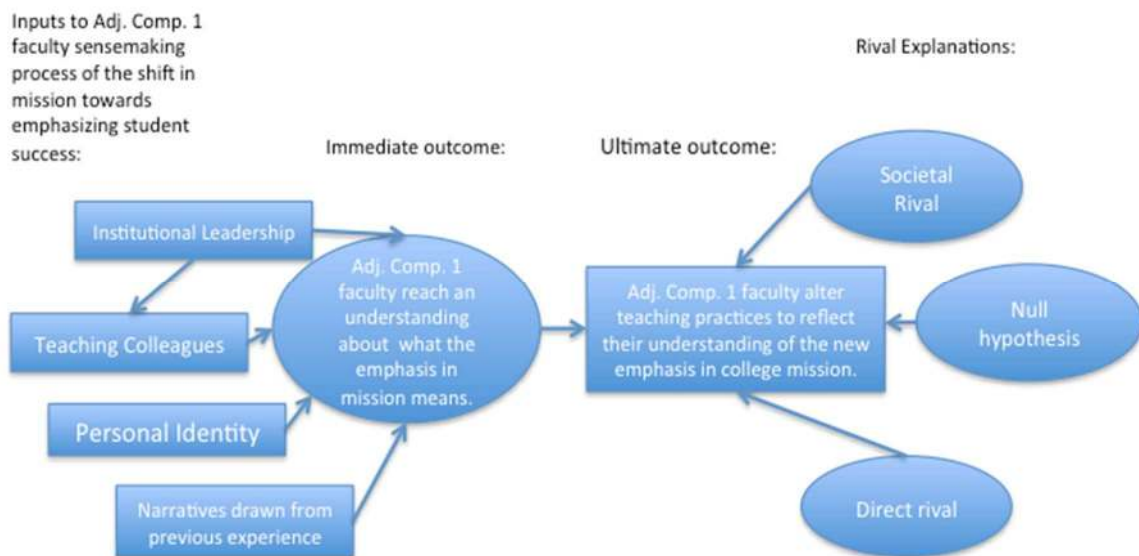


Figure 1. Logic model for D. Coulter study

My analysis was also helped along through the creation of an “event-listing matrix” (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 194). This documented the chronological order of significant developments associated with East Coast’s comprehensive student success initiative and their relationship to adjunct Composition I faculty (Miles et al., 2014, p. 194). An event-listing matrix allows researchers to not only outline a process but to also recognize the connections between events within that process (Miles et al., 2014, p. 194). This served as the basis for creating a rich and detailed narrative about the context of my study. As Miles et al. (2014) note, commencing this process with a matrix-based outline helps a researcher avoid “false chronologies” (p. 196).

Phase I of analysis: Intended institutional message. In the first phase of the analysis, which focused on the data collected in relationship to the institutional message about shift in mission to emphasize the college's commitment to student success, I extensively read and re-read interview transcripts and documents to determine if any significant trends became evident early in the analysis process. Following this, I employed axial coding to categorize data dispersed in the first coding process (Saldana, 2009, p. 159). During this second round of coding, I employed an inductive approach in determining themes, specifically seeking repetition or patterns of similar ideas expressed in the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, pp. 88-89).

As I carried out my analysis, validity and reliability were at the forefront of my mind. I tested the "truth" of my data and weighed alternative explanations for my findings (Rapley, 2007, p. 129). I engaged in member checks of my interview transcripts, asking leadership participants to review the transcript from their individual interview and to confirm I had accurately recorded their thoughts. They were also invited to provide further detail.

Gaining a solid understanding of how the institution attempted to inform constituents about the revision in mission to emphasize the college's commitment to improving student success is vital to analyzing the data collected in Phases II and III of the study. It clarifies the detail associated with the first link in the causal chain outlined in my study's logic model.

Phase II of analysis: Adjunct faculty sensemaking. Once the survey was completed, I began the second phase of the analysis process by cleaning the data and reducing it to a descriptive form (Fink, 2013, p. 141; Green, 2007, p. 145). I created cross tabs to examine relationships between categorical and ordinal variables measured by my survey (Leon-Guerrero & Frankfort-Nachmias, 2012, p. 187). This led to inferences that were analyzed in the context of my theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and logic model. There were findings in this stage that were applied in refining my interview protocol for adjunct faculty and contributed to the coding process applied to data collected in the third phase of the study.

Next, I focused on data collected through interviews with adjunct faculty, classroom observations, and adjunct-generated documents (e.g. syllabi, class handouts). I began my analysis by coding the information using topics that emerged from my literature review, theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and data collected from Phases I and II of my study. I applied process coding to trace connections between adjunct Composition I faculty sensemaking processes and their classroom practices (Saldana, 2009, p. 78). As Yin (2014) notes, “the claimed existence of a repeated cause-and-effect sequence of events, linked together” is the important aspect of logic model analysis, and the causal chain can be qualitatively analyzed (p. 156). The findings that emerged from this portion of the analysis was weighed against my theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and logic model.

Validity

The data collection and analysis processes outlined in this chapter were crafted with a mindfulness for the four tests typically employed to ensure the quality of empirical social science research: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Yin, 2014, p. 45).

The test known as construct validity ensured inferences were legitimately made from the process by which I defined how a concept is observed in my study. I attended to this in several ways as I carried out my research. I was careful to triangulate both participants and resources (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). During the analysis stage, I engaged in “member checking,” inviting interview participants to examine transcripts of their individual conversations with me to ensure these documents accurately represented their views. During the entire research process, I maintained a chain of evidence to ensure all evidence is accounted for and could be traced by an outside evaluator to my conclusions (Yin, 2014, p. 127).

Internal validity is a test to determine the extent to which the investigator can conclude there is a cause-effect relationship among variables in a study (Yin, 2014, p. 47). This was a concern for my particular study because I examined a possible relationship between potential sensegiving sources, the sensemaking processes of my study’s participants and the impact of their understanding of change on their pedagogy. To evade threats to internal validity, I crafted rival explanations for my theoretical propositions and a logic map that aided me in ensuring the inferences I drew from my data were well founded.

External validity is a test to determine if a study's findings can be generalized "beyond the immediate study" (Yin, 2014, p. 48). While statistical generalization is unachievable through case study research, analytical generalization is possible (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, pp. 86-87). This is a process that allows for generalization from empirical observations to theory. The theory I landed upon in conducting my study stemmed from both my theoretical propositions "empirically enhanced" by my study's findings and emerged from my findings as separate from my theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014, p. 41). The theory can become a working hypothesis for reanalyzing past studies or for future studies (Yin, 2014, pp. 40-41). As Yin (2014) notes, the key to aiming for external validity resides in the shaping of the study's research questions (p. 49). By presenting questions that sought to answer the question "how," I allowed myself the opportunity to arrive at analytic generalizations by the conclusion of my study.

Reliability is a test that will permit future researchers to carry out the same case study as is documented in my final report and arrive at identical findings and conclusions (Yin, 2014, p. 48). According to Yin (2014), reliability can be reached through two methods: development of a case study protocol and a case study database. The case study protocol is a document that guides the study; it provides an overview of the case study, data collection procedures, and data collection questions. My dissertation proposal served as my case study protocol. The case study database is an archive of data collected for the case study, presented in an organized and readable manner so an outside evaluator or another researcher can easily decipher and follow it. Immediately upon beginning my data-collection

process, I systematically preserved evidence – artifacts from the study site, interview transcripts, field notes from observations and meetings -- in a logical order within folders. The database also contained a journal where I made periodic entries to document the steps of my data-collection process.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, I was mindful of treating participants and settings in an ethical manner. I secured permission to carry out my research from both my research site – East Coast Community College -- and Rowan University's Institutional Research Board before I proceeded with data collection.

All participants in my research were provided with comprehensive information about the nature and purpose of my research. They signed informed consent forms before they were engaged in an interview, survey, or observation (See Appendix E). I asked for permission to record all interviews. Only one leadership participant declined being recorded, and I respected his request by taking handwritten notes during our conversation.

Prior to entering into this research, I was anxious about the potential challenge my position in the setting might pose to my progress. As mentioned earlier, I had been employed by East Coast for approximately 20 years. For nine of those years, I had been the supervisor of Composition I faculty. As I anticipated, there had been some turnover in the ranks of adjunct faculty since my departure as department leader, and there were several current employees who remembered me as their chairperson. Having resigned my leadership position several years prior to the data collection process of this research, I am confident I significantly reduced my

power relationship with my former employees. Still, I proceeded with caution since my position as full-time faculty member and formal researcher had the potential to instill a sense of intimidation in adjunct study participants. As Creswell (2013) points out, researchers must strive to reduce the power relationship that exists between a researcher and a study participant (p. 48).

Study Limitations

Yin (2014) advises case study researchers to set boundaries for a case to ensure it has a manageable scope (p. 33). The primary concern of my study was how adjunct Composition I faculty make sense of the community college's shift in mission to emphasize its commitment to improving student success and how the results of that sensemaking process are impacting their work as community college teachers. To bound my study, I focused on one community college that adopted a change in mission that features its commitment to improving student success. This visible alteration in mission at this college took effect four years prior to my data collection process, a very specific amount of time. I also limited the participants of my study to a particular bifurcated group: adjunct faculty instructing an entry level English class within an academic department and the leadership responsible for informing adjunct faculty about the college's revised mission. I have identified certain relevant theories – loosely coupled systems and sensemaking– to guide the construct of my study, data collection processes, and data analysis processes.

As I note in my literature review, power can play a role in how sensemakers prioritize the information they receive from change agents in trying to understand change; however, power was not a priority concern of my study. As I began my

research, it was not clear who or what was contributing to the sensemaking process of adjunct faculty in the context of the community college's mission change. Leaders and change agents were only two potential resources I anticipated contributing to adjunct Composition I faculty sensemaking processes, but knowing adjunct Composition I faculty have tenuous connections with the institutions where they work, I shaped a study that allowed me to account for additional factors that could contribute to the adjunct faculty's sensemaking processes, including their identity, professional training, and teaching experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the methodology for my study. I rationalized the value of employing an embedded case study design in gathering and analyzing data in the context of my research questions. I detailed the approaches I employed in identifying study participants and gathering data. In the appendices of this document, I include the interview protocols, observation protocols, and survey tools I employed in collecting data. I explained how data was analyzed using theoretical propositions, rival explanations, and a logic model, all derived from the details of my study's theoretical framework. I also applied an event-listing matrix as a part of my analysis process. Finally, I reviewed my concerns and the techniques I employed to address validity, reliability, and ethics as I carried out my research.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

This chapter presents the research findings of my embedded case study. I examine how contingent Composition I faculty at East Coast Community College are making sense of the college's shift in mission toward emphasizing the school's commitment to improving student success and how their understanding of institutional change is impacting their pedagogy. I begin by providing the demographics of study participants. Next, I give an overview of the study context; this summary is compulsory to understanding the findings of the case since context influences the participants in my research, their understanding of change, and the resulting actions they undertake as teachers in response to their sensemaking process (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Then, I turn to a discussion of the findings that emerged from the themes I discovered in my data analysis.

Demographics of Study Participants

Two different populations contributed to the data collection portion of this study. The first is a cohort of eight institutional change agents responsible for communicating with adjunct Composition I faculty about the college's shift in mission toward emphasizing the institution's commitment to improving student success. Five participants are male and three are female. Seven are Caucasian and one is Hispanic. They range in age from 35 to 71. Though all can be broadly categorized as institutional leaders, the group can be bifurcated by level of power. Upper-level administrators – the president, vice-presidents, and deans – have significant control over policy development, hiring practices, and budgetary

decisions that influence programs and practices. With the exception of the dean of liberal studies, upper-level administrators rarely have direct contact with adjunct Composition I faculty.

The lower-level leaders – an ATD facilitator and department/program coordinators – have no supervisory control over adjunct Composition I faculty. Their role is to communicate institutional policy and practices to adjunct Composition I faculty and to provide support to the teachers as they carry out duties. Support can take the form of supplying course texts, sharing assignment ideas, and answering questions. Lower-level leaders are the change agents with whom adjunct Composition I faculty at East Coast have the most direct interaction.

The second group to contribute to the data collection portion of this study are adjunct Composition I faculty. Limited demographic information was collected from the survey participants. All participants possess a master's degree. The group reported a broad scope of experience in teaching at the college level. About half have been teaching for East Coast less than five years and half have been employees for five or more years. Fifty percent identify the school's main campus as their primary place of employment. The remaining respondents identify one of the branch campuses or the online environment as the locus of their instruction. Most survey respondents report teaching their community college classes during the day. Approximately half teach in the evenings, and a few teach weekend classes.

A total of nine adjunct Composition I faculty members were interviewed for this study. They range in age from late twenties to mid-seventies. Two are African American, and the remainder are Caucasian. Two are male, and the others are

female. Two report the City Campus as their chief teaching site; two report the Rural Campus as their primary teaching site; and the remainder identify the main campus as their central teaching site. Three of the faculty members deliver their courses exclusively at night or on the weekend because they have full-time jobs at primary and secondary schools during the day. The rest of the study participants are able to deliver instruction during the day. Some of the members in this latter group have vocational commitments that permit them to work flexible hours; for example, they are adjuncts at other colleges, part-time librarians at primary and secondary schools, freelance writers, or visual artists. Others are retired educators. Similar to the survey respondents, the interview subjects report a broad range of experience with college-level teaching. Two have been instructing college-level courses for approximately one year. Two have been engaged in post-secondary teaching for ten years. The others report teaching in the college setting between four and five years.

The Context for the Embedded Case Study

Using personal observation, institutional documents, and information gathered from interviews with both leaders and adjunct Composition I faculty, I was able to construct an overview of study setting events and change-agent behaviors directly related to the institution's mission shift to emphasize their commitment to improving student success. This overview is vital to giving context for the study's findings. This summary focuses specifically on change agents and events that had the power to directly impact adjunct Composition I sensemaking and practice during the time of mission shift. For example, I do not talk about the college's success initiative known as "Math Boot Camp," despite its prominence in the

school's plan for comprehensive student success, because it was not an enterprise with which adjunct Composition I faculty were directly engaged.

East Coast Community College's shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to improving student success was formalized when the board of trustees approved the revised mission as part of the newest strategic plan in February of 2011. The new mission was officially adopted in July of 2011. It asserts the institution "creates opportunity by providing access to superior educational programs," and its first goal for achieving this is to "maximize student success." This alteration in mission language was widely publicized on campus. It was prominently presented in clear table card displays on the desks of all college employees, and it was promoted through articles in campus and community publications.

Following the adoption and publication of the revised mission statement, the college president prioritized the development of a comprehensive student success plan. Senior staff allocated a portion of the institution's budget to finance student success initiatives annually. In Fall 2011, the college president charged an existing enrollment-focused committee to investigate and advise on approaches to achieve this goal. The committee membership was representative of various dimensions of the institutional constituencies – including students and full-time faculty – and led by East Coast's former vice-president of academic affairs and the current vice-president of planning, research, facilities and executive support. Adjunct faculty did not serve on this committee.

Table 1

Timeline of significant events associated with East Coast's comprehensive student success initiative and adjunct Composition I faculty involvement.

Date	Event	Adjunct Composition I faculty involvement
Summer, 2011	Board of trustees adopts new mission and strategic plan .	No participation
Spring, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First ALP pilot taught by one full-time faculty member. • College joins ATD. 	No participation
Fall, 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College's Comprehensive Student Success Plan introduced at formal convocation. • ALP pilot scaled up to four sections; it is recognized as an ATD initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small cohort attends convocation, including Elizabeth, Ethan, and Sophia. • No participation
Fall, 2013	Career development curriculum infusion introduced as a formal ATD initiative	A small cohort participate in professional development and apply the concepts to their classes. Sophia is part of the group.
Summer, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First student success retreat held. • Formal ALP training session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Composition I adjunct faculty member participates (not a study participant). • First cohort of adjunct faculty is trained to teach ALP, including Elizabeth, Hannah, and Sophia.
Fall, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report in/report out policy introduced. • Workshops held to promote pedagogical practices intended to improve student success. • ALP scaled up to 14 sections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts all adjunct faculty. • A small cohort of adjunct faculty participate (Elizabeth, Ethan, Lilly). • Four adjunct faculty are drafted to teach (Elizabeth, Hannah, Sophia, and an adjunct who did not participate in the study).
Spring, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First developmental advising event held. • Additional workshops held to promote pedagogical practices intended to improve student success. 	Adjunct faculty expected to promote event to students, but they are not employed as student advisors. A small cohort of adjunct faculty participate (Lilly).

Achieving the Dream. In May, 2012, upon the committee's recommendation, the college formally joined the ATD National Reform Network. Over the summer, the college administration built a formal structure to facilitate the

student success plan – including the organization of a core and data team – and strategized to inform stakeholders about the need to improve student success. Adjunct faculty were not represented on any of the ATD committees. The college’s “readiness assessment” for ATD acknowledges this weakness, reporting there is frequent turnover of adjunct faculty at the institution. Additionally, the college observes, “While efforts to engage and support adjunct faculty are substantial, efforts are inconsistent, and in certain instances adjuncts are marginalized.”

While adjunct faculty may have had ample opportunity to read about the institution’s interest in improving student success via updates in the college newsletter or by reviewing the strategic plan, an invitation to participate in the college’s convocation during August of 2012 was the first formal opportunity part-time faculty had to contribute to the discussion about mission change at the institution and to understand its impact on their work.

Accelerated learning program pilot. Concurrent to these developments on the administrative level, the English Department piloted an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) during the Spring 2012 semester. During the planning process of ALP, the former vice-president of academic affairs stated in an e-mail that the pilot would fall under the umbrella of the college’s comprehensive student success initiative.

Similar to the courses created and implemented at the Community College of Baltimore County under the direction of Peter Adams, this experiment allowed first-time students placing into the school’s upper-level developmental English class to be mainstreamed into a Composition I class while simultaneously attending a

“support” course. The support class is a hybrid supplemental instruction/freshman orientation class. Part of the meeting time is dedicated to helping students improve their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, but the other portion focuses on connecting students with the college setting and teaching them methods for addressing the non-cognitive issues that could potentially impede their progress toward their general academic goals. One mandate of the East Coast model is to have the ALP and Composition I classes taught by the same instructor.

Once the college joined ATD and completed its first data analysis, its ATD core team adopted the English ALP pilot as one of three formal initiatives to foster and scale up in the interest of improving student success. In the first few years of the pilot, no adjunct faculty taught ALP courses, but they were invited to attend information and training sessions in preparation for future opportunities to teach in this pilot.

Career development curriculum infusion initiative. Another formal ATD initiative was introduced in Fall 2013, during the college’s second year of membership. Under the leadership and guidance of the vice-president of student affairs, the student support area began to work in collaboration with faculty to infuse career development information into the existing curriculum of developmental and gateway courses. Research has shown learners are more successful when they identify their goals early in their post-secondary learning process. Between that time and the present, several issues of the college newsletter promoted student support and faculty partnerships in this area. For example, the vice-president of student affairs and branch campus management and the director

of the rural campus student services worked in conjunction with an adjunct Composition I teacher to help her learners improve their cover letter writing skills. At another time, the vice president of student support held a “values auction” in a full-time faculty member’s ALP course to help students begin to understand the importance of setting goals early. He also introduced the students to online career planning tools. This initiative was widely promoted at various meetings and professional development activities held by the college, which were attended by some adjunct Composition I faculty.

Student success retreat. In August, 2014, administrative representatives and selected full-time and adjunct faculty engaged in a Student Success Retreat. Adjunct faculty participation was voluntary and limited to one representative per department, so only one English adjunct faculty member was present. The purpose of the event was to enhance collaboration across the institution in the effort to improve student retention and progress. Attendees were provided an overview of the existing formal ATD initiatives. Participants brainstormed and reflected on what students needed in order to succeed at various stages during their academic career (e.g. pre-enrollment, first semester, second semester, etc.). Seating at tables was arranged to ensure representatives from various departments were integrated and had a chance to become familiar with the student success concerns relevant to various areas. Immediately following the retreat, the English coordinator e-mailed the information sheets prepared by the student success facilitator for the retreat to all faculty in the department. In the body of the message, the coordinator suggested

the faculty review these items at their convenience so they might be informed about the ongoing student success initiatives.

Adjunct faculty begin to teach ALP. As the ALP pilot was scaled up, leaders recognized the need to broaden the pool of qualified candidates and hired adjunct faculty to teach in the program during the 2014-2015 academic year. To qualify, part-time teachers had to possess a master's degree and engage in a formal training session led by an external expert in Summer 2014. These teachers were paid a one-time stipend for completing the training.

Once adjunct faculty began to teach their ALP courses, they were provided with multiple supports. The ALP coordinator and experienced ALP teachers created a robust online resource site for teachers to access materials from the formal training sessions, a teacher's guide, sample schedules of assignments, and a multitude of strategies and activities. The program coordinator was available to adjunct faculty to answer questions and concerns. She created a professional learning community through which all ALP faculty were regularly connected with one another during the semester and could engage in discussion focused on improving practice in the interest of contributing to student retention and progress. Communication took place via e-mail and a formal ALP meeting held in person on the main campus during each semester.

Additional academic enterprises aimed at improving student success.

During my conversations with leadership about the college's shift in mission toward emphasizing the institution's commitment to improving student success, leadership participants wanted me to understand the message about mission alteration was

not conveyed solely through formal initiatives associated with the college's membership in ATD. They talked about several significant policies and practices they adopted in 2014 with the intent of helping faculty understand how to help students reach their goals. Several of these were aimed specifically at adjunct faculty.

Report in/report out policy. This was instituted solely for contingent faculty. According to leaders, it was a response to student complaints and anecdotal research indicating some part-time teachers were not meeting with their classes for the full period. Prior to teaching, adjunct faculty are expected to report to the support office on their respective campus and place a signature in a book to acknowledge the time of their arrival. They repeat the process upon their departure from campus. Administrators regularly monitor the report in/report out sheets and follow up with faculty if there is evidence of non-compliance with the policy.

Adjunct faculty workshops. These were created specifically to introduce part-time teachers to strategies that would help them use their classroom time more effectively and aid students in reaching their goals. Two were held during the fall, the first focusing on strategies to help students with disabilities and the second offering faculty alternative teaching strategies to lecture. The latter resulted in a booklet of ideas distributed to all adjunct faculty via their campus mailboxes. Two additional workshops were held in the spring: "More Tech Tools for Your Teaching Toolbox" and "Behavioral Assessment Team Issues." According to the coordinating dean, the administration sought to improve access and relevance with each workshop offered. They polled adjunct faculty to determine the most convenient

times to hold these professional development activities and to identify the most useful topics. The coordinating dean further motivated attendance by offering participants food and giveaways. She reports witnessing increased attendance at each successive workshop.

Developmental advising activity. The last informal success initiative undertaken by administration in 2014-2015 was a developmental advising activity. Classes were cancelled for two days in the spring semester, and full-time faculty worked in shifts to discuss academic pathways with learners and to help them select classes for the next semester. Only full-time faculty received training for this process. Senior Adjunct Faculty were invited to “shadow” full-time faculty during advising days, but they did not directly advise students. The vice-president of academic affairs felt adjunct participation in this capacity was still productive, informing their efforts to informally advise students during classroom meetings throughout the year. He did expect to eventually have adjunct faculty play a more formal role in future advisement activities.

Findings and Analysis

In the previous section of this chapter, I provided a descriptive timeline of events associated with the college’s comprehensive student success initiative to provide a context for understanding this next section, which focuses on findings and analysis. The aforementioned actions and events are relevant because they served as potential points of contact between adjunct faculty and East Coast’s comprehensive student success initiative. As I analyzed the data from the survey, interviews, and classroom observations, two main themes and three sub-themes

emerged. The main themes are adjunct Composition I faculty are not part of the formal discussion about institutional change and adjunct Composition I faculty have a secure sense of professional identity. The three sub-themes of the second main theme are adjunct Composition I faculty prioritize the framework of their professional identity in making sense of the college's shift in mission; adjunct Composition I faculty are ambivalent about or resist the messages of change initiatives they perceive do not respect their professional identity; and adjunct Composition I faculty are receptive to messages from change initiatives they perceive to respect their professional identity.

Adjunct Composition I faculty are not part of the formal discussion about institutional change. Leadership on all levels of East Coast say they understand improved student success is dependent upon the work of faculty in the classroom. They are also aware the majority of their teachers is comprised of part-time employees, and for this reason some students may have more contact with contingent faculty than full-time faculty. As one dean notes:

[Adjunct faculty] pretty much are the face of the college for a lot of students. And so, the student may not even know whether this person is full-time or part-time. They don't know what the difference is because the man or woman is standing in front of them in class talking about something or other. So, obviously, [we] need to – as best we can do – have [adjunct faculty] buy into the idea that they are there to help students be successful.

The president of East Coast Community College reports, "Adjunct faculty are a critical group; they help us deliver the mission." He envisions their involvement as a collaborative process. He says:

Steps have been taken to inform [adjunct faculty about the comprehensive student success plan]. We've developed strategies and are expanding them.

Discussions have been held in meetings with adjunct faculty. Orientation is an example. I'm sure it's mentioned in department meetings. Adjunct faculty should be getting the same information as their full-time counterparts. They should be giving input on how a particular strategy is working and be able to tell us whether or not it is a good investment.

"Should be" is a key phrase in this passage. At the same time as leader-participants in this study discuss the significant role they expect teachers to play in helping students reach their goals, they admit they are unsure if part-time teachers truly understand their position in helping the college accomplish its aims in the context of the comprehensive student success plan. During our conversations, leader-participants qualified their doubts: poor infrastructure; uncertainty about adjunct commitment; inadequate supervision; and reservations about asking part-time teachers to invest more time in their employment than their salary justifies.

During an interview, one upper-level administrator reflected upon a need to create a better framework for communicating messages about institutional change for part-time teachers.

I don't know if we had enough of the structure in place to help [adjuncts] make that connection as much as we would like. You know, I know [a dean], to her credit, is trying to do more orientations for adjuncts, so as that formalizes, I think that will become more of an avenue to do that, but that's always the challenge, right? We try.

The dean overseeing adjunct Composition I faculty gave specific examples of ways the institution informs part-time instructors about performance expectations and change. He seems confident the message is made transparent to the adjunct faculty, and he places the onus on them to receive and understand it.

Well, certainly when they're hired, they're told what's expected.... I'd say it's [faculty development days, in-service workshops, orientation], and the more generic rather than specifically in terms of English or social science. It's kind

of like trying to impose the idea that we're all in it together for the benefit of the students, and that falls on receptive ears most of the time, but not always, I guess. One of the reasons you have student evaluations, one of the reasons you have observations, and so on, is to see what's going on there.

The dean's remarks point to his assumption that a teacher's non-compliance with the college's expectations that faculty will attend to improving student success will be caught through regular monitoring of employee performance; however, the literature about adjunct faculty and the data from this study show part-time teachers operate in a largely autonomous manner. Though contingent faculty may be informed about policies for carrying out their jobs at their hiring time and throughout their employment with East Coast, supervisors admit they have limited means for determining whether or not these teachers are meeting their professional obligations on a daily basis. Part of the problem may reside in the overabundance of part-time instructors reporting to one leader, making it impossible for him or her to carefully and regularly monitor every one. Until recently, the chain of command overseeing adjunct Composition I faculty at East Coast included a dean and a department chair, both having supervisory power. As the college entered into its comprehensive student success plan, it concurrently dispensed with the position of department chair and replaced that leader with a departmental coordinator. As one lower-level change agent observes:

I think there's less – “oversight's” such a harsh word – but there's less oversight now that we've gotten rid of department chairs, too, because it was difficult to observe all of the sections as it were, but now, our dean is dealing with several departments, hundreds of faculty, you know, however many... at least hundreds of sections, and it's just impossible to know what's going on in all of them.

Leaders rarely directly observe the classroom work of adjunct faculty; they often send proxies to carry out this duty – full-time or other adjunct faculty or the departmental coordinator. Formal observations are conducted when an adjunct Composition I faculty member is new or expresses interest in being promoted; otherwise, these teachers are observed on an “as needed” basis, meaning their classroom performance has generated enough criticism from students or colleagues to raise supervisory concern about the quality of their work. When there are no indicators of problems, adjunct Composition I faculty can work in the absence of interaction with their direct supervisor for several years at a time. There is little means for change agents to weigh whether or not part-time faculty are understanding institutional change movements, like the shift in mission toward emphasizing the college’s commitment to improving student success at East Coast and applying their understanding of change to their work.

The departmental coordinator lacks the authority to evaluate adjunct performance or to intervene in personnel matters, yet the coordinator is still a powerful leadership figure in the sense adjunct faculty have the most direct contact with this individual and seek resources and guidance from him or her. In addition to teaching four classes, the coordinator is an administrative assistant to the dean. Being the primary conduit of information to part-time teachers, he or she is largely responsible for carrying the intended messages about change and expected outcomes to the adjunct faculty. If the coordinator does not understand the intended message or is personally ambivalent about it or fearful about the implications of change in relationship to part-time employee service, this can interrupt the message

flow to adjunct faculty. One leader-participant in my study admitted this is something with which he grapples as a coordinator.

“Student success initiative” – that term throws me off a little bit because I don’t think I’ve told [part-time faculty], “We are on this initiative and all.” In terms of their role in a successful classroom, per se, you know, I think I try to make it as clear as possible, not only “these are the standards we have for our particular course,” but I try to keep them engaged in what we’re doing at the college. I mean, as much as possible, I think I try to keep the line of communication open to the adjuncts, which is difficult because they’re just sort of here and then they’re gone, but I like them to feel as involved as possible, I guess. So, even whenever we have a workshop, I will be the one who will forward out the information, any handouts that we received from a particular workshop or conference. I don’t know, though, how that translates into – I mean, for any of us – I don’t know how that translates into their classroom necessarily being more effective. I think it helps them to feel more valued if you keep them involved in the conversation that is being had at college, you know? And, so, I think that’s helpful ultimately because maybe they feel that they are part of what we are doing here, which they certainly are. The mentoring is the best I can do for the new faculty members we have, but otherwise they’re kind of on their own.

It is evident this coordinator is unclear regarding the connection between the bigger message about institutional change and the implications for classroom performance, even for himself. He is in compliance with administrative expectations by passing along information related to the comprehensive student success initiative to the adjunct faculty member. The lower-level leader says this act is “engaging” part-time teachers in an institutional dialogue and signaling they are important to the learning community, invited to be involved, but the conversation is clearly one-sided. The lower-level leader envisions the whole adjunct body as transient and possibly uncommitted beyond their teaching responsibilities. He says he is available for conversation and mentoring, but it appears he has not participated in discussion with adjunct Composition I teachers about improving

student success in relationship to their classroom work. There also seems to be an expectation on his part that the adjunct faculty member should initiate that conversation with him in response to the information he has provided.

At the time of data collection, there was no single, static repository adjunct faculty could visit to obtain complete information about the college's comprehensive student success plan. Much of the information about this movement was diffused to the college community through diverse sources – articles in the college newsletter, comments at a professional development or orientation event, and e-mail from a program coordinator. Adjunct faculty were invited to attend orientations, department meetings, and workshops at East Coast, but study participants admitted having limited ability to participate because the timing of these events conflict with their personal or professional commitments. Overall, adjuncts reported change agents provided few and random opportunities for them to receive information and engage in conversations about the college's comprehensive student success initiative.

Elizabeth views herself as an adjunct willing to do more than teach a class at the community college. She attends in-service, adjunct orientation, professional development opportunities, and is engaged with one of the college's formal student success initiatives, ALP. And while she does feel valued by some colleagues and area coordinators, she feels disconnected from upper-level leadership and ATD.

I think [ATD] is a nice umbrella.... The only thing is other than a couple years ago, when they introduced it at the faculty orientation... I've not heard much about it since then, but I haven't been to any other workshops or professional development [on that topic], and I don't even recall that they had any for adjuncts. I do think the communication between that program and adjuncts

needs to be tighter. We need to be more involved. Part of that, too, is up to the adjuncts themselves. For some, it's just "I come into class, and I leave." I wish there were better – I guess you could say communication? It just doesn't seem – the whole umbrella thing – it just doesn't seem as connected, at least to the adjuncts. I know that there are a lot of us, but I think [leadership] can see who the ones are who have stayed and continue.... I don't expect as an adjunct to be in touch with the upper echelon of the administration, and there's something to be said for flying under the radar, so to speak, but I think they could make more of an effort. I think they never should have done away with department chairs. That was a terrible move, I thought, because they just removed one link of that echelon.... I don't think the message [about the shift in mission] is real strong to the adjuncts.... I'm not sure they know what to do with us or how to reach us. I think they're trying with the adjunct [orientation] sessions, so the message is there: you don't want kids to be dropping out. You want to keep them.

Amelia is an adjunct frustrated by her disconnect from the college's comprehensive student success initiative. She says she learned about it by reading articles online. As a trained educational professional and long-term contingent faculty member, Amelia believes she has much to contribute to administrative understanding about how to make students successful, yet her talent remains untapped. Several survey respondents echoed Amelia's desire to be invited to contribute to the conversation about improving student success. One wrote, "I'd like to be thought of as a competent professional who has something to offer to improve the curriculum once in a while rather than as a semi-professional who has limited information." Another commented:

It is important that we "use" each other in regularly held meetings or communication on pedagogical matters and student learning issues. We should have enough talent and experience (as well as doubts and questions) to help each other professionally, without complaining about school policies or personnel, to do our vital work; i.e. helping students succeed.

Adjunct Composition I faculty were excluded from contributing to formal discussions about mission change and design of the comprehensive student success

plan. They did not hold membership on any ATD committees. Adjunct faculty were not included in the pilot stage of first-year student success initiatives like ALP. It was not until the second year of the college's comprehensive student success plan that a small percentage of adjunct faculty began to be directly included in efforts to improve student success at East Coast. Adjunct Composition I faculty view themselves as competent, knowledgeable professionals who have something to contribute to the conversation about how to improve student success; however, they do not feel enough is being done to include them or to acknowledge their expertise in terms of the shift in mission toward emphasizing the college's commitment to improving student success.

Adjunct Composition I faculty have a secure sense of teacher identity.

The majority of adjunct Composition I faculty in this study arrived at East Coast with their professional "teacher" identity intact. Most of the survey and interview participants completed a formal teacher preparation program, earned a state certification to teach or supervise in the public school system, and/or spent significant time teaching in a variety of settings, including parochial schools and other colleges (see Table 2). It is important to note the study participants draw upon multiple sources to form their identity as professional educator. It does not

Table 2

Participants' years of employment at the study site, degrees held, and certification status.

Participants	Years teaching at study site	Degree(s)	Category of teaching certificate
Survey Respondent K	Less than a year	Masters, English	No certificate
Lilly	1	Masters, Educational Leadership; Masters, Reading Specialist	P-3, K-5, 5-8, business, reading specialist, supervisor
Survey Respondent A	1-2	Masters, English	P-3, K-5, reading specialist, supervisor
Chloe	2	Masters, Library Science	K-8, English, library science
Ethan	3	Masters, Writing Arts	No certificate
Survey Respondent E	3-4	Masters, Instruction	Certificate of eligibility for advanced standing
Survey Respondent G	3-4	Masters, Creative Writing	No certificate
Survey Respondent H	3-4	Masters, English	Provisional middle and secondary English
Survey Respondent I	3-4	Masters, Education	Elementary, art, ESL
Survey Respondent L	3-4	Masters, Criminal Justice	K-5
Gabriella	5	Masters, Education	Unspecified certificate
Hannah	5	Masters, English Literature	No certificate
Survey Respondent B	5-6	Masters, English	No certificate
Survey Respondent C	5-6	Masters, English	Secondary English
Elizabeth	6	Masters, Library Media	K-5, media specialist
Survey Respondent P	7-8	Masters, Psychology of Reading	Secondary, reading specialist
Sophia	8	Masters, Education	K-5, ESL, art
Survey Respondent F	9-10	Masters, Educational Leadership	Elementary education, principal
Survey Respondent M	9-10	Masters, English	No certificate
Survey Respondent O	9-10	Masters, English	K-5, psychology
Amelia	10	Masters, Teaching; Masters, School Administration	K-5, principal
Benjamin	10	Masters, English	No certificate
Survey Respondent D	More than 10	Masters, English	English, social science, library science
Survey Respondent N	More than 10	MFA, Creative Writing	K-8, reading specialist, supervisor

exclusively stem from their work in the public school system, or their employment in the parochial school system, teaching at the primary or secondary or college level. The teacher's identity is an amalgam of a variety of trainings and experience.

Twelve of the 16 survey respondents possess at least one certificate that makes them eligible to work in a state public school system. Six of the interview participants hold certificates and have been employed in some instructional capacity within the public school system. Many of the participants have multiple certificates.

If an individual possesses a teaching certificate, this signals he or she has received some training in pedagogy or completed a formal teacher preparation program and passed a comprehensive test. In cases where an individual holding a certificate has been employed in the public school system, he or she has also been mentored, supervised, and evaluated on the job.

The study setting only requires post-secondary instructors to possess a master's degree in the appropriate discipline (e.g. English, literature, linguistics) in order to teach Composition I. None of the study participants hold degrees in andragogy or community college teaching; however, those who have successfully completed formal teacher training programs, are certified to teach in the public school system, and/or have been employed in the public school system believe the knowledge base and skill they have gained from these experiences are applicable and effective in the post-secondary classroom. Having this training and certification also gives them a sense of confidence and legitimacy they might otherwise be missing if they taught exclusively in the community college setting. These teachers

have few opportunities for meaningful interactions with peers or leaders either as a result of fate (the schedule of another work commitment conflicts with the timing of a college-offered professional development activity) or design (college policy dictates adjunct faculty are not permitted to attend a college governance meeting).

Amelia holds two master's degrees in education, a teaching certificate, and administrative licenses. At the time of our interview, she was employed as a literacy coach in the public school system. As we conversed, she indicated her formal training in education and experience as a public school educator were important to her work as a community college instructor, even though she has been teaching at the community college for ten years. She also believes adjunct colleagues lacking this training may not be very effective in the community college classroom.

I think that the training is pertinent because when you look at the different levels of people in the educational field – there are different avenues to get in – so, if you don't have that undergraduate or that graduate in teaching, you do not know the mechanics or the psychology behind education. You do not know the methodologies of teaching. You may not know scaffolding. You may not know the different ways to instruct. You may only have been taught that one way: to lecture and [the students] are supposed to receive. That's not how folks learn today, especially this generation. There is a multitude of ways that you have to look at your learners.... My opinion: some instructors come in from the [local business] and they come in from other places, and they may have the [subject expertise and professional experience], but they don't know how to teach. And that's a big divide.

Chloe is currently employed as a librarian at a public middle school. In addition to her librarian credential, she is certified to teach K-8 in the public school system. At the time of our interview, she had two years of teaching experience at the college level. Chloe admits her training is influential in her approach to community college students.

Being trained as a certified teacher helps with structure in the college classroom. Too many times we don't know how to structure that sort of classroom, how it should run, but everything I do in the middle school and at the high school, I do in the college. So, formative assessments, summative assessments all the way through; checking for understanding. There was just an e-mail that went out a couple days ago – I don't know who sent it – but it was a workshop on self-assessment, and I was thrilled because I already do that because the kids need to check their understanding throughout the course too. The one thing people need to remember is that college kids are still learning the same way they were K through 12. And I think – I always pictured a college classroom very philosophical, but it does actually need to be very structured.

The timing of the workshop Chloe references above conflicted with her work schedule as a public school librarian, precluding her participation; however, it is evident she believes she has mastered the topic and employs the practice in her classroom as a result of her earlier formal training. She believes the concept of self-assessment can be unilaterally applied to both public school students and post-secondary students. She does not anticipate a need to adjust the practice for different educational audiences. The workshop offering affirms for her the practice is applicable to post-secondary learners.

Chloe's identity as trained, experienced public school teacher surfaced again when she talked about making paper requirements clear to her community college students.

You have to make sure they understand what skills they're being asked to meet. If you give them an assignment, and you don't tell them what's expected of them, they don't really know what to give you, and that doesn't build confidence. So, I'll say things like, "Make sure you use six transition sentences and make sure you have two citations." Just the simple stuff, but they also have to underline it and bold it, and identify where they did it. It's sort of like the lower grades. With those objectives, they need to know what's expected of them.

It is evident Chloe sees the skills she learned to employ in teaching primary and middle school students as applicable in educating community college students.

Presently, Gabriella teaches exclusively at East Coast as an adjunct faculty member, but she has a master's degree in education, holds a teaching certificate, and was employed in the public school system for a lengthy period of time. During our interview, she talked about how her professional training as a teacher and simultaneous employment in the public school system contributed to the construction of her identity as an educator.

So, everything we did in the master's program classroom, we had to take back to our classrooms, and I was teaching sixth grade English at the time. Part of the time, I was teaching sixth grade English and part of the time, I was teaching at an alternative school that was for students that had dropped out, left, got kicked out or whatever. That was definitely – to me, that made me. That really did make me because I had to apply everything I learned immediately in the classroom, reflect on it, write about it, and bring it back to [the graduate] class the next week.

As our conversation proceeded, it was evident Gabriella's earlier experiences as a public school teacher shaded her understanding of how to teach community college learners. For example, I noticed during my observation of her class meeting that she had students maintaining notebooks. I asked her about this practice, and she framed her response in the context of her former employment.

When I do check their notebooks, I'm going really fast to just look for evidence of critical thinking. I think, for the most part, we're dealing with – at least recent generations, they grew up so much with teaching to the test. They're almost like shocked when I want to know what they think about anything. That is so crazy to me, but I know where that's coming from because I was in that kind of environment, and I had some principals that were like, "Yes, you have to teach to the test. I'm sorry. We have to get our scores up or they were going to shut our schools down." I had other principals who were like, "Look, I know you care about these kids, and you know what they need. Close the door, teach whatever you want to teach and

however you want to teach it, teach it to them. As long as they are learning. And I'll let you know when the folks are coming from the board of ed. or wherever to see you, and then we have to make sure you are at the right part of the curriculum or the testing." So, I just think it's real important that [college students] realize their experiences are valued and their opinions are valued and their thoughts are valued.

Lilly holds master's degrees in reading education and educational leadership. She possesses multiple teaching certificates that qualify her to instruct courses, pre-K through twelfth grade. She is currently employed as a reading specialist and literacy coordinator at a special education school. She is pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership. As we spoke, it was evident Lilly's graduate training in education has influenced her identity as teacher in the community college classroom.

I think my study in common core has definitely [influenced my design of] the Composition I and Composition II classes because I know what [students] need to know when they get here. I know what the common core says inside and out because I did my research study on common core, so what they need to know and what we are teaching them in sixth, eighth, and twelfth grade and how it [relates to] the college level courses.

Additionally, Lilly is using class time in Composition I to connect students to the school through social media and to teach them how to use these tools in a responsible and transformative manner. This idea originated from a residency she recently completed for her graduate studies in educational leadership; it is not part of the goals and objectives of the Composition I course syllabus.

Unlike the participants in my recent discussion, three of the interview participants and four of the survey respondents have not completed formal teaching preparation programs, nor do they hold teaching certificates or degrees in education or instruction. The interview participants report they have on-the-job experience

that helps them to identify as experienced teachers. I had insufficient data to be able to draw a similar conclusion about survey respondents falling into this category. One of the interview participants holds a master's degree in English, one holds a master's degree in writing arts, and the third holds a master's degree in English Literature. Two of this cohort were employed by parochial schools for a length of time in addition to teaching as adjunct English faculty at colleges. The third taught classes at several community colleges in addition to the study site since attaining his graduate degree.

Hannah, who was a teacher at both a Catholic university and several Catholic high schools, reports her experiences in these settings made her the kind of community college teacher who respects the individuality of her learners and constructs lessons to meet their individual needs.

I think it's because I worked in places that were religious about being connected to the kids, like emotionally, and understanding their problems was par for the course for us. At [the Catholic university] I taught in the EOF program, which is kind of like ALP, so in addition to our classes, I worked in the writing lab as a one-on-one tutor with a lot of these kids because a lot had language barrier issues, just economically crippling, horrible situations at home. We had [a tragic accident], and I lost three of my students, and we had to deal with – there was like grief counseling, and if you weren't plugged in to that, if you were not a human being as a teacher for them, those kids were going to quit school. I mean, how do you hang on in school when you go through that? So, having my finger on the pulse of the human side and the EQ side of that got me through as well.... Again, working at those schools, dealing with people one-on-one, like people were not just numbers, it was really important.

Benjamin, who was both a teacher and an administrator in a Catholic high school for nearly forty years, talked about how one of his earliest experiences on the job forced him to refine his teacher identity.

I learned, you know, at the end of my first year of teaching, and I had the lowest track level senior class. They never gave me any trouble whatsoever. And I asked them in the end – there were just a couple boys who were leaving – and I said, “You know, you never gave me any trouble.” (Those classes gave a lot of teachers a lot of trouble.) And I said, “Why?” And here’s the response, but I learned from this response: “Well, you were very, very tall; you were very, very skinny,” (And I was. Thirty pounds skinner than I am now. I am slender now, but I was skinny. I was a runner.) “And we didn’t know what you were talking about. So, we kind of made a pact among ourselves to just leave him alone.” Then, I examined what I was talking about, and I remember one whole section. I was talking about the theocracy of New England and Jonathan Edwards, and I was imitating college teachers’ stuff, and when they said, “We didn’t know what you were talking about,” that had a big impact on me, that I better learn how to do this a little differently.

Considering the comments of the aforementioned faculty, there are advantages to having a part-time faculty member arrive in the community college classroom with a clear sense of teacher identity. They have a basis of experience and knowledge that allows them to enter the classroom with confidence and authority. They have the resources to immediately construct an effective learning community. They may already understand the need to diversify teaching techniques, and they can anticipate student weaknesses and formulate strategies to address them.

At the same time, a strong sense of teacher identity may cause an instructor to self-isolate, especially if the individual believes his or her ability is greater than that of less-experienced or untrained colleagues. For ten months out of the year, Amelia is employed as a reading specialist in the public school system, and she has taught three college writing classes per semester for a period of ten years. She admits her extensive training and classroom experience makes her less likely to engage in professional development activities sponsored by the college because she views them as rudimentary in the context of her index of knowledge and experience.

For example, when I asked her if she attended a recent campus workshop on behavioral management, she responded:

I've had so much training in classroom behavior management. One of my papers for my master's – I've been there, and I'm not saying I don't need to grow, because there could be new methods, but I read a lot and I talk in social circles with friends of mine [in another part of the state], and they'll say, "Try this. Have you tried this with a struggling reader? Have you tried that?" And currently being involved with [a graduate training program in another state] – because the district is paying for it – they're teaching us with different levels of information and growth and different things we can use to motivate our students and teach them how to become better writers and better thinkers and better readers.

The unfortunate aspect of Amelia's decision to exclude herself from the college-sponsored professional development activities is that these events can be important points of exchange for both teachers and leaders within the institution. This was illustrated during my conversation with Lilly. Despite her extensive training in education, Lilly opted to attend the behavior management workshop. She had only been teaching at the college for a year, and she was driven by curiosity to attend because she had not encountered behavioral issues in her college-level classes and was interested in learning about the kinds of problems her colleagues were facing. Though she reported the workshop proved to be interesting, the most valuable aspect of the experience was the informal exchange that occurred among the adjunct faculty at breaks in the workshop.

In speaking with the other adjuncts in the room, we were talking about – because this summer will be the first time I'll be teaching [the upper-level developmental English course]; I've always taught 101 or 102 – and I said, "Oh, you teach [the upper-level developmental English course]? What do you feel?" And what they revealed to me is, "I would like to know what [developmental students] need to know in Comp. I and what they need to know in Comp. II." And we started discussing, and another gentleman was beside me, and he's computer science. He's actually a retired pilot. He said,

“I’m going to be honest with you. I know nothing about education. I know nothing about the laws.”

Lilly said she and several other public school teachers were able to answer the questions of the computer science faculty member and to inform him about laws, but what is important to note about this is the professional development gathering facilitated unintended connections and informal exchange that benefited a variety of instructors. Teachers of lower-level English classes gained information about upper-level English classes and vice-versa. An educator in a different discipline gained a better understanding of the kind of preparation his students were receiving in public schools before they attended college.

Adjunct Composition I faculty in this study arrived at the institution with their teacher identity intact as a result of their formal educational training and/or their experience being employed in various educational settings. Their teacher identity informs their practice in the Composition I classroom and gives them confidence in carrying out their responsibilities, despite their lack of interaction with teaching colleagues or institutional leaders at the community college. There is a risk, however, that an adjunct Composition I faculty member may feel so confident in his or her teacher identity that he or she may self-isolate from other instructors and avoid professional development activities or social events. This constricts his or her opportunity to become familiar with the institution’s culture, to engage in idea exchange with other teachers, and to serve as mentors to less-experienced colleagues.

The adjunct Composition I faculty member's teacher identity and how it is received within the community college setting plays a powerful role in shaping the teacher's sensemaking process in understanding how to make learners successful. This is documented in the following sub-themes of the second main theme of my study.

Adjunct Composition I faculty prioritize the framework of their teacher identity in making sense of the college's shift in mission. Survey respondents and interview participants unanimously agreed the Composition I instructor has a responsibility for helping community college students succeed, but the majority report this value is not stemming from or influenced by formal student success initiatives at the study site or at a remote educational site where they teach. Twelve of the 16 survey respondents were aware of the college's membership in ATD, and seven said the college's association with this organization had increased their concern for student success; still, the majority indicate the college's membership in ATD did not inspire them to alter their practice. They believe their work is always geared toward improving student retention and progress. One survey respondent noted, "I believe I have been passionately concerned about student success in my work all of my teaching career." Another wrote, "I have not altered my teaching practices. I love teaching my students, caring about my students' learning, and helping each to reach his/her finish line." A third commented, "My teaching has always been designed for success; it would exist whether dreams were part of the latest buzz or not."

Only one survey respondent reported altering his teaching based on involvement in the formal ATD initiative ALP:

As an ALP and 101 instructor, part of my curriculum is geared toward career exploration and defining personal values. We integrate this into our essay-writing practices and readings. When students connect their future to what they are doing in class, they are happier and more motivated.

In determining practices they must adopt to make entry-level undergraduate students successful, adjunct Composition I faculty members indicate they are most influenced by conversations with students, their personal experience as learners, classroom trial and error, and their formal training as teachers. They are more moderately influenced by articles they read in professional journals and popular periodicals, the standardized texts and materials for Composition I, and informal conversations they have with teaching colleagues at colleges other than East Coast. Conversations and meetings with colleagues at East Coast and leadership figures at any college are identified as less impactful (See Table 3).

When asked to define student success, survey respondents were split in framing the term. Some focused specifically on the learner's long-term goals. For example, one survey participant described it as students "defining a goal that meets their interests and abilities and working toward it." In this case, success is viewed as a construct customized to fit the needs and interests of the learners; at the same time, it has a clear end point in the future. Another respondent defined success as the students "passing their classes and completing their college education." This thinking is more in line with the national completion agenda, where students progress through a prescribed sequence of steps in order to earn a credential or

transfer to a four-year college. A third survey participant considered students successful if they became “lifelong learners,” which speaks to the idea of college being the place where students acquire the tools to become independent learners external to the institution.

Other survey participants discussed student achievement in the context of the Composition I course. One views it as a rigid process, where student success occurs when “a student meets the goals and learning objectives of a class.” Presumably, this is the only way the student can pass the class. Another teacher recognizes a cause-effect relationship between students gaining a sense of independence and responsibility for their learning and reaching course outcomes. He writes that student success occurs “when they understand they have to take a proactive role and responsibility in their course work and they do so. If they do that, they can fulfill the academic requirements of the class.”

Another participant is less concerned with course goals and outcomes, only expecting to see some evidence of improvement in skill between the student’s entrance into and exit from the classroom. She wrote a learner can be considered successful when “the student has more power of language when he or she leaves my classroom than when he or she came into the classroom. “

One participant gave a definition that acknowledged the need for students to pay attention to both immediate and future expectations in reaching success. According to this individual, it involves “students setting and maintaining (or updating) their short-term (semester basis) and long-term (graduation, transfer) academic goals.”

Table 3

The degree to which various factors shape survey participants' understanding of how to help students succeed.

Influential factors in adjunct Composition I faculty understanding of how to make students succeed	Great or Moderate Influence	Minimal or No Influence	Not applicable
Conversations with students	16	0	0
Classroom trial and error	16	0	0
The adjunct's personal experience as a student	15	1	0
Articles from professional journals	14	2	0
The adjunct's formal training as a teacher	12	3	0
The standardized texts and materials of Composition I	12	4	0
Articles from popular periodicals	11	4	0
Informal conversations with teaching colleagues at a college other than East Coast	9	7	0
Training to teach ALP	4	3	9
Informal conversations with leadership figures at East Coast	4	10	2
Formal meetings with teaching colleagues at East Coast	4	9	3
Formal meetings with leadership figures at a college other than East Coast	3	7	6
Formal meetings with leadership figures at East Coast	2	10	4

Note: N=16

Whether study participants discuss student success in the context of long-term or short-term goals, they all agree learners in the community college setting do not pursue a common goal. While a few mention graduation or passing a class as signs of student success, more often study participants talk about helping learners achieve their unique goals at an individual pace. Ethan says he believes the college desires “the best for their students, and they want their students to be able to achieve their goals.” The key to note here is Ethan’s reference to “their goals,” meaning those determined by the learners. Sophia echoes this when she identifies student success as a twofold process: “Students need to identify their goals, and then they need to find the tools to achieve them.”

Hannah understands the traditional measures of student success are not applicable to all of her learners, so she has adjusted her long-term expectations to them.

I have a couple of kids who are battling addictions, who – that’s like prevalent here – who I said to my husband, “They might not end up at Harvard.” And my husband, [he’s in law enforcement], he says, “They’re not dead.” And I’m like, “Exactly.” You know, for some kids their bar is making it through the semester. You know, maybe they’re not thinking, yet, [local university]. Maybe they’re not thinking, “I’m gonna move [out of the area and attend a university there].” Maybe they’re just trying to get a job. You know? We need to get every person to their stop, not just the four-year people.

There are a number of research-based best practices instructors can undertake to enhance the classroom learning environment and help community college students reach their goals. These include creating opportunities for regular student-teacher interaction; making high expectations clear; employing active and collaborative learning strategies; and providing students with frequent, prompt, and useful feedback. During the course of my study, I found ample evidence adjunct Composition I faculty were integrating these beneficial practices in their teaching; however, their decision to adopt these pedagogical approaches stems more from their teacher’s identity which tells them it is their responsibility to make students successful than from the college’s shift in mission to emphasize the institution’s commitment to improving student success.

Teacher-student interaction. There are two ways in which teachers can be considered available to learners. First, they must be physically reachable, and second, they must project an attitude that welcomes student approach (See Table 4). The literature about adjunct faculty reports they tend to be transient employees.

Table 4

Coding process for determining how study participants facilitate student-teacher interaction.

Theme	Sub-themes	Key terms	Survey evidence	Interview evidence	Observation evidence	Document evidence
Student-teacher interaction	Physically reachable	Accessible, after class, approachable, available, before class, call, contact, conference, e-mail, learning management software (LMS), meet, outside, office hours, social media, telephone, text message.	Primarily make themselves available outside of class via e-mail (94%), in the classroom before and after the meeting (88%), and through learning management software (50%). Available via telephone or e-mail (J, N, P) Doesn't hold office hours, but is available to students before and after class (E, J, N, O)	Doesn't hold office hours, but is available to students before and after class (Amelia, Ethan, Gabriella, Lilly). Communicates through LMS (Ethan, Gabriella, Hannah, Lilly). Available through telephone (Chloe) Available through e-mail (Amelia, Chloe) Available through text message (Amelia, Chloe, Lilly) Available through social media (Lilly)	Providing guidance and answering questions from students before and after class meeting (Amelia, Benjamin, Chloe, Elizabeth, Ethan, Gabriella, Hannah, Lilly, Sophia). Teacher announces availability for a meeting outside of class (Elizabeth, Lilly, Sophia).	Contact information clearly marked on syllabus; school-issued e-mail and telephone number (Amelia, Benjamin, Chloe, Elizabeth, Ethan, Gabriella, Hannah, Lilly, Sophia).
	Project an accessible attitude	Become familiar, care, compassionate, concern, encouraging, eye-contact, friendly, kind, interested, invested, open, mentoring, positive, respectful, warm.	Becomes familiar with students (J, P) Concerned for student welfare (D, F, P)	Becomes familiar with students (Amelia, Hannah, Lilly, Sophia) Boosts self-esteem and confidence (Amelia, Benjamin, Chloe, Gabriella, Lilly) Concerned for student welfare (Amelia, Hannah)	Knows students' names, makes eye contact, shows concern for dignity, uses humor appropriately, patient, employs an appropriate wait time following questions, receptive to questions, willing to help (Amelia, Benjamin, Chloe, Elizabeth, Ethan, Gabriella, Hannah, Lilly, Sophia).	

Their presence on campus is typically limited to their classroom meetings; they are not mandated to hold office hours. Despite the fact adjunct Composition I faculty are not required to hold office hours and leaders do not anticipate they will meet with students beyond the class session, the study data shows adjunct Composition I faculty are available to their students outside of class meetings and campus settings.

Survey respondents indicate they are most likely to “meet” with students through e-mail or for a few minutes before or after class meetings. The two prominent reasons survey participants report interacting with students external to class are to answer questions about an upcoming assignment or to provide help with editing and revising a paper. One survey respondent reported:

I try to arrive at least 30 minutes prior (if not an hour) before class time to meet with student(s). I also stay after class to assist students. Most of our students need extra support and the extra time provided is non-negotiable for me. It is my duty to provide.

Most of the interview participants were also aware of the need to be available to learners outside of class, and they give what they can within the constraints of their other obligations. Gabriella reports:

I do try to take time with students. I think that’s really important for some of them. They just really need me to take some extra time, and it’s usually after class. I don’t have – a lot of times – a lot of time after class, but I do try. I don’t have office hours, but I will take time or ask them if they want to meet.

The study participants report giving students their personal phone numbers and inviting them to call or text between class meetings. Teachers are also available to learners via e-mail.

For many of the study participants, interacting with learners is key to retaining them. They report purposely building relationships and intervening when

students are at risk of failing a class or dropping out of college. After many years as a public school teacher, ten years as a community college instructor and a lifetime of living in the city where she teaches, Amelia is confident she has a good grasp of the roadblocks that keep her community college learners from moving toward their goals and the kind of encouragement she must supply through her teaching in order to retain students and help them be successful.

Most of our students have been shut out, left out, put on the sideline. Bad marriages. A lot of children, and now they discover it wasn't the best thing or the right choice. I keep saying, "You were young and stupid. We're all young and stupid." I said, "And now, as you approach forty, I don't want to hear this." So, they have been left out, and no one has taken them back in. So, I always try to make their day a little bit better. Do you know what I mean? Because when I read some of these essays – the first one is narrative/descriptive – I'm ready to cry. And I look at what they've been through, and it's like, "How do you not help a human being? How do you not?"

Through interactions with her students, Amelia has come to understand the variety of difficulties they face. Composition I faculty at East Coast are in the unique position of learning about the personal lives and challenges of their learners because approximately half of the writing assignments for the class invite students to draw upon their own experiences for the content of their work. They might tell personal stories or make connections between assigned readings and their lived experience.

Having this knowledge about her students, Amelia helps them to frame mistakes as something in the past and to view the future as a blank slate, an opportunity to change and progress. She actively seeks to boost their sense of self-esteem because she realizes a positive sense of self is likely to result in better

academic performance. Amelia presents herself as both a mentor and a source of support to her learners.

I mean, I've been there. You know what I mean? And I've listened; I think that's one of the things: I listen and I help. If they tell me they need employment, I hear something, I tell them. I'll say, "Guess what? I went to my doctor, and my doctor said, 'Anyone in here have a medical background?'" And I will make sure I will provide that. If it's a drug problem, I'll send them to the community places that I know about and give them a name. So, I help them. I'm more than their instructor of knowledge. I try to make them cognizant of things going on around them and how I can help them to make it better because I'm a little older or I've been in the community for a long time.

Hannah's philosophy about treating students with compassion is similar to Amelia's. During our conversation, she remembered an experience she had as an undergraduate student that informs her behavior as a community college teacher.

My freshman year of college, my spring semester, my mother passed away very suddenly, very tragically, and I missed two French classes, and I went in and – I know, I know on this end of the desk how people throw excuses at you all of the time – but I had a teacher, she was from France, and I came in and I said, "My mother passed away," and she said, "Well, you still missed two classes, so your grade is dropping." And at that point, I didn't even think – that semester, I didn't exactly argue my grades with anybody. I'm pretty easygoing anyway. I was just, "Okay, it's a 'B.'" As long as I got to hold my scholarship, I didn't mind, but I remembered thinking, "You can't be like that; you have to be a human being, especially at a community college." These kids have so much going on. They're not as insulated as four-year students are. They don't live in a dorm, they don't have a meal plan, they all have at least two jobs, so I've tried to learn what's going on with them as individuals while I'm teaching them. I try to be a human being.

Like Hannah and Amelia, Sophia also subscribes to the practice of "getting to know" her students as part of her effort to connect with them, serve them and retain them.

We start the very first day with a survey – how many hours do you work? You know? Do you care for people, like are you a caregiver for anybody in your home? How many classes are you taking? You know, what are your goals? And then their first writing is about their ideal day in their ideal job in

a perfect world, and they have to be descriptive. It has a lot of levels to it, but just kind of gets me to know them better. I think it's a good start because then, when I see things along the way I'll think, "Oh, so-and-so would like this because they're interested in this, and then I can tell them"; whereas, if I hadn't done that, we wouldn't have that relationship. I think the relationship is really big. So, that's what I'm always working for.... I think Comp. 1 is a really great place to start because everyone has to take it. You know, we're in a really unique position to not only welcome them to the school, make them feel like this is part of their home, but to let them know somebody is going to help them. Somebody cares about whether they finish or whether they reach their goals.

Similar to Sophia, Chloe aims to help students understand the role she can play in their success by staying in contact with her about concerns and problems.

When I start the class, the two things I tell them are, number one, you always need to tell me when there's an issue with you or with me, and if you don't feel comfortable coming to me, to go to the [dean]. They need to know their voice is heard. It's definitely heard at the college. The second thing I tell them is, "If you're having a life issue, you need to communicate that to me too so we can work that out." They need to know that I'm not there just as a professor but also as a mentor. I have students call me up all the time, saying, "I'm going through x, y and z. What can I do to succeed in this class?" And if they don't communicate that to me, that's on them, but I strive to make them feel comfortable communicating that.

Several of the interview participants told stories about how the relationships they cultivated with students contributed to their ability to intervene when a learner faced circumstances that might put their enrollment in jeopardy. For example, Lilly reports her students find her approachable because she appears to be close to their age and they are impressed she has already been successful obtaining degrees while balancing work and family commitments. Lilly tells the story of how her approachability and willingness to help a learner may have resulted in his retention at the study site.

I had one student last semester. He said, "You know what? I'm taking the next semester off. I'm going to Miami to bartend." And I said, "Well, that's great." I

said, "You're young. That's great to do, but you need to stay in school because if you don't, it's going to take you six/seven years to finish. And you want to get done. You want to have that degree because you don't want to be twenty-four/twenty-five and still waiting to finish your college degree...." He didn't know the online courses existed for [this college]. So, giving him that advice, "You know, you can do this online. You can still go to Miami and take courses." "I can?" "Absolutely." And we opened the [tabloid], and it was late one night. It was in December... and it did open his eyes.

Study participants interacted with students during the observed class meetings. Adjunct Composition I faculty called students by name, spoke to them in a courteous tone, and treated them with concern for their dignity. In every case, it was evident learners felt comfortable approaching the professor with questions, comments or concerns. Interactions between the students and professors were cordial in tone, and their work together was proactive.

A number of interview participants remark one means of making students successful is building their confidence and cultivating their independence, and this is achieved through regular interaction. Lilly observes students enter her gateway course with insecurities about their abilities.

They're not confident in their writing and reading and their abilities to analyze text, but what we find out by the end of Composition I is that they had more in them than they believed.... Some of my best writers have come back to me and said, "Thank you for giving me that confidence," and when they get that first paper back, they're surprised at themselves. Where, "Wow! I really did get a 90?" "Yes, you're a good writer." Again, I go back with confidence.

Gabriella has had a similar experience with her students.

They come in a lot of time very unsure of themselves, and so, in class, even if...my initial assessment is a "C" student. Maybe they only get to a "C+," but they feel more comfortable about "Yes, I can write, and I can write an essay, and I can write a pretty good essay." Even that. The more success they have with little steps, I think, is what gives them the confidence that they can succeed in other areas.

For Benjamin, student success is completely dependent upon a teacher's ability to cultivate a student's sense of confidence. His perspective about this was shaped by his own experience as an undergraduate student. He recalls the profound effect a professor's compliment had on his performance as a student:

[He] said, "You really write well." I never thought particularly that I did, but it was a real starting point for me to have more confidence in myself as a writer. I mean, I wanted to prove that I always wrote well.

Adjunct Composition I faculty embrace the practice of interacting with students. Though they may not be readily available on campus between class meetings, they can be reached by learners through e-mail, text messaging, and telephone. These teachers strive to know their learners and will intervene when they sense a student is at risk of putting his or her enrollment in jeopardy. The interview participants mentioned encouragement and positive reinforcement as important aspects of boosting student confidence.

Clearly stated high expectations. Data from survey, participant interviews, and classroom observation confirm adjunct Composition I faculty use a multitude of means to communicate course expectations to students (See Table 5). Survey respondents and interview participants indicated distribution and review of the syllabus at the beginning of the semester was the most popular means of communicating course expectations to students.

Table 5

Methods adjunct Composition I faculty use to inform students about performance expectations.

Methods	Percentage of Survey Respondents
Distribution and review of syllabus at the start of the semester.	100%
Written directions for assignments.	94%
Written feedback on graded assignments.	94%
Modeling/Samples of good work.	81%
Grading rubrics for assignments.	81%
Individual conferences with students.	75%

Note: N=16

The English Department at East Coast requires Composition I adjunct faculty to employ a departmentally developed core syllabus that includes course goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. Course requirements, the formula for determining the weighted average of assignments in tabulating the final grade, and a rubric for scoring essays are also specified in the document. Adjunct Composition I faculty have the freedom to set attendance and late work/make-up work policies and are directed to insert those policies into the standard syllabus before the document is made available to students at the start of the semester. Faculty are given complete freedom in developing their assignment schedules.

Those who teach classes on campus will distribute a paper copy of the syllabus and assignment schedule to learners during the first class meeting, but many will also make this information accessible through the college's learning management system. Survey and interview participants identified training in the college's learning management system as the college-sponsored professional development activity that most influenced their efforts to help Composition I

students succeed. Since half of the survey respondents indicate the learning management system permits them to remain in touch with students outside of traditional class meetings and several of the interview participants indicate it is a means of connecting students to course expectations, it is evident these teachers believe communication of course expectations is significant to making learners successful. Ethan says:

The importance of having announcements and having the schedule online is so that students can see what it is that they are expected to accomplish, and an outline of what goals they are told to achieve, so that they can stay on top of them in case they miss a class. They don't have to worry about reaching out as much because they have a list of what was expected of them and what will be coming up to be due.

The list of support strategies participants report employing to ensure students understand their expectations emphasizes the importance they place on demonstration and communications. Several mentioned modeling expectations. Half of the survey participants said they reinforced expectations through written feedback on assignments and oral feedback in one-on-one conferences or during full-class discussion. Chloe indicated a teacher must repeatedly send the message about expectations to ensure learners hear it and understand it.

It's better to over-communicate and have them roll their eyes at you than assuming that they know what's going on. If I e-mail a syllabus, I print it, and I e-mail it again. I think I e-mail my students eight or nine times a week, and I make sure I repeat what I've said through e-mail – what I've said in class. They forget, they have a lot going on, so that's one thing: over-communication is really important.

Several of the interview participants talked about the significance of holding students to high expectations. Elizabeth relayed information about her effort to help Composition I students in a particular course section improve their analytic writing

skills. Though she observed they were meeting the basic essay writing requirements of the course, she was compelled to encourage them to do better.

I have a lot of good writers, and they're doing everything I've asked for. They're integrating quotes, they're citing properly, they know how to write a thesis statement, they know how to support it, you know? They're doing a lot of everything I ask for. What I've found is some of them are struggling to write three-to-four pages. Some of them are repetitive, and I tell them, "When you are in either situation, it's because you haven't looked deep enough into the text. You haven't thought enough about it. You haven't used enough examples." So, that's an example of how I kind of switched gears because that's what they need. I have a class of good writers who need it, and the other class – they need a lot. That will help them too, I think. I mean, I don't want to dumb it down just because they are struggling writers, you know? I tell them, "My expectations are high for you!" And I feel like it's good for them to stretch.

Gabriella said her practice of holding students to high expectations has given her a reputation among learners as the teacher who shows "tough love."

It's funny how I get some students, and they're like, "My friend – so and so – told me that I should take you. He or she really enjoyed being in your class, but I heard you're going to really work us hard." I think that's part of it. It's just like – for a lot of them, that's just what they need. I'm making them work hard, but the fact that they are rising to the occasion – then now, you've done it, so you don't have any excuse to say you haven't done it or you can't do it because of this – you had the job, you had the kid, you had this, this, this, all this other stuff going on.

Adjunct Composition I faculty not only set expectations for coursework, but they also establish expectations for appropriate classroom behavior. Amelia explains:

I would never have a student do this [*lays her head on the table*] in my class. Unacceptable. "You sit up. If you're unprepared to learn, you need to leave." They're not allowed to text in my class. You take a text break, a Pepsi break, but you need to leave the class. If you have a sick family member – but I explain all of this – then you give me the "heads up" that you need to text back and forth to check on this, or you just have to excuse yourself. You know what I mean? It's setting the society of the classroom because the classroom is a duplication of society, right?

Similarly concerned about student behavior, Hannah told a story of how she intervened when she learned a student had a conflict with his teacher in another class.

[He] almost got into an altercation with one of his teachers, and I said, “Well, how did that happen? You’re completely polite and respectful in my class. Like, now, I’m embarrassed because you’re one of my kids. Like, what happened?” And he said, “He got in my face because I had my phone out.” And I said, “You shouldn’t be staring at your phone while someone’s teaching, and that’s something you’ll learn going to college. Like, how to be an adult, how to be a human being. Like, how you’re supposed to behave. A lot of these – and I say “kids” – kids don’t know yet.

Classroom observations fortified what I learned through the survey and interview data. Teachers expressed course expectations in diverse ways. They communicated clear rules for completing a quiz or a collaborative assignment. For example, Chloe posted directions for engaging in a group project on a monitor at the front of the class and provided student groups with a rubric she would employ to score their assignment when it was finished. Teachers circulated among students as they worked independently or collaboratively and intervened to reiterate expectations for learners. For example, as Lilly’s students were working cooperatively on draft paragraphs, she reminded them to fortify opinion with evidence. Amelia talked about the importance of this practice during our interview.

Even when I have them working in groups of threes – triads – or quads, and I walk around, and I’m listening, and I say, “Guys, I just have to say something.” And they say, “We knew you would, so let’s go!” And then I’ll jump in and say, “I just don’t want you to go down that road if it’s not the right road” or “Just expand on what you’re saying about the author’s [writing] – is he writing to inform? Is he writing to persuade? Then, give me the rationale and show me in the paragraph. If he’s writing to persuade, tell me why you believe that or show me where ethos is.”

Some modeled their expectations. For instance, Elizabeth attempted to demonstrate good essay writing by sharing a learner's exemplary paper with the class and working with the students to identify the essay's strengths.

Understanding the special challenges students face and desiring to help them succeed, a number of the study participants admitted they will sometimes compromise class policy and give students an extension on the official deadline of an assignment in order to complete it. At the same time, they made it clear they do not compromise their standards or the quality of a student's learning experience in doing this. For example, Elizabeth told a story about an older student for whom she made concessions in the interest of retaining her.

You know, one woman was telling me – and she's a really good student – but sometimes she needs extended time. She has two sons, she works, and she's going to school. She works at a nursing home. I think she wants to be a nurse. She will work double shifts to make the rent, and during those times of the month, between her and I, I have given her extended time because she's an excellent student. And she said, "If I don't have it, I will drop out because putting a roof over my kid's head is number one," and I totally get that, and so, I am able to do that, and she comes through with quality work.

During our conversation about this learner, Elizabeth reiterated the fact the student delivered "quality work." Gabriella also mentioned she makes concessions about course policies in the interest of retaining students.

My syllabus says no late work and no make ups, but I break that rule every time. I think if I start out that way, it is a good rule of thumb. So, it's on the syllabus – no make ups, no late, but you know, I do allow some flexibility because I think for the most part the population that I've seen here is – they wanted a college education or college degree, but they didn't know how, or they weren't sure how, or they tried years ago, or they just realized that college is important, that they want to move themselves up socioeconomically. So, I just think too much rigidity will scare them away.

While Amelia admits to exercising some give and take about class policies in the interest of helping her learners reach their goals, she maintains high expectations for the quality of their work.

If they text me to say the paper is going to be late, like I had a few of those today, I say, "Don't worry about it; we'll talk about it. Submit it as soon as possible." I try to work with people because they are people here at the community college for a reason. So, I understand the population. I think some of us are missing that piece, that we need to demonstrate more empathy, and I'm not saying give anyone anything. My students will tell you I make them earn everything, but when they leave my class, they got it. So, I make them earn it, but I have a compassion inside. I understand they are human beings and they're going through things.

Active and collaborative learning activities. The majority of study participants mentioned the importance of including active learning and collaborative learning activities in their classes. In survey responses, adjunct faculty still identified lecture as the mode of delivery they employed the most. All respondents said they used lecture either every meeting or almost every meeting. The second most popular classroom activity was large-group discussion. In addition to large group discussion, respondents reported using other types of collaborative and active learning strategies throughout the semester: small group projects, case studies, role playing, peer editing, games, and service learning.

Reviewing these survey responses alone, one might envision Composition I classes where the majority of meetings feature a teacher as "the sage on the stage"; however, both interviews with the study participants and observations of their classes reveal a very different picture. Instructors made their commitment to active and collaborative learning very clear through their words and their actions.

Hannah knows from her student population that straight lecture is not an effective mode of delivery.

I've had students who have dropped classes because they have teachers who are old school and just lecture, just talk for like an hour and forty-five minutes and don't even make eye contact.

Amelia admits she relied heavily upon lecture earlier in her career, but she has worked to make her classes more active in current years. Recently, she introduced a "fishbowl technique" I witnessed during a classroom visit. The "fishbowl" requires a handful of learners to gather at the center of the classroom, in full view of their peers, and initiate a discussion about an assigned reading. In some iterations of this exercise, membership in the fishbowl evolves, with participants exiting and entering at will. Limited by time and classroom logistics, Amelia allows the conversation to spread from the focus of the fishbowl to the rest of the class participants. In the observed class meeting, the fishbowl constituency initiated the discussion and sustained it until every member had contributed. Eventually, virtually every member of the class made some contribution to the discussion.

Many of the interview participants reported having learners regularly engage in group work. During our interview, Hannah talked about the importance of including group work in her classes. She explains:

Not group work in the traditional sense because when I say "the traditional sense," I always think of one person doing everything. Group work in that every single person needs to write up the role that they played within the presentation because in that case they begin self-policing. And in that case they also begin instructing each other and guiding each other and pulling ideas out of each other, which I think is really neat, and I think it's priceless. They're going to get stuff out of each other that I'm not going to get because no matter how hard I try, I'm always an outsider.

During my visit to Hannah's class, I observed no use of lecture. The teacher sat with other students as groups made presentations aimed to demonstrate their ability to critique. Subjects ranged from a new model of car to a music video. It was evident all members of the presentation groups had assumed some responsibility in crafting or delivering materials. At the conclusion of presentations, the other students provided constructive feedback to their peers.

Gabriella mentions her training as an educator – both pursuing a master's degree and receiving professional development while teaching at another community college – helped her appreciate the value of group work. It was evident during my visit to her class Gabriella purposely selects the members of her groups. When I asked about this strategy, she explained:

I think it's just taking advantage of the diversity that we have here, which is one of the things I love. I don't get as much diversity when I'm teaching on [main campus], but in [city campus] for sure. We have such a wealth in our diverse student population. It's like we've got to take advantage of this because this may – I realized at some point sometimes this is the only opportunity our students have to speak to somebody who didn't grow up in the United States or grew up half in the United States and half in another country. Different ages....but I think it just adds so much to their discussions to hear from people who were maybe nineteen and started here, and then life took its turns and they left because [returning students] never fail to say, "Get it while you're single! Get it while you're not married! While you don't have kids! Don't stop!" Sounds so much better coming from them than coming from me or from their parents. It just seems like it is worth gold for [traditional-age students] to hear it from somebody who is in closer proximity to their age group. So, it's like the cultural diversity, the age diversity, even experiences. Many of our students have never been outside of the United States. Many of our students have never had a – I had a guy one semester that was just like, "I know everybody thinks that because I'm gay and I'm black that I'm so liberal, but I'm a Republican!" It's just like, okay! But it added so much. I mean, how often do you get that? It adds so much to their discussions and just opens their minds up to – okay, so everybody doesn't think like they do in their little, narrow, eighteen-year-old worlds.

So, for Gabriella the benefit of collaboration is not only the intellectual exchange of ideas relative to a reading assignment, but also each student's personal development. By assembling groups of people who are different from one another, the teacher helps her learners broaden their perspective of the world, and this may contribute to their decision to remain in school.

Ethan is a proponent of active learning. During the interview, he mentioned a number of ways he ensures students are engaged with their learning.

I utilize peer review workshops, so that way they can get feedback. I always try to utilize class discussions, so that way they're not just hearing me lecture. They're actually an active participant in the class.

When I observed Ethan's class, he had the learners take turns reading a paragraph of an essay out loud until the essay was completed, then he led a full-class discussion of the reading. When I asked him why he had the students do this, he responded:

I just felt that helped them to be more engaged and be part of the class. I had classes before where I had a lot of students that would just sit in the corner and stay quiet. So, by having them read aloud and having everyone take a shift, I know everyone has to be at least following along and no one can just be sleeping in the corner.... I know from when I was in college, whenever we had to discuss things out loud or read out loud it would keep me awake. Not that I fell asleep in different classes, but it would always keep me on my toes. I talked to other beginning faculty, I mean other English professors, and one of them suggested the reading out loud, and I thought it was a good idea, so I decided to incorporate it with the entire class and not just a few select readers.

Though some interview participants did not specifically mention during our conversation how they employ active learning and collaborative learning strategies with their students, my observation of their classes spoke to their commitment in this area.

Frequent, prompt and useful feedback. Timeliness of feedback is important to the majority of the study participants. Through training and practice as instructors, they have come to understand this as an important duty in their role as educator. Most survey respondents indicated they returned graded work to students between one or two weeks of its submission. Some respondents explained the nature of the assignment will dictate how long it will take them to grade it and return it to a learner. For example, one participant wrote, “Homework assignments – the next class; essays – one week after the due date.”

Benjamin reported responding to all student writing in an expedient manner.

Whatever they write, and now I mean in a lab or if they are writing a class response to something. I read those right away. Now, I’m an adjunct; I don’t have another job. This is it, so I do have the time. I know that. I love to read these things, and then give immediate responses to them. They need that immediacy, I believe. I mean, I was chair at [a Catholic high school] for a very, very long time, and that was one of my biggest problems. The teachers, they just didn’t get things back, or there was just a grade on it.

Like Benjamin, Amelia strives to return student papers swiftly.

In terms of grading, my number one, if they provide something to me – whether it’s a paper or a [reading quiz], I usually give it right back to them. If it’s not that next class period, it’s the one after that, due to maybe something occurring – I was sick, you know, or spring break – but normally, when they turn in the essays [Wednesday], they’ll have them back on Monday. I pride myself on getting up every Saturday at 5:30 AM and grading everything that I have, and I put them in my truck, and I give them back to them because feedback is important so they know where they fall short.

In order to make feedback understandable and useful to students, survey respondents report creating opportunities for learners to engage in conversation with the instructor about their progress. One participant reported:

For on campus courses, I hold one-on-one conferences (usually week 6 and 13). Additionally, the last five minutes of each class is a Q&A session. I

encourage students to “work out” the problem rather than tell them “this is right” or “this is wrong.”

Another noted:

I encourage students to contact me (email or phone) if they have a question. I dialogue with them through their journals or by e-mail. In person, I stay after class and conference with students when needed. Many assignments build, meaning, they draw from previous understandings, and so I monitor to make sure students are not creating the same errors. When this is apparent, I initiate dialogue.

A third wrote,

Review common weaknesses I’ve seen in the class; remind them to talk to me if they have other questions not covered.

Some of the study participants craft opportunities where students can obtain feedback from both the instructor and their fellow students. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents report having students engage in peer editing exercises a few times over the semester. As Ethan notes:

I really like to do the workshops where they can give each other peer feedback because it’s a lot easier to accept criticism from your peers than your instructor, I feel, and I feel they’re a lot more open with each other and more honest about what’s going on in the papers. I do also try to give them feedback as well because I know as a student it helped to have the professor kind of guide me in what directions I needed to go with my papers.

Chloe knows from past teaching experiences that students are sometimes reluctant to seek out help understanding their progress in a class. For this reason, she employs rubrics for all work.

A lot of it has to do with the – they don’t want to speak up for themselves. The students, they don’t want to tell you when they’re having issues in terms of content because they’re afraid of what other people might think, so by doing those assessments and documenting them you know whether they’re having success or not. That way, it’s more objective. That way, they can give it to you, give you the information about verbalizing it. Rubrics are really important, and obviously they’re required for the [standard course] syllabus

for papers, but I use rubrics for almost all of my assignments. That way they understand the structure of what's expected.

Many of the teachers mentioned the need to balance truth with tact in responding to student work. Both Ethan and Sophia attended two separate professional development workshops that helped them understand the value of providing feedback in a way that motivates students to focus on improving their skill. Ethan's workshop was sponsored by East Coast. He appreciated learning how giving students "the right kind" of feedback and avoiding overly negative comments can contribute to student motivation.

Sophia's training occurred off campus, at a nearby university where she is also an adjunct faculty member.

They said, "You really shouldn't comment on more than three things in a paper because a student gets a paper back with a bunch of marks, and they tend to just block it out. It's human nature, and they said, "Always start with a positive," and I think that's something I learned over the years to keep their interest. You know, show them what they did right first, and then just look for patterns rather than every little mistake. You know, maybe they're getting a lot of fragments or a lot of subject-verb problems. Just at the bottom note: "I noticed a lot of subject-verb. If you went to this page in [the writing handbook], you could figure that out, and if you still want to do something, I can show you some exercises if you like." You know, online exercises. That kind of thing. So, they have to own it. And I liked the delineation between local and global editing, too, because I passed that on to the students. You know, look at your big picture first.

Sophia also has the students compose many small writings, and she comments on them as well. She says, "You know, write the little love notes to [the students] because I think that's what keeps them writing and see that writing is important."

Amelia mentioned a practice she calls “noticings,” where she will set aside a small amount of class time for grammar or mechanics lessons relative to the common errors she is observing in student papers. Learners are not publicly shamed for their mistakes, and the whole class benefits from the review.

Several of the study participants discussed the need to provide feedback in a way that empowers students to take responsibility for their learning. For example, two survey respondents mentioned creating an atmosphere where learners were welcomed to further investigate and debate the instructor’s responses to their work. One commented, “I make the student feel comfortable to ask questions and challenge me if they feel I’m mistaken.” Another wrote, “In class, I make sure that students know it’s okay to question grades and comments.”

Gabriella will begin the semester by giving students copious feedback on their essays, but she gradually scales back her comments and editing marks. She also regularly has students engage in peer editing exercises; however, she finds some learners still want her feedback exclusively. She tells them:

“I’m not going to be there all of the time. What’s really good about working with a partner is you get to see other people’s writing. You give them some good feedback; they get some, but ultimately, you need to be able to edit, proofread, edit, and revise your own work without – I’m not going to be in your life! Why are you acting like I’m going to be in your life indefinitely? This is a skill you can take forward in life.” This is a useful skill because that’s what employers are telling us, right? Students are coming out of community colleges, and they still can’t write?

Adjunct Composition I faculty view themselves as playing an important role in making students successful. They understand learners in their classes are pursuing various goals, some which do not fit the traditional measures for student

success being advocated for by external stakeholders. To help students be successful, teachers build relationships with them, counsel them, grow their confidence and teach them to be self-reliant. Adjunct Composition I faculty will occasionally make concessions about course policy in the interest of retaining learners; however, the instructors refuse to sacrifice course quality or to compromise their expectations for student performance in the interest of improving completion numbers in the gateway course. This understanding of how to make students successful is stemming from the teacher's personal experiences as students, their interactions with the community college learners, and their teacher's identity than from their involvement in or exposure to East Coast's comprehensive student success initiative.

Adjunct Composition I faculty are ambivalent about or resist change initiatives they perceive do not respect their teacher identity. The adjunct faculty in this study arrived at the institution with a teacher identity intact. They possess a sense of confidence in their knowledge and skill and a feeling of legitimacy. They are driven to help students succeed. Despite this, many adjunct Composition I faculty are sensitive to institutional gestures and practices that seem to send a contradictory message about their work and standing in the institution (See Table 6). For example, several of the interview participants communicated it was difficult for them to respect proposed changes from institutional leaders with whom they have little or no relationship. Both Amelia and Elizabeth talked about upper-level leaders who walked past them without acknowledgement. Benjamin feels alienated

by the vocabulary choice of administrators that seems to communicate a different set of values from the ones he espouses as an educator.

I think sometimes the administration – I’ll put it generally, not all – treat this as a business, and even words are addressed such as “clients” or “you are our business.” I recoil at that. [Learners] should be addressed as “scholars” and “students”; this is all about scholarship. This is academia. I just don’t like that kind of language.... I believe the message [about improving student success] is sincere. I just don’t know if that message is being relayed enough and with better examples and better communication. Sometimes, some teachers – myself included – just get annoyed at the language.

And then there are those who have been completely unresponsive to the institution’s message about mission shift because they observe the school’s practices in relationship to adjunct faculty are not in line with their message about improving student success.

I believe that East Coast has not committed to its adjuncts, and adjuncts teach most of the students. This is a huge problem! More frequently, I’ve observed that students are just not ready for higher education. They need lots of coaching and consistent (positive) reinforcement, but adjuncts are in no way compensated for the necessary time commitments. And don’t blame adjuncts; they have virtually NO job security. With such a poor commitment from the college, I can’t see too many adjuncts looking long range and offering great depths of commitment in return. With near minimum wage pay, no raises, and second class treatment (Ex. Report-in sheets), it’s hard to offer enough personal resources (time outside of class) that meet the student’s increasing demand for personal attention. I’m not saying that I don’t care, but I’ve talked to [colleagues] that even recognize the imbalance between the needs and expectations from students and actual compensation to its core group of teachers. You can run all the programs that grant money can buy, but success always comes back to one primary influence – the teacher in the classroom. That’s the biggest problem with East Coast’s commitment to improving student success – undervaluing their adjuncts.

Table 6

Coding process for determining how study participants respond to change initiatives that do not respect their teacher's identity.

Theme	Sub-themes	Key terms	Survey evidence	Interview evidence
Adjuncts ambivalent about/resist change initiatives that do not respect their teacher's identity	Disconnected from change agents	Disconnect, distant, different aims and values, insufficient resources, lack of recognition, poor language choices, uncommunicative, unfriendly.	Do not receive adequate compensation (F, I, L). Have no job security (L)	Not recognized by upper-level leaders (Amelia, Elizabeth). Leaders are invisible (Amelia, Elizabeth) Administrative values are more business-oriented than student-oriented (Amelia, Benjamin)
	Adjunct faculty are not as important as full-time faculty	Disconnect, disrespect, inconsiderate, inconvenient, lack of supervision, loophole, fragmented, misinformation, not consulted, not impactful, poorly informed, poorly implemented, second-class citizen, unimportant, uninformed.	Report in/report out makes adjuncts feel like second-class citizens (L). Only two of the 16 survey respondents were engaged in formal advisement activities.	Report in/report out is an insult to adjunct professional status (Amelia, Benjamin, Elizabeth). Report in/report out is meaningless to professional practice (Elizabeth, Ethan, Gabriella, Hannah). Made to look incompetent because information about advisement days was confusing or inaccurate (Elizabeth, Gabriella) Abrupt cancellation of classes during advisement days forced teachers to reconfigure carefully designed semester plans (Benjamin, Elizabeth, Gabriella)

Even in cases where study participants had a positive perspective about the institution's improved commitment to student success, they were still unable to engage fully with the movement.

Now more than four years ago, I feel that there are concerned administrators who respond to my needs and questions and who are willing to present great opportunities to the students. Any system can use improvement, however. As an adjunct I often feel disconnected from the school. I have to hold 2-3 jobs in order to control my income.

This theme of disconnect and disrespect continued to surface with interview participants when they talked about two of the institution's informal student success initiatives – the Report In/Report Out Policy and the Developmental Advising Activity. Though adjunct Composition I faculty were impacted by these initiatives in some regard, none of the teachers had a voice in developing the policies or practices associated with them. The majority either felt a sense of ambivalence about each initiative or they were angry because they perceived it insulted or undermined their professional identity as educators.

Report In/Report Out. The implementation of this policy was clearly viewed differently by leaders and adjunct Composition I faculty. During our interviews, several of the school's academic leaders referenced this practice as a means of improving student success. The policy, according to the leaders, emerged in response to complaints and anecdotal research that indicated some part-time teachers were not meeting with learners for their full-class period. In conversing with adjunct faculty who were dismissing students early, one dean discovered their primary teaching strategy was lecture. The teachers believed once information was

dispensed to students, it was acceptable to end class, even if the meeting were terminated significantly earlier than the advertised ending. A vice president reported:

I had adjuncts in all seriousness tell me, "I covered the lesson in an hour and a half. I thought I was good. I didn't realize we had to stay." I don't know how true that is, but I said, "Well, you covered the lesson as far as standing up in front of them and talking about stuff, but there are other enrichment type activities that can take place over the remainder of the three hours of class time."

In conversing with institutional leaders, I learned they believe faculty should diversify their pedagogical approaches to teaching. They discussed the value of full-class discussion, group work, pair work, and oral presentation in helping students become more engaged in their learning and, thus, successful. The majority eschewed the use of lecture and PowerPoint presentations. They also understood it was insufficient to implement the Report In/Report Out policy to help adjunct faculty understand its purpose in relationship to their work. They decided to hold a series of workshops aimed at helping contingent instructors broaden their teaching repertoire beyond lecture.

Only one of the adjunct interview participants, Lilly, attended these workshops. As a result, she understood the intended message from college change agents.

A lot of times what we are seeing in probably implementing our Report In/Report Out sheet are teachers run out of ideas. Especially those classes that are once a week that are three hours long. What do we do next? We went through all that already. So, pulling some of the examples, pulling up a video, trying a game, working together, collaborating, doing that journal writing. That definitely extends that extra 15-20 minutes. Pulling out a cartoon that they can look at and analyze. You'd be surprised. You could pull out a piece of paper and they can talk for one-half hour, 40 minutes on that piece of paper.

One upper-level change agent expected the general adjunct populace to embrace the Report In/Report Out initiative because it also signaled the presence of administrative oversight and willingness to respond to poor practice. He said:

I would think that adjuncts who have been doing things the right way for years would be happy we pay attention because it reflects badly on the college as a whole when we have a handful of people who let students go early.

In contrast, a coordinator expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of the Report In/Report Out policy and its companion workshops. He observed:

Now, the Report In/Report Out policy.... I think it was meant to be so that adjuncts would not leave their classes out early. I don't know if that's how we define student success. It is not how I would; however, you know, if you say just keeping the class the entire time is a successful class, then there you go. That new policy is meant to help with that. I will also say [a dean's] responsibility is to help with adjunct development.... The workshops have been on – I don't know. I wouldn't say successful teaching strategies, more like tips to do within the classroom. I participated in one on technology tools to use in the classroom.... I'm not sure how active participation has been [in the workshops]. In the one I helped to facilitate, I think we had twenty adjuncts total across the three campuses out of how many hundreds of adjuncts we have, so, you know, it's difficult.

In fact, many of the interview participants who did not attend the workshops meant to rationalize the policy were confused, ambivalent or harbored resentment toward the initiative. It was evident from both our conversations and the class observations that the majority of these teachers arrived early to their course meeting place, held a full-class session, and then remained behind to answer questions and to assist students. Earlier in this chapter, I shared evidence that illustrated how study participants regularly employ active learning and collaborative activities as part of their pedagogy.

Gabriella had a vague understanding of the policy's purpose, but she did not connect the practice to the college's shift in mission.

I don't know what the whole Report In/Report Out thing is because it was somehow – our freedom was being abused or something like that, but I don't think it's contributing to student success in any way, shape or form.

When I asked Hannah her impression of how the policy might impact student success, she appeared to have never considered that connection prior to our conversation. She was aware of the anger the new policy inspired in some colleagues, but she did not feel personally impacted by the alteration.

I think it probably contributes to teaching success more than it does student success. I mean, everyone has heard the tale of teachers who don't have class. I mean, I guess that would, like, contribute to students not learning. It didn't really change anything as far as I'm concerned. I mean, I'm here anyway.... I know it got a lot of [adjunct faculty's] backs up. I'm up here [in the office] anyway getting my mail, so as far as students, I haven't seen it.

Like Hannah, Ethan was unaffected by the policy since he regularly visits the office before and after class meetings and holds a full-class meeting. He said, "I don't think my students notice me signing in or out, and I always make sure I'm in the class ahead of time anyway. I don't think it impacts them either way."

When I asked Ethan why it was important for him to arrive early and stay late, he explained this practice in the context of his teacher's identity.

I feel like it doesn't look professional if I'm walking into the room as soon as the class is supposed to start. I like to be in the room at least 10 minutes, preferably 15 minutes, before the class starts. That way, if they have any questions they don't feel comfortable asking in class, either before or immediately after, they can approach me to ask me questions about essays, or – if they missed class – make-up work, so I just want them to know I'm here. And they can see my presence in the classroom.

Several of the long-term adjunct Composition I faculty not only reported feeling disrespected by the policy, they also observed it did not accomplish the intended oversight message meant by administration. A few of the teachers told stories about other adjunct faculty circumventing the rule. As Elizabeth noted:

If you're that kind of instructor who wants to get away with things, you're going to find a way. Like, [the students] were telling me about one, because they're always asking, "Can we leave early?" And I'm like, "I really need to keep you here," and I explain why because even if we're, like, done, here's why, and they go – I forget who it was – Professor Somebody – he has the almost-three-hour class, and he'll dismiss after an hour, and I said, "How does he get away with that with reporting in and reporting out, because we have to do that?" And they go, "He just stays there and waits until the time is up, and then he reports out." So, you know what? There's ways around it.

Benjamin and Amelia relate similar narratives about faculty "beating" the rule. The resolution, they believe, is to institute more direct monitoring of the faculty by supervisory personnel. Amelia, for example, observed she rarely sees administration at the branch campus where she teaches.

So, I think the culture needs to change.... I met the president one time [on City Campus]. He just kind of walked past me. I said, "Hi, I've been here for a while." So, I don't know him, and I think that we need to invite that conversation where he should sit in my class and see who I am and what I can do. And sit in the other classes where I walk past, and I see two students there. I want to know why I only see two students when I have twenty.

She believes that if leadership visited campus on a regular basis and became familiar with the patterns of teachers and students, they would be able to efficiently identify concerns and address them without implementing policies that hurt the dignity of effective and responsible educators.

I'm very professional. I find [the Report In/Report Out] policy insulting because I come to work every day. This will be my tenth year; I missed one day. I'm here before [class], and I'm here after, so I think the folks – because I know how we generalize; I used to work in corporate America, so you can't

just pinpoint – but if you know the students, and you know the teachers who show up at 7:00 and leave at 7:30, you call them in, and you don't hire them back. End of story. But for us to have to arrive – I arrive early, but let's just say the person coming from [local business just before class] – we have to go all the way to that office. No. The ones who are going to do wrong, they'll still do wrong.... [The institution should] hire someone who cares about teaching our students, especially these students. Multiple layers of problems. They need us. They count on us, and sometimes we're all they can count on.

Developmental advising activity. While the Report In/Report Out policy was intended to directly impact adjunct faculty practice, contingent faculty were less involved in a second informal student success initiative: a developmental advising activity. The responsibility of advising students sat with full-time faculty, administrators, and student support staff. Learners were incentivized to seek advisement by the offer of early registration in classes. While advisement services were available for a month prior to registration, the college also cancelled two days of classes to allow for an intensive advisement activity. According to one vice-president, adjunct faculty were allowed to serve as support volunteers at the event; they were not formally trained to advise students.

Even though adjunct faculty were not invited to engage in student advisement, they were impacted by the event. All were asked to promote it and to encourage student participation. Details for the event were conveyed to the teachers via their departmental coordinators. Several interview participants reported the directions were ambiguous, causing confusion among the students and themselves. They were left with questions about the length of the event; its location; whether or not it was mandatory; and the advantages and benefits of student participation. A few of the adjunct Composition I faculty mentioned making inquiries to

coordinators and other campus representatives in the interest of answering student questions, but they reported some campus resources were still unclear about the parameters of the event. Some teachers felt their inability to guide students and to answer their questions compromised their reputation and authority in the classroom. For example, Elizabeth said of the advisement days:

The information we got was very sketchy, at least for the adjuncts. I was told – I don't know, we just got this – maybe I'm not on the right mailing list, I don't know – but I only got sort of a short outline that said basically it was mandatory. It talked more about advising – I didn't know anything about the month. I got it about the two days, and even that – it was very sketchy, and I guess I should have tried to find out more on my own, but "Excuse me, I'm trying to teach two classes a week, two meaningful classes a week, and, you know, I do a lot of stuff at home for it – going online for little video clips, all that kind of stuff. It's like, do I really have to track down the right person to talk to, to tell me more about what I should be telling the kid about advising days?" I felt the information was very poor; the communication was very poor. I tried to tell my kids, "Show up, see what the plan for the day is – because it was supposed to be a day-long thing. If you don't have an advisor, get one that day, and I think you could register. Well, then, I asked my kids for feedback the following week, and some thought it was good, and some said, "They said you told us the wrong thing. It wasn't mandatory." And then somebody else said, "I couldn't register." And then someone else said, "They said you had all month to do this." I thought it was very poor.... See, I don't want to give them bad information, which is why I felt badly about the advising days because I felt like I had, but I only gave them the information that [leadership] gave me. So, if I don't know an answer, I'm not going to act like I do. I'm going to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out for you" or "I know this is the person that you should talk to." I don't know about how it went that day because I wasn't here, and I had even thought about volunteering [at City Campus], but the communication was so poor that I was just kind of disgusted, to be honest. And I wasn't the only one who felt that way.

Gabriella, who teaches at the City campus felt compelled to intervene when her students expressed confusion about the location of the advising process.

A lot of students were upset because somehow or another they had gotten information – they said from their professors – saying that you could only do it [at the main campus], and I went to [the senior campus administrator], and said, "This can't possibly be the case," and she said, "Absolutely not. They can

do it at any of the campuses.” I was surprised that I didn’t get more information.

This initiative further discombobulated adjunct faculty because they had not been prepared for the class cancellation associated with the advisement event. Study participants reported being forced to scurry and revise teaching plans that had already been compromised several times by class cancellations related to inclement weather. As Gabriella remembers:

I give a syllabus and then I have an assignment sheet, and I had those dates [for the developmental advisement event] on my assignment sheets as class days, and I was like, “Oh, no. They’re taking another day from us! We already missed snow days, and they’re taking another day from us.” So, I had to rearrange stuff and get it together.

In the long run, Benjamin reported he and several colleagues believed the class cancellations for the developmental advisement event may have contributed more to student attrition than retention.

[The teachers] are very annoyed by how fragmented the whole semester is with snow days, spring break, then those two days, and what three other teachers here – two others and myself – have said in conversation is we have had a couple of kids not come back in each class.... I think to [students], by this point: “I may as well stay home” or something. One young lady in [a class I am currently teaching] hasn’t been in two weeks, and I thought she dropped, but there are a couple that withdrew, and their marks weren’t that bad, but I guess it just seems so choppy [to them].

In general, adjunct Composition I faculty report they exist on the periphery of certain components of the institution’s comprehensive student success plan. As professionals, they know they have useful experience and information to draw upon in order to contribute to the conversation about how to accomplish mission shift; however, they feel institutional representatives and practices repeatedly signal their voice is not valued in the ongoing conversation about the movement. They respond

to this in one of two ways. Either they grow ambivalent or they become weary and resentful because leadership figures do not show them the respect they deserve as educational professionals. Either way, they direct their energies and focus primarily in the direction of the place where they are respected and can make a difference: in the classroom.

Adjunct Composition I faculty embrace the messages from change initiatives they perceive respect their teacher identity. As has already been established, very few adjunct faculty have been directly engaged in initiatives associated with East Coast's comprehensive student success plan; however, in reviewing the study data, it became evident the small number of study participants exposed to formal initiatives thought very favorably about two – ALP and the career development curriculum infusion effort. They mentioned learning about these initiatives early in the college's comprehensive student success plan and feeling welcomed to contribute to their development and administration.

Adjunct Composition I faculty teaching within the ALP program describe the experience as feeling they are part of a professional learning community. According to Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, and Sharp (2009) a professional learning community is “a group of educators...who focus their work on the formal study of instructional practices in order to improve students' learning” (p. 6). The process of building this community in ALP begins with engagement in an intensive training for which adjunct faculty are compensated. Following this, adjunct Composition I faculty are assigned a mentor – a full-time faculty member or another adjunct faculty member with ALP teaching experience – to guide and assess their progress. They also have

permission to enter a resource site full of information and exercises relevant to teaching ALP courses. They have participatory access to online discussions with fellow ALP teachers and are invited to attend a biannual meeting related to ALP. Study participants mention they have regular, supportive interactions with the ALP coordinator and the departmental coordinator, who helped create the ALP pilot. Both coordinators actively teach within the program.

Adjunct Composition I faculty teaching outside of the ALP program do not have a strong voice in crafting course curriculum, and they are provided with a standardized text from which to teach. The book is thematically organized into chapters concerned with contemporary issues. Some contingent faculty are frustrated by their lack of textbook choice. Amelia is not a fan of the current edition of the course text; she says it is poorly written, and she worries her mature learners will not be able to make connections with the material because it focuses heavily upon popular culture. She said, “I work with it, but I provide a lot of supplemental reading as well because some of the essays – I don’t know how they were even submitted.”

In contrast, adjunct Composition I faculty teaching within the ALP program are given the privilege of selecting their course texts, and their membership in the ALP professional learning community provides them with an outlet through which they can voice concerns and make recommendations for course curriculum revision.

It is clear Elizabeth’s membership in the ALP professional learning community is sending her positive messages about her identity as a teacher on campus.

I think that [the ALP coordinator] is excellent. We do have a meeting each semester in addition to the training, and I contact her a lot as I have [a full-time faculty member] who was my mentor last semester for ALP, and I just find all of the ALP – the full-time teachers, I feel like I’m with the cream of the crop, so to speak. And it makes me try harder and every semester to try to do better. It kind of gives me something to strive for because I think they set the bar high. So, I absolutely love this program. I feel like I’ve found my niche.

Elizabeth’s positive expression here is significant. Earlier in our conversation, she mentioned acquiring senior adjunct status, which is the single promotion adjuncts at East Coast can obtain. She said, “There’s not much – not anywhere else to go from there. It’s like the adjunct – it kind of stops.” It is evident, though, that her membership in the ALP professional learning community is making her strive to do better.

Elizabeth’s sense of legitimacy and inclusion in the ALP community is further confirmed when she talks about being part of a collective to determine how to improve student progress. During our interview, Elizabeth told a story about how her learners were suffering from end-of-semester fatigue, so she planned some in-class exercises to try to understand their drop in motivation with the aim of determining how to help the students conquer it. She explained the results of this action research would not be something she reserved for herself.

[The students are] tired, and so, somehow, I have to bridge that, and I also thought, too, depending upon their answers, I want to share them with my ALP colleagues. I know everybody struggles.

It is clear Elizabeth sees her ALP colleagues, both full-time and part-time teachers, as her equals. For Sophia, having the connection to the ALP professional learning community has been a source of support and reassurance when she has

doubted herself as an educator or was confused about student assessment or goals.

She explained:

That's really a nice camaraderie.... Being around experienced developmental professors has helped a lot because I think before meeting them, I tended to take it on myself. Like, "Why can't I get [students] to perform where they need to?" Where someone with that experience with developmental learning knows that, you know, you either have to take steps or you have to forgive yourself. [The students] are only going to get so far in a semester. That kind of perspective was helpful.

Likewise, Hannah mentioned her interaction with her ALP colleagues gave her confidence to try new approaches to teaching in the interest of helping students succeed when other colleagues were disparaging of innovation.

If anything, I felt validated because sometimes – as a teacher – you feel like (especially if you have a husband who's [in law enforcement] and who isn't into that EQ and you run into other teachers who are like, "I'm not going to do that.") I just ran into someone who said, "Well, that's ridiculous if they think that I'm going to do that." That's just not the way I'm wired. If there's a way in, I'm going to find it. So, I felt validated. Like, "Okay, good. Like, I'm not taking crazy pills. It's okay to do this with them."

In speaking with adjunct Composition I faculty connected to the ALP pilot, I hear three unique messages they are receiving from leadership in this program and prioritizing as they make sense of the college's shift in mission to emphasize its commitment to helping students succeed. First, the ALP teacher must help first-time college students navigate the college setting. Second, the ALP teacher must advocate for students in this setting and teach them how to advocate for themselves. Third, the ALP teacher is responsible for helping students think about how to reach their goals in terms of academics and careers.

One of the hallmarks of the ALP course is providing students with the tools to navigate the college setting. As the coordinator of the program explains:

At the beginning of the semester, we do a lot of work with helping adjunct faculty develop some kind of acclimation to the college. Most of them do scavenger hunts or tours. So, we do a lot of work with that, making sure they are prepared for that, that they have done something that works for them and for the students, and that's really important for the students. I can't speak from the adjunct experience, but at the end of the semester, I always hear from students that was the most valuable thing because they felt comfortable [on campus] earlier [in their academic career].

Elizabeth, Sophia, and Hannah confirmed they believed learners are more successful when they have a better understanding of how to navigate the landscape and bureaucracy of the college. In addition to helping students with their coursework, ALP teachers report setting aside class time to take learners for campus tours or to field questions and concerns students may have in regard to any aspect of college life. Elizabeth explained:

Last semester, on Mondays – see, Monday's our classroom day where I will talk with them about what's going on with their lives. "What's going on in other classes? Do you have any questions about registering for next semester? Of what courses you need to stay on track? Anything like that, and if I don't know the answers, I'll find them out for you."

The adjunct teachers admit they are sometimes learning alongside of the students, but they are confident in receiving appropriate counsel from change agents associated with ALP when questions come up. For example, Hannah understood from her interaction with the ALP coordinator that lack of finances and poor communication could serve as barriers to student success, so the teacher made it one of her aims to ensure her ALP students were accessing their college e-mail and reading it.

I looked into financial aid things, and how [students] get their mail and stuff. [The ALP coordinator] was great because I had no idea with the [college e-mail account], a lot of their financial aid information just gets delivered to that mail. A lot of those kids don't check their [college e-mail account], so that

was one of my first hurdles with them.... Like a mother hen, I was like “You’re checking that [college e-mail account] once a week with me because there’s very important, vital information there that you need.

Hannah’s hope is the practice of checking college e-mail accounts will become habitual and helpful to the students going forward.

ALP faculty also believe a teacher must advocate for students in the community college setting and teach students how to advocate for themselves. “[The ALP coordinator] always says, ‘You advocate for the kids. That’s what we’re here for. They come first,’” reports Elizabeth. For example, when her students were unable to obtain books for her course for a variety of reasons (e.g. learners could not get to the campus bookstore within its limited hours of operation; the bookstore under-ordered copies and sold out before financial aid checks were issued), she helped learners find alternative means for obtaining the book, including Web merchants and a neighborhood store. At the suggestion of the ALP and departmental coordinators, Elizabeth also made the senior campus administrator aware of the problems students were having in hopes bookstore policies and hours would be changed in respect to student needs.

Hannah was compelled to coach students to handle issues outside of class by her ALP training. One of the ALP faculty’s responsibilities is to get progress reports from their students’ teachers and then discuss them with their learners. She recalled:

So, I would get all those reports from their teachers, which was super helpful because I had kids who were working very hard in ALP, and then going to a class that they, maybe, didn’t care about as much, and they were blowing it off, and I made it like – I kind of talked to them like they were my little brothers and sisters. I’m like, “Listen, you can’t do that! You have got to get

your head together, which I would have no idea they were at risk in those other classes if I didn't get those reports, and I wouldn't be able to pester them about it. I had one kid who – through persuasion – ended up pulling his little bootstraps up, and he got through his psych class. The other one dropped. I thought that was great because otherwise it's just all these disparate pieces, and I would just think, "That kid's great" because I think they're great from what they're doing here.... A lot of these kids give what they get and get what they give, so there were a few who maybe weren't used to lecture-based classes, and they just kind of blew them off, and I had to tell them, "You can't do that. You have to adapt. Everyone you meet isn't going to be so accepting. Some [teachers] are like, "This is the way I do it. You either deal with it or you don't deal with it. The end."

ALP-trained Composition I teachers understand the value of implementing course strategies that encourage students to begin to think of their learning in the context of meeting larger goals, like transferring to a four-year college or earning a professional series certificate. It seems this practice is fostered by the ALP training and boosted by adjunct Composition I faculty connections with the career development curriculum infusion initiative. During our interview, Sophia talked about designing a writing unit on career development for one of the ALP-oriented Composition I classes she taught.

So, I wanted them to see the connection between what they were enrolled in and what they were going to enroll in and what their goals were. So, they had to define their goals explicitly in a paper and a lot of short writing exercises. So, there was a lot of motivation, and in the reflection there was motivation. Sometimes they would even change their minds about what they were going to do or what they thought they were going to do or what their parents wanted them to do versus what was in their heart – that kind of thing.

The idea for designing a unit around vocation came from a career development curriculum infusion workshop Sophia attended with her high-level ESL students several years earlier. Sophia was so impressed by her ESL student

responses to the workshop that she decided to replicate it in her Composition I classes. She described her experience:

[The learners] loved it so much that I made them write thank yous so that they would not only thank [the workshop facilitator], but also reflect on what they learned. They had to be specific, and it was such a huge response that I had him come back a couple of semesters in a row to different classes, even my 101 class, to do it, and the responses were amazing, like they brought tears to your eyes, so once I started to see what he was doing and how much [the college was] trying to build the success initiative, that's when I became more aware that we were actually enrolled in [ATD].

Significant here is how the study participant's awareness of the college's comprehensive student success plan grew out of being directly engaged with a specific initiative and witnessing its positive effect on her students and how these outcomes aligned with her own values as a teacher.

Hannah decided to have her ALP students engage in some career development at the suggestion of a change agent at a branch campus. She learned it is important to have discussions about career and goals early in a student's learning experience.

We did the [vocations] questionnaire, and that was neat because you just see these kids, they take the quiz. They have in their head, "I'm going to be a fireman because everyone in my family has done this." And they take the quiz and they're like, "I have absolutely no personality traits that go with this job." They don't know about the career world. Some of them are so green. They just want to do something because that's what they've been told they should do. You know, like I had a guy who said, "I want to go into finance." I said, "Well, what does that entail?" And he's like, "I don't know. You make a lot of money, though." I said, "Okay, do you like math?" "No." "Do you like accounting?" "No." "Do you know what finance is?" "Nope!" I'm like, "Oh, okay." So, I think that kind of stuff, we could probably use some more of.

Both the ALP and career development curriculum infusion initiative helped adjunct Composition I teachers recognize the value of bringing guest speakers into

the classroom to talk directly with students about campus offerings and programs. According to both leaders and ALP faculty, this strategy helped learners foster better connections with campus actors and stimulated their thinking about setting goals. The ALP coordinator said guest speakers were part of the program from its inception.

It quickly became an informal element of the program... that is always mentioned as part of the ALP training. Baltimore has a much more robust list of possible guest speakers, and [a representative from Community College of Baltimore] talked about this in the training he led for us last summer. So, the idea is discussed at training and probably in mentoring too (and [an advisor] is mentioned as a contact for [an] overview session), but at this point, faculty are on their own in setting up guest speakers. I'm keeping a list of these as they come to my attention, so I can hopefully put together a list of contacts and possible guest speakers.

During one Monday session, when Elizabeth was informing her students about opportunities to complete a four-year degree on campus, she recognized it would be beneficial to bring in a representative to speak with the learners.

I mentioned, "Do you know there are several degrees you can get by staying on the [main campus] through [a state college extension center on East Coast's main campus]? They were very interested in that. "Could you get someone from [the state college's extension center] to talk to us?" And I said, "Yes, I'll find out," and [the representative] came, and I'm telling you, I felt they really got a lot out of that, and I thought, "Maybe I should have a few more guest speakers."

Sophia invited the Dean of Career Education to address her students after she heard the administrator speak about the college's certificate programs at an in-service event.

So, I asked if she would speak to my classes, and that was shattering. Like, that was groundbreaking in my 101 class. It's an "ALP-er" class too, but they all wrote letters, and none of them were aware that those professional series existed. A lot of nursing students don't have a back-up plan. [The dean] was telling them, "Look into Surgical Tech., look into other related fields because

we can only let this many in the nursing program,” and it gave them more strategy, and I think it connected them more – you know what I mean – to the school because they felt like someone was on their side, someone was really trying to make this workable for them.... They wrote thank you notes that were very specific, like, “What did I learn that I didn’t know before?” That kind of thing. [The dean] read every single one of them, and she responded to every single one of them. And she actually said it helped her too. Yeah, that was really positive.

Hannah observes that by having representatives from the student services area of the college visit her classes and conduct workshops, students begin to develop a comfort level and ease in working with them when learners have to approach these campus representatives about other business. For example, when one student told Hannah she was having trouble with a teacher, Hannah suggested the learner see the leader who conducted a workshop for the class earlier in the semester.

[The student] said, [the workshop leader] can do that?” And she already knew [the workshop leader], and I said, “You can trust [her]. It’s all anonymous.” And [the student] knew that she could go to her; whereas, in another situation, I don’t think that would have been the case. I think [the student] would have kind of hid under a rock.

Adjunct Composition I faculty associated with the ALP and the career development curriculum infusion initiatives have experienced a boost in self-esteem because they believe their work as educators has been respected, valued, and affirmed by change agents. They are hearing unique messages about how to make students more successful from these movements, and they are experimenting with new pedagogical techniques they believe are contributing to student retention and success. They are taking time to ensure learners are connected to the college campus; advocating for students and teaching them how to be advocates for

themselves; and infusing existing curriculum with opportunities for learners to begin to explore their academic and professional goals. I did not find evidence that teaching peers who were not connected to these initiatives were pursuing similar changes in their practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I share the main findings and sub-findings of my case study research. It is evident the leader-participants in my study understand the importance of adjunct faculty in carrying out the college's mission; however, they admit efforts to include contingent teachers in the school's comprehensive student success initiative have been minimal. Fortunately, the adjunct Composition I faculty participants in the study arrived at the institution with their teacher identity intact, and that has guided them in attending to the success of their learners without having to depend upon much external direction from supervisors. Evidence shows these teachers are applying research-based pedagogical best practices in their classes to ensure their students are reaching their goals. Judging from survey responses and interview conversations, the majority of this population is aware of the college's shift in mission to emphasize its commitment to improving student success, and the teachers are confident they have something valuable to contribute in shaping the institution's comprehensive student success initiative. They feel alienated by change agents that do not appear to recognize and respect their professional identity as educator, and they fail to find congruency between the messages of initiatives led by these change agents and their classroom practice.

When change agents respect the adjunct Composition I faculty member's

professional identity as an educator and include him or her in the development and administration of initiatives intended to improve student success, faculty are more likely to embrace the messages associated with change and use the information they gain to experiment with new ways of teaching.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

The landscape at community colleges has altered significantly in recent years. Schools are increasingly dependent upon a contingent faculty to deliver the mission of the institution (NCES, 2012). Simultaneously, community colleges are being pressured to improve student retention and success. External stakeholders like the President of the United States and private foundations like Lumina define student success in terms of completion – graduation, receipt of a certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution (Humphreys, 2012, p. 10; Lumina, 2016; Rhoades, 2012, p. 18; White House, 2016). The definition of student success espoused by leaders and teachers in the community college system is far more nuanced than what is mentioned by external stakeholders in newspaper articles and political speeches. For them, each learner has a unique goal to achieve, and it is not necessarily earning a credential. As one leader participant in my study says:

I don't think we can define [student success] institutionally because I think every student who comes here is going to have a very different definition of what success means to them. It might be one course, it might be the culmination of a degree. I know historically – and let's be honest; a lot of this is driven by government and federal numbers – we've always looked at completers, graduation rates as a measure of success, but I believe the whole mission of a community college – it goes beyond just completing a college degree. Much of it is vocational in nature, and that might mean short-term training rather than a two-year plus degree.

Even with this understanding of success in the context of the community college setting, the leadership at East Coast has prioritized improving retention and progress of learners in its strategic plan and directed resources toward a comprehensive student success initiative, which has included enrolling in ATD and

creating specific strategies and policies aimed at increasing student graduation, certification, and transfer.

Knowing part-time teachers comprise the larger portion of the faculty and are expected to carry out the mission of the institution, I undertook an embedded, single case study to determine how adjunct Composition I faculty are making sense of the college's shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to student success and the impact of their sensemaking process on their teaching. The members of the college have always aspired to help students be successful; however, the college constituency made this aspect of their commitment an evident priority in a revised mission statement, as is evidenced in the number one goal: "Maximize student success." The school further clarifies the meaning behind this goal by explaining its plans to enhance institutional effectiveness through careful, regular assessment; improving the progress of first-time, full-time students from remedial classes to college level classes by three percent; and the creation of a comprehensive student success plan that will result in a 25% increase in the number of first-time, full-time students who earn degrees or certificates.

I formulated a series of questions to guide my research. Drawing on the theoretical framework I presented in Chapter 2, I developed two theoretical propositions. Each was paired with an overarching research question and helped guide my data analysis.

Research Question #1: How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?

- a) What messages is the institution sending to adjunct Composition I faculty about the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?
- b) What information and narratives are adjunct Composition I faculty prioritizing as they make sense of the change process?
- c) What aspects of the adjunct Composition I faculty member's identity and self interests are helping him or her make sense of the change in mission to emphasize the institution's commitment to student success?

Theoretical Proposition 1: In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty have close, regular contact with institutional change agents, they prioritize the information and narratives they receive from these individuals in making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Theoretical Proposition 1a: In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty have little or no direct contact with institutional change agents, they prioritize the information and narratives they derive from their identity, professional development, and personal experience to make sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.

Research Question #2: How are adjunct Composition I faculty applying their understanding about the change in mission to their pedagogy?

Theoretical Proposition 2: Adjunct Composition I faculty who work in conjunction with institutional change agents to make sense of the community

college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for helping students succeed.

Theoretical Proposition 2a: Adjunct Composition I faculty who depend upon their identity, professional development, and personal experience to understand the shift in mission at the community college do not recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and do not implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for helping students succeed.

I chose to make Composition I faculty rather than the entire adjunct body the focus of my research for several reasons. First, Composition I is a gateway course that impacts student performance beyond the English department. The writing, reading, information literacy and critical thinking skills acquired in this class are vital to the performance of students pursuing study in subsequent courses, regardless of the discipline. Every degree-seeking student in community colleges of the state where I conducted my study are mandated to take Composition I as a general education requirement. Second, there is a shared training and socialization process for teachers of the composition discipline that sets them apart from their colleagues who specialize in literature and creative writing and professors of gateway courses in disciplines other than English. By centering my research on this group of individuals, I was able to bound my study as I collected data and analyzed it.

This chapter contains four sections. I begin by reviewing the two main themes and three sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis stage of the study. Each theme and sub-theme is considered in both the context of extant literature and its unique contribution to the body of research on adjunct faculty and institutional change. This leads to a discussion of how these themes help me answer the research questions of my study. Next, I consider the implications of my study for theory and practice. Following this, I examine both limitations of my study and opportunities for further research, and I present a conclusion.

The first main theme to emerge from this study is “adjunct Composition I faculty are not part of the formal discussion about institutional change.” Both leaders and part-time teachers participating in this study acknowledge this phenomenon, but they have differing viewpoints about its cause. Institutional leadership acknowledged they rely on adjunct faculty to deliver the school’s mission, which includes a greater emphasis on their commitment to improving student success. Most leaders admit more could be done to involve adjunct faculty in the process of change; at the same time, they suggest adjunct faculty members have a limited commitment to the institution that precludes them from involvement. Leaders cite the adjunct faculty member’s busy schedule or his or her resistance to contributing more effort to the job than his or her employment contract with the college specifies.

In reviewing documents, interview transcripts, survey responses, and notes I took as a participant observer at meetings, I confirmed the school relied heavily upon full-time employees – not adjunct faculty -- to engage in both a sensemaking

and sensegiving process in order to shape the new mission and to effect change. The sensegiving aspect of this process is a crucial element, empowering constituents by giving them a role in constructing a shared vision of the future (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Kezar, 2012). Part-time teachers were primarily on the receiving end of information about the college's mission shift. In fact, adjunct Composition I faculty were not solicited to directly contribute to conversations about institutional change until a year into the school's membership in ATD. No adjunct faculty were formally invited to serve on committees relevant to the mission revision or construction of the strategic plan. No adjunct faculty were formally invited to serve on committees associated with the comprehensive student success plan. The school did not create forums through which adjunct Composition I faculty could exchange ideas with change agents during the inchoate stages of change.

A number of adjunct participants in this study reported they were willing and able to provide support to the college's comprehensive student success plan; however, they said the leadership did not supply adequate information about it or failed to facilitate opportunities for meaningful engagement. In a recent dissertation study about academic community at the community college, Sam (2012) observed "an indifferent culture toward adjuncts was prevalent" at her research site.

Historically, adjunct faculty have operated on the periphery of the academic community. The existing literature about adjunct faculty shows they are never fully integrated into the campus culture; have few opportunities for exchange with leaders and their peers; do not have a voice in shaping policy and curriculum; are rarely recognized for their contributions to the institution; and are disconnected

from innovations related to improving student success at the community college (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Sam, 2014; Meixner, et al., 2010; Mayer, et al., 2014; Rutshow, et al., 2011; Thompson, 2003).

My study confirms adjuncts continue to feel a sense of alienation from the institution and its innovations. The responsibility of building an inclusive academic community, according to Sam (2012), sits with various constituencies, not just the individual (p. 194). During her research, Sam observed adjunct faculty were interested in being part of new academic communities, but they did not have the wherewithal to join them. When administrators and long-term faculty assume the adjunct faculty member's lack of involvement is representative of their disinterest, they may fail to see and address the roadblocks keeping adjunct faculty from being active members of the community (p. 242). I observed the same tendency among the leader participants in my study. They were not mindful of creating pathways for adjunct faculty participation in the college's comprehensive student success plan because they thought part-time faculty were too busy or they were not concerned with mission shift.

Loose coupling suggests a reason for this. This organizational design allows the school to operate in a cost-effective manner, which is vital to preserving the access component of the institution's mission. At this study site, a small administrative core of academic leaders maintains a traditional workday schedule filled with ceremonial duties, meetings, and classroom visits. Leaders are pulled into various campus settings and the community external to the college. The administrative group is too small to closely monitor the vast technical core because

there are not enough hours in the day and their schedule diverges from that of the teaching staff. Instructors are hired as experts, expected to carry out their duties with little intervention from supervisors, and work is lightly assessed (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer et al., 1980).

The college might hire more leaders to ensure greater, regular interaction between administrators and followers, but this would require more funding to address the demand for additional salary and benefits, a cost that would likely be passed along to students through an increase in tuition and/or fees. Raising the rate of tuition, however, would defeat the access component of the college's mission, possibly precluding students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and traditionally marginalized populations from their only opportunity to acquire a post-secondary credential. Additionally, too much regimentation could inhibit a teacher's production in the classroom. As Ingersoll (1993) observes, administrators must permit instructors "looseness" in planning and running classes in order to be effective in the face of student vagaries (p. 101). Every Composition I class, for example, is populated with students of different backgrounds and needs, and an instructor must adjust strategies and plans to help learners reach the goals and objectives of the course.

When teaching and administrative schedules vary, it is difficult for leaders and instructors to meet either formally or informally to engage in the social aspect of sensemaking. This means there are few opportunities for leaders and constituents to construct a "shared meaning" of change about a specific initiative, so when adjunct Composition I faculty members are presented with the cue for change,

they are more likely to depend upon “ready-made scripts and justifications influenced by their own identities and self interests” in making sense of that change (O’Meara et al., 2014, p. 625). Their limited social interaction with change agents and other teachers forces them to depend more upon old frameworks for interpreting information and restricts their chances to test old frameworks with new frameworks as they attempt to understand alteration (Weick et al., 2005). This gives me a partial answer to my first research question, which asks how adjunct Composition I faculty are making sense of the college’s shift in mission to emphasize its commitment to improving student success. I will present my answers to the research questions after I review the other themes and sub-themes that emerged from my study.

The second main theme that surfaced from the study is “adjuncts have a secure sense of teacher identity.” One unique contribution of my research is that it demonstrates adjunct faculty can be confident, knowledgeable and effective teachers concerned with student retention and success. The participants in this study are at a point in their careers where they feel a solid sense of who they are as professionals. Penrose (2012) believes there are three components of professional identity: “(1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and (3) an internal social structure based on shared goals and values” (p. 112). Vital to this professionalism is engagement within the professional community.

Throughout this study, I refer to the participants possessing a “teacher’s identity.” It is meant to be a generic, inclusive term for a group of instructors who

hold the same job title and possess similar practices and values, but they arrived at that common point via different paths. As I collected and analyzed data, I realized the identity of the Composition I faculty members was very complex, an amalgam of diverse experiences – being a college student, formal training in pedagogy and education, receiving an official credential, professional development activities, teaching in a variety of classroom settings (primary school, secondary school, community college, university), and conversations with administrators and teaching peers. Identity is not static; it is constantly evolving as a result of formal learning, lived experience, and dialogue (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p. 108; Sachs, 2013, p. 155). For part-time Composition I teachers, identity is “fraught with contradictions, conflicts, and insecurities” (Bilia et al., 2011, p. 388). This dissonance may be more amplified for adjunct faculty at the community college, where even full-time faculty struggle to find their footing within the context of the higher education setting, caught between the identities of scholarly university professor and effective teacher (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

This consideration of identity is important. According to sensemaking theory, a worker’s identity is a powerful force in making sense of change. The manner in which the employee envisions himself or herself within a work setting impacts the way he or she receives cues for change and rationalizes that change (Weick et al., 2005, p. 416). Judging from the manner in which the worker enacts or interprets the workplace, supervisors and colleagues will develop an image of the employee that impacts the manner in which they engage with him or her. This, in turn, stabilizes or destabilizes the worker’s identity. Weick et al. (2005) assert that if an employee

perceives his or her image has altered in the face of a colleague or supervisor, the employee is in a condition where he or she is amenable to receiving new messages (p. 416).

The existing literature about adjunct faculty focuses largely on how their sense of identity is vulnerable to institutional practices – exclusion from college governance, having no voice in shaping the curriculum of classes, being treated as if they are somehow less talented or less important than full-time faculty (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Meixner et al., 2010; Street et al., 2012; CCCSE, 2014). Penrose worries the professional identity of contingent faculty is challenged by their work conditions. She argues the worldview of composition studies is a complex one, and new faculty who are introduced to it through a mandated teaching curriculum rather than engagement in study and discourse with colleagues may find conflict between their teaching values and departmental expectations that will undermine their confidence as experts (Penrose, 2012, p. 113). Furthermore, she believes there is a risk contingent faculty will view institutionally organized professional development activities as a means of indoctrination to organizational practices and values rather than an opportunity for genuine exchange of ideas and growth (Penrose, 2012, p. 116). This, too, has the potential of making faculty feel inadequate.

The portion of the literature that documents a possible relationship between student failure to succeed in college and their enrollment in classes taught primarily by adjunct faculty suggests part-time teachers are somewhat inferior technicians

(Bettinger & Long, 2004; Umbach, 2007) or they are less available to their students when compared to their full-time peers (Cox et al., 2010; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009).

The participants in my study were sensitive to many of the institutional elements that were reported in the existing literature as potentially undermining their identity. They are not part of the shared governance system (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 198; Kezar & Sam, 2014, p. 445). Unless they teach ALP courses, they do not have a voice in shaping the curriculum or selecting the book for the course they teach (Thompson, 2003, p. 45). They largely feel invisible to administration and full-time faculty (Leslie & Gappa, 1993; Meixner et al., 2010). Simultaneously, they seem unfazed by these potentially crippling factors and continue to be productive. Their strength appears to emanate from their teacher identity. This teacher identity stems from a combination of sources. First, it comes from affirmation of their professional status by virtue of a credential – for example, a certificate from a state agency or a degree from an accredited college – and/or sustained employment in an educational institution. Second, it comes from a sense of competence – having a body of knowledge and a set of strategies to carry out their responsibilities. It is further fortified through evidence of sustained classroom effectiveness – trust and praise from colleagues and supervisors at other educational institutions, positive student evaluations, and consistent learner progress toward their goals. This is how faculty can effectively instruct their learners despite their frequent isolation from colleagues in the community college setting.

In fact, having a buffer between themselves and administrators and full-time faculty might actually protect them from developing a destructive self-image. The

teachers in my study are already employing research-based pedagogical methods for helping students reach their goals. Their classes are student-centered. They limit lecture in favor of employing active and collaborative learning strategies (Chang, 2006; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kinzie, 2005). They hold their students to high expectations and provide them with the necessary support to meet those expectations (Bickerstaff et al., 2012; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; CCCSE, 2010; Tinto, 1999). Using e-mail and texting, they are available to their students beyond the classroom setting. They feel adequately informed about institutional policies and activities as a result of an orientation they attended upon their hire and electronic communication they receive from program coordinators. When they have questions and concerns, they are comfortable reaching out to a lower-level leader to assist them in finding answers. They are the competent experts within the microcosm of their classroom.

The first sub-theme to the second main theme of my study is “adjunct faculty prioritize the framework of their teacher identity in making sense of the college’s shift in mission.” When adjunct faculty arrive at the institution with the confidence and technical skills to work effectively in isolation, the framework they apply in making sense of change comes primarily from their teacher identity. Weick (2001) tells us members of a loosely coupled system tend to craft “individual realities” that result from each person’s unique perception, contributions to the environment, and bounded rationality (p. 387). Even though adjunct participants in this study rarely, if ever, had the opportunity to interact with one another, there were obvious parallels in the “realities” they created apart from one another. The teachers unanimously

agree they have an important role to play in helping students reach their academic goals, and they employ a number of pedagogical practices that have been verified through research to contribute to student progress and success. It is likely these parallels in thinking and practice are the result of commonalities they encountered during their education, training, and on-the-job experience. These parallels in thinking and practice may have resulted from what Perrow (2014) terms “unobtrusive controls” or what Weick (2001) calls “control by premises” (p. 77). Neither of these result from the institutional environment. Perrow (2014) posits that one form of organizational control rests in oversight of the “cognitive premises underlying action.” Unobtrusive controls are established through the “training institutions and professional associations” of employees whose work is non-routine (Perrow, 2014, p. 130). Unobtrusive controls are used by the employee to reduce the range of inputs that will influence his or her decision process and narrow down the number of alternatives to consider in reaching a decision (Perrow, 2014, p. 129).

Ingersoll (1993) asserts teachers are caught between two entities: an administration that communicates mandates and students who have varying needs that challenge their instructors in complying with administrative demands (p. 104). Though Ingersoll’s focus was directed at primary and secondary teachers, his theory is applicable to teachers in the post-secondary setting. It is difficult to classify community college students as one type since they begin their education at various stages of their lives (e.g. traditional-aged student versus returning student), come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and lack identical college preparatory training. The one thing the members of this group of learners seem to share is they

are facing some kind of challenge (e.g. remediation needs and balancing personal and work obligations with commitment to education) in reaching the ultimate goal – acquisition of a credential or transfer to a four-year college. Ingersoll (1993) observes that when leadership gives the teacher autonomy and discretion, they cultivate faculty commitment, avoid challenge, and shift the responsibility of making students successful to the teachers; at the same time, teachers have limited control in making students successful, but they continue to operate as if they do (p. 104). They depend upon their understanding of standards and norms to help them decide the right strategies to employ in helping students reach their goals. This is consistent with Perrow’s “unobtrusive controls” and Weick’s “control by premises.”

The second sub-theme that emerged in relationship to my second main theme is “adjunct faculty are ambivalent about or resist change initiatives they perceive do not respect their teacher identity.” In general, change is arduous for all faculty. As Evans (1996) notes, change represents a loss, challenges a teacher’s competence, creates confusion, and causes conflict. Multiple scholars have acknowledged successful, enduring change is dependent upon the leader’s ability to make constituents partners in the change process (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 2012). It is difficult to foster sensemaking and collaboration among followers working in a loosely coupled system. A productive sensemaking process involves negotiation between parties in constructing a vision of the future or a “sensegiving” process (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Followers are likely to be receptive to “sensegiving” when they recognize a change will have a significant impact on them, their peers, or the institution where they are employed (Maitlis &

Lawrence, 2007). Employees participate in sensegiving when they are a recognized authority on an issue, viewed as “legitimate,” and given the occasion to participate in sensegiving (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Maitlis (2005) observes sensemaking requires different amounts of animation and control, depending upon the outcome desired (p. 47).

The Report In/Report Out policy and Developmental Advising Activity were both well-intentioned, widespread changes introduced by the administration of East Coast. Their common aim was to address student needs in terms of retention and progress; however, they were introduced to the constituency with restricted opportunity for organizational sensemaking. This means, leadership maintained control of the meanings attached to these initiatives without allowing stakeholders an opportunity to “provide alternative understandings” (Maitlis, 2005, p. 39). This process was marked by low animation among stakeholders and high control by leadership (Maitlis, 2005, p. 39). Restricted in how they could make sense of these alterations in policy and practice, faculty failed to recognize their value in the context of the college’s shift in mission toward emphasizing its commitment to helping students succeed. Both initiatives were met with confusion and resistance. They helped perpetuate the idea adjunct faculty are less worthy than full-time faculty (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Meixner et al., 2010; Street et al., 2012). Full-time faculty are exempt from the Report In/Report Out policy. Full-time faculty were at the center of the developmental advising activity. They received exclusive training in using the school’s advising software and were stationed on campus during the two-day event, working directly with students to plan their classes for the upcoming

semester. Only senior adjuncts were invited to participate, and they were not given the same kind of responsibility or prominence as their full-time faculty were.

One might argue the Report In/Report Out policy is more of a rule than an initiative, and while rules have the potential to create tighter connections between people in a system, they can also increase looseness between actors when they are applied in places that have no problems to be resolved (Weick, 2001, pp. 42-43). For example, leadership intended for the rule to communicate the school's value of holding complete and engaging classroom meetings. During my study, I found evidence the majority of interview participants were already maintaining a full, active classroom meeting with their students. For these individuals, the introduction of the Report In/Report Out rule was a signal adjunct faculty were not trusted by leadership to carry out their professional obligation, and this confused or insulted their teacher identity. Furthermore, when instructors learned about violators of the rule who escape punishment, they viewed the rule as an exercise in futility on the part of administration and were further disillusioned.

Adjunct Composition I faculty also felt their teacher's identity was disrespected in several ways throughout the implementation of the school's developmental advising activity. They were charged with being heralds of the initiative without having the benefit of consistent and accurate information. They were forced to spend extra time to locate answers to their students' questions. The event caused further disruption to a semester already made tenuous by numerous class cancellations due to inclement weather. Had the adjunct faculty been engaged in a sensemaking and sensegiving process during the planning stage of this

initiative, they might have developed a richer understanding of its value and how it would proceed, and they may have contributed some ideas that could have made the event more effective. For example, they may have helped administrators understand the problematic nature of cancelling classes at a time when the opportunity for direct contact with students was so precious. During this exchange, they might also have persuaded administration to see the value of having all faculty trained in the methods of developmental advising and software operation. Given this knowledge and ability, the adjunct faculty member would be equipped to advise students who could not attend the formal advisement event because of a personal or a professional conflict.

The final sub-theme to emerge as part of my second main theme is “adjunct faculty embrace the messages from change initiatives they perceive respect their teacher identity.” My study demonstrates when change strategies are designed to include adjunct faculty in the sensemaking and sensegiving process of change, the adjunct faculty feel their professional identity as an educator is respected, and they are more likely to be receptive to the messages of change and apply them to their practice. According to Penrose (2012)

Being a professional is not a matter of being free from community decisions but being part of them; not just of acquiring the profession’s knowledge but of contributing to it; not of working in isolation but of engaging with colleagues (p. 121).

Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf (2013) confirm adjunct faculty in their study gained a greater sense of their professional identity as English faculty at two-year colleges by engaging in organizational socialization experiences. Since part-time

composition faculty are unlikely to have the funds or the time to engage in professional conferences or to hold memberships in professional organizations, “the best opportunity for part-time faculty to cultivate a professional identity is locally, namely at and through their colleges” (Toth et al., 2013, p. 107).

The ALP and career development curriculum infusion initiatives of my study began conservatively. Change agents introduced them with a mindfulness toward the school’s existing culture and a sensitivity toward adjunct Composition I faculty identity as educators. In both cases, the leaders of each initiative made the teaching constituency – including part-time Composition I teachers – aware of the rationale and operations of both programs through regular dissemination of information. ALP agents held information sessions and training programs for interested faculty. They not only discussed the intricacies of the program, but they also shared statistics that demonstrated the positive impact of ALP on student performance. Change agents associated with the career development initiative led orientation sessions for all faculty, and then they recruited a small group with whom they collaborated to infuse career development activities into the curriculum of existing developmental and gateway courses. Successes were promoted by faculty to their peers through professional development activities and articles in the employee newsletter. Additional teachers were recruited via word of mouth, and the program continues to grow.

These initiatives served as coupling devices between adjunct faculty and the college’s comprehensive student success plan. Part-time stakeholders felt their identity as professional educators was respected through their partnership with

other professional educators associated with the initiative. The change agents connected with these initiatives employed a guided approach to sensemaking; it was marked both by high control and high animation (Maitlis, 2005, p. 35). The sensemaking process was highly controlled because it was structured and orderly. It was highly animated because there was a regular and significant exchange of information between leaders and teachers (Maitlis, 2005, p. 31). As these initiatives grow, they gain additional stakeholders and are becoming an embraced norm of the institutional culture.

Coburn (2001) tells us messages about change are abstract. The work of teachers is active. Faced with the challenge of translating concepts into classroom operations, teachers in Coburn's study depended upon their "worldviews," "preexisting practices," and "collective sensemaking" to make sense of change, determine which concepts to emphasize and ignore, and identify a process for transforming general concepts into classroom practice (Coburn, 2001, p. 162). Coburn (2001) reports the sensemaking of her study's participants was influenced by the parties with which teachers conversed and the "conditions" created by leaders for verbal exchange. In the community college setting, adjunct Composition I faculty have limited opportunities or agency to engage in the kind of collective sensemaking the full-time elementary school reading teachers in Coburn's study did. Elementary school reading teachers are mandated by contract to engage in professional development, and since they work identical hours in the same setting, there is a greater chance their paths will cross and informal conversations about change can occur. Coburn (2001) proves that even these conditions do not

guarantee productive sensemaking; however, it does afford the conditions that could lead to successful sensemaking about change. Adjunct Composition I faculty in my study operate under very different conditions. Unlike Coburn's participants, they have limited opportunities to "work with other teachers" in order to "grapple with multiple and sometimes conflicting messages."

Like Coburn's (2001) study, my study shows the manner in which change agents facilitate sensemaking opportunities is influential to the process, even in the community college setting (p. 160). They have the power to dictate where sensemaking occurs; emphasize certain messages; frame the messages; and structure collaboration (Coburn, 2001, pp. 160-162). When leaders create the conditions for sensemaking among adjunct Composition I faculty, the teachers gain "access to greater resources and expertise" to aid them in making "decisions about which of the plethora of messages to pursue" in enacting productive change within their classrooms (Coburn, 2001, p. 162).

Taken as a whole, this discussion about themes can be applied in answering the research questions and discussing the theoretical propositions and rival explanations of my study.

Research Question #1: How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?

To answer this question completely, I will respond to its sub-questions. My first sub-question is: "What messages is the institution sending to Composition I

adjunct faculty about the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?”

The umbrella message of East Coast Community College’s comprehensive student success plan is “We are emphasizing our commitment to improving student success.” Through interview of leadership figures and review of documentation, I found more specific messages were being conveyed through initiatives associated with the comprehensive student success plan. The Report In/Report Out policy was intended to communicate the importance of holding a full and active classroom meeting to ensure students have adequate time to learn and apply the skills and knowledge being taught in each course. The developmental advising activity meant to communicate the important role teachers play in ensuring students receive the right guidance in selecting classes and planning their academic pathway to goal achievement. The ALP initiative communicated teachers must help new students navigate and connect with the institutional setting. It also emphasized the importance of teachers advocating for students as well as helping learners acquire the skills to advocate for themselves in the college setting. Both the ALP and the career development curriculum infusion initiatives communicate the importance of teachers helping students begin to think about both their academic and career goals early in their college experience.

In addition to the first sub-question, I formulated two more sub-questions: “What information and narratives are adjunct Composition I faculty privileging as they make sense of the change process?” and “What aspects of the adjunct Composition I faculty member’s identity and self interests are helping him or her

make sense of the change in mission to emphasize the institution's commitment to student success?"

The answer to these questions is dependent upon the adjunct faculty member's relationship with change agents associated with the college's comprehensive student success plan and whether or not those individuals show respect to their teacher identity. At the community college, leadership describes adjunct faculty as professionals, and to some degree, an argument can be made to support this view. Adjunct faculty are trusted to function effectively in the absence of constant direct supervisory control because they have been formally educated and anticipated to engage in regular professional development. At the same time, they are not entirely trusted to be responsible (e.g. Report In/Report Out; being required to teach with a standardized text and curriculum). They tend not to have the resources or opportunities to sustain membership in a professional network of their disciplinary peers where they can exchange ideas, continue to develop their craft, and obtain moral support. Because the majority of study participants primarily work in isolation from institutional change agents and teaching colleagues, they are apt to take their cues about the need for change from classroom interactions with learners. They draw heavily upon the framework of their identity as professional educator to make sense of the general message that is being sent by the institution to them about the college's shift in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success (O'Meara et al., 2014, p. 625). The majority of participants in this study do not construe the overall message about mission shift as a cue for change as they are already confident they are taking the necessary steps to

make students successful. This finding supports Theoretical Proposition 1a of my study: “In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty do not have close, regular contact with institutional change agents, they prioritize the information and narratives they derive from their identity, professional development, and personal experience to make sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.”

There were occasions in the study where I found leadership figures served as coupling mechanisms between adjunct faculty and initiatives associated with East Coast’s comprehensive student success plan. They demonstrated respect for the identity of their adjunct colleagues as educational professionals. These change agents gave adjunct Composition I faculty cues for the need to implement change and created the conditions so they could engage in the social aspect of sensemaking and sensegiving that resulted in new frameworks that helped part-time teachers understand the shift in mission. These adjunct Composition I faculty depended upon a combination of their teacher identity and sensemaking and sensegiving with change agents to understand the change in mission to emphasize its commitment to improving student success (Coburn, 2001, p. 162). They did not necessarily prioritize the messages they received from change agents about mission shift in making sense of the change, as I suggested they might in Theoretical Proposition 1; however, they were receptive to messages from leadership under these conditions and synthesized the information they gathered from multiple sources in building their understanding of mission shift.

I did not find substantial evidence to support any of the rival explanations for Theoretical Propositions 1 and 1a. In Rival Explanation 1 to Theoretical Proposition 1, I asserted, “Adjunct Composition I faculty have close regular contact with institutional change agents, but they prioritize their identity and their personal experience in making sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.” The majority of study participants did not have close, regular contact with institutional change agents, but those who did did not report prioritizing the messages from these sources over their own identity and personal experience during the sensemaking process. Rather, they seemed to draw equally from all resources in making sense of the shift in institutional mission. In Rival Explanation 2 to Theoretical Proposition 1, I asserted “Adjunct Composition I faculty have close regular contact with institutional change agents, but they prioritize a broader societal educational trend as they make sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.” As I mentioned before, the majority of participants in this study did not have close regular contact with institutional change agents. At the same time, none reported prioritizing a broader societal educational trend in making sense about the shift in mission. In Rival Explanation 1 to Theoretical Proposition 1a, I asserted, “Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, so they prioritize a broader societal educational trend in making sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.” While it was true the majority of study participants did not have regular contact with institutional change agents, they did

not prioritize a broader societal educational trend in making sense about institutional change. In Rival Explanation 2 to Theoretical Proposition 1a, I assert, “Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, so they prioritize messages from change agents of a success initiative undertaken at other institutions where they teach in order to make sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success.” Again, it is true the majority of adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, and though many of the study participants did work for other educational institutions in addition to East Coast, none identified messages they received from leadership of success initiatives at other institutions as being influential in their sensemaking process about mission shift at East Coast Community College.

This brings me back to my main question: “How are adjunct Composition I faculty members making sense of the community college’s change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success?” Adjunct Composition I faculty members are aware of the overall message about the institution’s mission change, and they tend to draw upon their professional identity as educator when making sense of this shift; however, their sensemaking process is also influenced by their perception of how institutional change agents and initiatives are treating their professional identity. When change initiatives are designed to respect the adjunct Composition I faculty member’s identity, he or she hears and understands the intended messages of the initiative. When change agents introduce initiatives that

do not seem to respect the adjunct faculty member's professional identity, the part-time teacher does not comprehend the intended messages of those initiatives.

Research Question #2: How are adjunct Composition I faculty applying their understanding about the change in mission to their pedagogy?

In cases where adjunct Composition I faculty are taking their cues for change from their instructional community and are dependent upon their identity as professional educators to make sense of the shift in mission, I observed few efforts by faculty to alter their pedagogical approach. This is not to say the adjunct Composition I faculty lacked commitment to instituting improvements to their work in the interest of creating conditions for emphasizing the college's commitment to improving student success. The study participants believe they are already investing efforts in this direction and their strategies and approaches to teaching are reflective of best practices for improving student success. These findings disprove a portion of my Theoretical Proposition 2a, where I speculated adjunct Composition I faculty who depend upon their identity and personal experience to make sense of the shift in mission would not recognize the important role they play in making students successful. In contrast, the study participants said they do understand their responsibility in helping students reach goals; however, because these faculty are confident they are already serving the needs of students in this regard, they are not compelled to alter their teaching practices in the manner being advocated for by institutional change agents associated with the college's comprehensive student success plan. This finding is more in line with the second rival explanation I formulated in response to Theoretical Proposition 2a: "Adjunct Composition I

faculty who depend upon their identity, professional development and personal experience to understand the community college's change in mission to emphasize its commitment to student success understand the important role they play in helping students succeed but do not implement pedagogical changes that are relevant to helping students succeed." I would further refine this statement by adding, "Adjunct Composition I faculty, as a result of their understanding of mission shift alone, do not implement pedagogical changes that are deemed relevant by change agents to helping students succeed; rather, they implement pedagogical changes when they perceive their classroom practices are not helping their students achieve the intended outcomes of the course."

In cases where adjunct faculty engage in a sensemaking process with institutional change agents to gain an understanding of the college's shift in mission, they understand the important role they play in helping students achieve success and learn new pedagogical approaches for helping students reach their goals. They fold these strategies into the existing repertoire of best practices they already employ in an effort to improve their methods for making learners successful. This finding is consistent with Theoretical Proposition 2.

Rival Explanation 1, which I proposed in opposition to Theoretical Proposition 2 is also supported by findings in my study. I asserted, "Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents, but they still recognize the important role they play in helping students succeed and implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of best practices for making students succeed." Even when adjunct Composition I faculty in this study did not

have regular contact with institutional change agents, they understood the important role they play in helping students succeed, and they did implement pedagogical changes that are reflective of research-based best practices for making students succeed. These changes, though, are not reflective of the influence of the unique institutional messages about how teachers can help the institution achieve its shift in mission. I found no evidence to support Rival Explanation 2 to Theoretical Proposition 2: “Adjunct Composition I faculty do not have regular contact with institutional change agents and undertake no pedagogical changes relevant to helping students succeed.” All of my study’s participants had made pedagogical changes in the interest of helping students succeed, regardless of whether or not they had regular contact with institutional change agents.

Implications

Implications for theory. This study affirms some earlier findings about sensemaking and loosely coupled systems, but it also extends the theories. As Evans (1996) notes, employees will undertake change they find “meaningful.” They must understand it, accept its impact on their convictions and the things for which they hold a fondness, and they must be able to synthesize the change with their worldview. According to sensemaking theory, a worker’s identity is a powerful force in making sense of change. The manner in which the employee envisions himself or herself within a work setting impacts the way he or she receives cues for change and rationalizes that change (Weick et al., 2005, p. 416). Judging from the manner in which the worker “enacts” or “interprets” the workplace, supervisors and colleagues will develop an “image” of the employee that impacts the manner in which they

engage with him or her. This, in turn, “stabilizes or destabilizes” the worker’s identity. Weick et al. (2005) indicate that if an employee perceives his or her image has altered in the face of a colleague or supervisor, the employee is in a condition where he or she is amenable to receiving new messages (p. 416). Generally, scholars have assumed destabilization of identity means a worker’s competency and good reputation are threatened, and this motivates him or her to effect a change that can reinstate his or her previous positive image among colleagues (Coopey, Keegan & Emler, 1997, p. 304). My study asserts that employees within a loosely coupled system can perceive conflicting images of themselves among various groups of constituents in the same work setting. This is not a unique finding in terms of non-tenure-track faculty. In an earlier study, Levin and Shaker (2011) found contingent full-time faculty assumed different identities when in contact with various audiences in the university setting.

In the classroom and with students, [full-time, non-tenure track instructors (FTNTT)] have practice identities as expert teachers; in interactions with tenured faculty, [FTNTT] faculty become subalterns as their placement on the academic hierarchy diminishes their influence and power within their figured world. In this world, the university is a professional bureaucracy, where high-status professionals or professors set the norms on the basis of research traditions, which largely exclude [FTNTT] faculty. In the world of their classrooms, however, their low institutional status matters little because that position is of little import or visibility to their students (p. 1479).

I draw a similar conclusion in my study of adjunct Composition I faculty. The participants talk about having two workplace identities in the community college setting that impact the manner in which they conceptualize themselves, but what is unique in my study is that I examine how the dual identity of adjunct faculty

influences the manner in which they make sense of and apply messages about change to their practice.

The first identity of adjunct faculty is shaped by their formal professional training as educators and their work in the classroom. The teachers perceive they are recognized as authorities and respected by their constituents – their students -- in this setting. Employed in a loosely coupled system, they are accustomed to functioning with little supervisory intervention and few opportunities for exchange with their supervisors or fellow instructors. Their teacher identity is primarily destabilized when they witness learners failing in a class despite the implementation of past practices that have resulted in success. This is their cue to engage in a sensemaking process to try to discover a plausible story for what is happening and determining a solution for resolving the problem. They are largely motivated by a need to preserve their sense of self-confidence and self-sufficiency as teachers. Their tools for effecting meaningful change are their teacher identity and interactions with their students.

In observing and conversing with adjunct Composition I faculty about their work, it was evident they were employing pedagogical best practices in helping learners reach their short-term and long-term goals. They generally understood student success as a priority of the institution, but these teachers did not consider the college's alteration in mission revolutionary since they were already committed to helping learners succeed in their classroom work. Their framework for understanding how to make students successful was constructed from their memories of being a student; their formal training as educators; their classroom

teaching experience; and/or sensemaking experiences they had with learners. They were not primed to hear new messages from campus resources associated with the comprehensive student success plan that may have resulted in unique pedagogical changes in their classes.

The adjunct Composition I faculty member's other identity exists beyond the borders of the classroom in the broader context of the community college setting. In this environment, they feel their identity is largely unappreciated by administrators and colleagues. This is affirmed for them by their low salary, omission from departmental business and college governance, and lack of recognition. The literature about adjunct faculty confirms this attitude permeates their ranks nationally. The instructors have come to accept this treatment as a norm, and change initiatives that seem to affirm this deficit perspective – Report In/Report Out policy and the developmental advisement activity in my study – fail to create the kind of destabilization of identity within the target sensemakers to make them hear unique institutional messages being sent about the college's shift in mission toward improving student success. Adjunct faculty interpret these initiatives as further signals of institutional distrust in and disrespect for their professional abilities. This negative image is further amplified by the fact the initiatives treat full-time faculty differently from part-time faculty.

Something different happened, though, when adjunct Composition I faculty engaged with change agents and teaching colleagues who treated them as competent and knowledgeable professionals and included them in the professional learning community dedicated to effecting change. Given the respect, resources, and

opportunity for sensemaking with colleagues, the adjunct faculty member's identity as undervalued worker in the broader context of the community college was destabilized, and he or she became receptive to new messages about how to make students successful from a fresh resource, and this resulted in unique alterations to practice that were advocated for by initiatives within the college's comprehensive student success plan. The result was teachers implementing new pedagogical strategies in their classes as a result of the messages they heard from change agents. For example, they planned scavenger hunts to familiarize students with the campus; they invited guest speakers to make learners aware of various programs and services available through the college; they taught students how to navigate the college's self-advising software, and they built assignments into their curriculum that allowed students to practice course competencies while they reflected upon life goals or career interests. These practices are unique when compared with the practices employed by peers who have not encountered opportunities to engage in change that respect their teacher's identity.

This aspect of my research affirms what has been recognized by other scholars. A sustained PLC has the potential to allow sensemaking to continue beyond the implementation point of alteration, which may be important to maintain significant change (Kezar, 2013, p. 775; Coburn, 2001, p. 163). According to Putnam et al. (2009) a professional learning community is "a group of educators...who focus their work on the formal study of instructional practices in order to improve students' learning (p. 6). The professional learning community may be the key to facilitating the kind of identity alteration that results in the adoption of new

teaching techniques because it provides teachers the opportunity to periodically gather as a group and discuss pedagogical difficulties, reevaluate desired learning objectives, and question assessment techniques (Kezar, 2013, p. 775; Coburn, 2001, p. 163).

This study also introduces a unique idea about actor identity and the sensemaking process. Scholars have suggested destabilization of the worker's identity as a necessary step toward the sensemaking process; however, most assume the worker has a single positive identity to preserve in the workplace. My study complicates this idea by demonstrating adjunct Composition I faculty can have multiple identities within a single workplace, at least one positive and one negative. Sam (2012) observes there are multiple communities within the community college setting, and adjunct faculty tend to feel a sense of belonging in the "instructional community," the place where students and teachers meet (p. 135). My study contributes evidence adjunct Composition I faculty are most concerned with and influenced in sensemaking by the image learners have about them. As long as the instructors can find a niche within the college setting where their production and identity are respected, they can function effectively and insulate themselves against the negative image that can be projected upon them by colleagues and administrators; at the same time, this makes them less receptive to messages about change that come from the latter group. This is consistent with loosely coupled systems theory. My research suggests administrators interested in making adjunct faculty amenable to alteration must first find ways to affirm their membership as professional educators within the broader academic community. In other words, if

change agents apply a method to destabilize the sense of negative identity adjunct faculty possess as a result of longtime cultural perspectives and practices in the community college setting, they have the potential to capture their attention in a new way and to prime them to receive messages about change that can result in unique pedagogical change that benefits learners. My contribution to sensemaking theory is that I found destabilization of a negative identity in the workplace stimulated a sensemaking process about change in my study participants as well as destabilization of a positive identity. This is an idea that is worthy of further exploration by scholars interested in implementing change among contingent workers in a loosely coupled system. They might identify indicators of a negative identity and explore the processes leaders can follow to destabilize that negative identity in the interest of making teachers receptive to messages about change.

Implications for practice. My study also shows leadership is underestimating the kind of contribution adjunct Composition I faculty can and are willing to make in shaping and understanding institutional change. The exclusion of these teachers from the early part of a change process is unfortunate. During our conversations, adjunct Composition I faculty made it evident they are interested in being consulted on issues that impact their students. They are vital, trained, and experienced educators. They are working on the front line, interacting with learners inside and outside of the class setting, becoming familiar with them in ways administrators and full-time faculty may not be. Adjunct Composition I faculty often teach at times of the day and in locations full-time faculty do not – evenings, weekends, and on branch campuses. They may have already developed unique

strategies for helping this particular group of students find the path to their goals. They potentially have exclusive information to share with the broader institution about the challenges students face in reaching their goals and the strategies needed in practice to help learners become accomplished.

Research supports the idea of educational leaders engaging and equipping followers as collaborators in order to fully implement and sustain change (Evans, 1996, p. 17; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 2012). This is important, for as Evans (1996) notes:

Our response to change, particularly when it is imposed upon us, is determined by how we understand it, what it does to our attachments and beliefs, and how we can fit it into the sense we make of our world. This is crucial to our motivation; few of us will accept the losses and discontinuities of change unless the undertaking is meaningful to us (p. 17).

Community colleges interested in instituting significant and long-term change would benefit from finding ways to make adjunct faculty part of that change from design to implementation (Achieving the Dream & Public Agenda, 2011; Henderson & Lawton, 2015). This constituency has grown to the degree that colleges can no longer afford to ignore them or assume they are disinterested in being part of the academic community beyond their instructional community. According to Kotter (2015), it is not sufficient to create and communicate a vision of change; leaders must eliminate the obstacles that keep followers from engaging in the change process. Adjunct faculty should be given opportunities to serve on committees that shape change, consulted in designing strategies for implementing change, and trained to undertake change in their classrooms. Forums should be created to allow part-time teachers occasions to express their views and concerns

about student performance and ideas for helping them reach their goals. These should be scheduled with respect for the varying commitments and availabilities of contingent faculty. This means holding them at various times of the day, on different days of the week – including weekends – and at diverse locations, including the online setting, to ensure the broadest opportunity for input. Existing in the digital age, community colleges have no excuse for excluding the adjunct faculty perspective in creating change.

Making adjunct faculty part of the discussion about student success and necessary change is a good initial step toward signaling respect to the professional educational identity of contingent teachers. To sustain adjunct faculty membership in this process, colleges can demonstrate acceptance and application of adjunct faculty contributions and feedback in the broad institutional conversation about change. They can show appreciation for their contribution. Pecuniary compensation should be made whenever possible, but in cases of budgetary restrictions, institutions should at least provide part-time faculty with a meal or a certificate of acknowledgement if they are giving up personal time to engage in a focus group or formal professional development.

In addition to building the adjunct faculty member's relationship with the broader academic community, efforts should be made to facilitate greater interaction amongst all teaching constituents – both part-time and full-time -- within a discipline. The microcosm of teachers working within East Coast's ALP initiative illustrated this was possible. Weick (2001) tells us:

Actors in a loosely coupled system rely on trust and presumptions, are often isolated, find social comparison difficult, have no one to borrow from, seldom imitate, suffer pluralistic ignorance, maintain discretion, improvise, and have less hubris because they know the universe is not sufficiently connected to make widespread change possible.

Adjunct study participants involved with ALP reported they are not isolated: they have part-time and full-time colleagues with whom they can compare themselves, borrow from, and imitate. They are kept informed through conversation and e-mail with these fellow teachers. They are less likely to think they are alone in their practice because they have opportunities for social exchange with peers who possess similar professional concerns; they speak up and report their ideas are acknowledged. They might still be forced to improvise because they are not constantly coupled with their colleagues; however, they have opportunities to obtain feedback from their peers when they discuss the process and outcome of their improvisation with them. As a result of their membership in the ALP professional learning community, they are able to engage in the social aspect of sensemaking which gives them the courage and confidence to effect change among their learners.

More seasoned adjunct Composition I faculty should be empowered to share their wisdom in the roles of mentor and classroom observer to less experienced Composition I faculty. Hiring skilled adjunct faculty into these roles signifies the institution's respect for their identity as professional educator. Many schools have a budgetary line for compensating mentors and classroom observers for their service; this is another means of rewarding adjunct Composition I faculty for their service and acknowledging their value as teaching professionals. Senior adjunct faculty

members should also be part of professional development; pointedly consulted about curriculum changes; and involved in the selection of course texts.

Departments should schedule regular face-to-face meetings or create an online forum where all adjunct faculty within a discipline can securely discuss challenges they face and strategies that have been effective in helping students reach their goals. These are all means of engaging part-time constituents as collaborators in order to fully implement and sustain change.

Though this study focused specifically on adjunct faculty sensemaking, it confirmed the influential role leaders can play in both facilitating and impeding the sensegiving process. Prior to introducing a significant change, leaders should reflect carefully upon the role they will play in the sensemaking process and the roles they expect faculty to play. As was noted in the literature, change agents can have a powerful influence on the sensegiving processes of constituents by helping them interpret and understand new policies through both formal and informal conversation and by creating opportunities for sensemaking (Coburn, 2005). Missing from this conversation, though, was the important element of respecting adjunct faculty teacher identity. As my study shows, adjunct faculty are not receptive to changes introduced by a leadership that fails to recognize their professional identity as teacher. It is not enough for leaders to possess a vision for the future; they should find ways to communicate their vision vividly through a sensegiving process that is inclusive of all college employees. As Maitlis (2005) notes, this does not have to happen in large groups; leaders can help to shape constituent understandings of change through smaller, more intimate meetings.

When leaders find time to engage with all faculty stakeholders to share their vision and invite response to shape that vision, they are more likely to generate sustained change in the organization (Maitlis, 2005, p. 36).

Study Limitations and Consideration for Future Research

To bound my study, I focused on Composition I adjunct faculty at a specific institution. Either coincidentally or as a result of hiring practices of supervisors, the adjunct participants tended to be formally trained educators and possessed teaching experience that gave them performance confidence and helped them shape their understanding of how to make students successful. The absence of adjunct Composition I participants with little-to-no formal training in education or teaching experience was a limitation of my study. There has been a long tradition of community college faculty being hired to teach based upon evidence of advanced study and expertise in their subject area. Position candidates are not required to demonstrate proficiency in pedagogy or andragogy (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb, 1999; Halpern & Hakel, 2003, p. 37; Tinto, 2007, p. 7). Benjamin in his recollection about his first year as a high school instructor is the closest I came to understanding how an inexperienced and untrained teacher copes without his teacher's identity intact; he assumes the mask of his college professors, and when that proves to be ineffective, he removes the mask and begins to develop an authentic teacher's identity. Upon entering the classroom for the first time, new instructors can experience "praxis shock," a condition where the concepts they have learned about teaching are strained or verified by classroom realities. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) talk about praxis shock in the context of formally trained educators entering

the classroom and the greater academic community for the first time, but I believe this concept is also applicable to content experts lacking formal training in education and teaching their initial class in a community college. They adopt what Schulman (2005) terms “signature pedagogies,” the styles of instruction that were employed by their professors in preparing them for their disciplinary practice. Cox (2009) notes college-level academics are conditioned by their graduate programs to “profess” rather than instruct. They anticipate their students will have the same motivation and interests as they did as post-secondary learners and are surprised when they discover the learners do not share their love for a discipline. Cox (2009) writes that while “students can certainly be described as unprepared for college, their professors are not necessarily prepared for their students” (p. 167). As a result, new teachers may feel insecure and ineffective in their new role. They can learn about the profession through trial and error, reading books and articles, actively seeking out more experienced teachers for dialogue and mentoring, and attending professional development activities as their schedule allows. Gradually, through self-education and teaching experience, they begin to cultivate a teacher identity, but this takes time and effort. In the end, they may evolve into highly effective instructors or continue to espouse the signature pedagogies of their discipline, assuming students who cannot learn from their pedagogical approach are deficient and incapable of meeting the rigors of college-level learning. This topic is worthy of further exploration through research, perhaps a study examining how adjunct faculty who might have disciplinary expertise but no classroom teaching

experience are engaging in a sensemaking process about institutional change and how the resulting understanding is impacting their approach to teaching.

It is also important to note my study participants were not purposely selected because of their formal training in pedagogy or their long-term experience as classroom writing instructors. I discovered this shared experience among them as I collected and analyzed my data. This study outcome might be considered an anomaly since past research shows most college professors lack formal training in pedagogy and andragogy (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb, 1999). Still, I believe it raises questions about whether or not hiring practices at the community college are changing. Perhaps administrators are finally understanding and embracing the idea good teaching is the key to achieving the student success mission of the community college. It is possible they are broadening their hiring criteria and deliberately employing teachers with both disciplinary and pedagogical expertise in the interest of helping students meet their goals more effectively. This pattern in my study raises a question that warrants further examination.

Another limitation of my study is its exclusive focus on Composition I faculty. These individuals have a common training and socialization process that distinguishes them from their colleagues who teach literature and other specialized forms of writing (creative, technical, research) within the discipline of English, let alone professors of gateway courses in other disciplines. Future research might focus on whether or not part-time teachers of entry level courses in other subject areas arrive at the institution with an established teacher identity; how this identity impacts the way they understand the college's shift in mission to emphasize its

commitment to improving student success; and how that comprehension impacts their pedagogical approaches.

It might also be worthwhile to examine whether or not the general categorization of “identity as professional educator” can be further divided and analyzed. The majority of adjunct participants in this study were formally trained and certified as different kinds of educators; for instance, some were licensed to teach primary school and others were licensed to teach secondary school. Considering the settings of both primary and secondary schools, scholars have observed there are “distinctive institutional environments” associated with disciplinary areas (Spillaine & Burch, 2006, p. 89; Rowan, 2006, p. 25). In my study, I did not consider if the categorical nature of a teacher’s formal training or certification to teach primary or secondary school afforded them qualities that distinguished them from their colleagues who lacked that same exact training. Does having specialized education negatively or positively impact the quality of a teacher’s work in making students successful? Is it sufficient to identify generally as a teacher in order to determine how to help community college students reach their goals? Do all teachers formally trained to teach primary or secondary school share common traits that are applicable and useful to community college teaching? If so, what are they? Should colleges be providing professional development to these experienced educators to help them learn how to retool their existing skills for college-level instruction? Though I observed at least one class of each adjunct participant in this study, and the strategies I witnessed were ones deemed appropriate for college-level learning in the context of the literature, I was not in

every class of the semester, and I did not examine the grading processes of these faculty. Is it possible the teacher identity developed by adjunct faculty through their training to be primary school teachers directs the teacher to give college-level learners too much help with their writing or to grade essays less stringently? Likewise, if a secondary school instructor's chief experience is instructing students in advanced placement or honors courses, is he or she likely to set unrealistic expectations for community college student performance or to grade writing too stringently in an entry-level composition course? Further research should be conducted to find answers to these questions.

Conclusion

It is likely college completion rates will continue to be a concern for policy makers, members of private foundations, educators and general citizens in the future. Happily, community colleges have already committed to improve student completion rates and taken some important first steps toward accomplishing their goal. East Coast Community College, like many schools, has shaped a vision for change and formalized it in several ways. They have altered the language of the college mission to reflect an improved commitment to student success. They have allocated funds to support efforts intended to help with student retention and progress. They have hired outside consultants to aid in shaping and implementing change. They have charged faculty to shape innovations intended to help them meet their mission. Unfortunately, few adjunct faculty have been engaged in this process. This is troubling since nearly 70 percent of faculty employed at public two-year colleges are part-time instructors (NCES, 2012). All community college learners will

likely enroll in classes taught by adjunct faculty at some point in their academic career, so it is not unreasonable to expect the institution to engage them in its plan for change.

The good news is adjunct Composition I faculty in this embedded case study did not need direction from administration to help students succeed. They presented themselves as confident and capable instructors who had an authentic compassion for their students and a drive to help learners reach their goals. Their motivation to help their students succeed stemmed from their identity as professional educator, which was shaped by formal training in education and/or experience as a classroom teacher. They employ research-based practices for helping students succeed. These instructors work largely in isolation and use their teacher's identity and interaction with their students as frameworks for determining ways to help learners overcome challenges in reaching their goals. They have few opportunities to engage in the social aspect of sensemaking with peers and change agents; therefore, they do not hear the messages being sent by the institution about unique ways they can help students succeed.

The study participants observe part of the problem resides in the way their teacher's identity is treated by colleagues and administrators external to their classrooms. When instructors encounter initiatives implemented in a way that conveys a lack of respect for their professional identity as educators, they are impervious to the messages about student success meant to be communicated by these innovations; thus, their teaching strategies are not impacted and altered.

At the same time, some study participants reported they were more responsive to the messages that have been generated through change agents and initiatives that showed respect for their professional identities as educators and engaged them in the social process of sensemaking. This gave them new frameworks through which to view change and their role in the process. This left them more receptive to messages about change and primed to apply the unique strategies they learn from those initiatives to their classroom practices in the interest of helping students reach their academic goals.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Leadership

Opening: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today for this conversation. My name is Denise Coulter, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Rowan University. I am in the process of constructing a case study that will report on how adjunct faculty are making sense of Atlantic Cape Community College's student success mission. Prior to this meeting, I e-mailed you a copy of the human consent form for your review and signature, so you are aware of your rights as a participant in this study. Though I will be recording our conversation, I will also be taking notes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. What is your current position at East Coast Community College?
2. How long have you served in this position?
3. Briefly describe your responsibilities in the context of the college's comprehensive student success initiative.
4. What is the institution's definition of student success?
5. How is student success measured at this school?
6. Why was there a need for a comprehensive student success initiative at East Coast?
7. Who contributed to the formulation of the original comprehensive student success plan?
8. How does membership in ATD figure into the comprehensive student success plan?
9. How important are adjunct faculty to the progress of the college's comprehensive student success initiative?
10. What steps has the institution taken to facilitate adjunct faculty understanding of the school's commitment to improving student retention and success?
 - a. Written materials?
 - b. Formal presentations?
 - c. Formal professional development activities – in house and external?
 - d. Informal conversations?
11. How have you contributed to adjunct faculty understanding of the school's commitment to improving student retention and success?
12. Who is primarily responsible for cultivating Composition I adjunct faculty awareness and understanding of the institution's commitment to student success?
13. How do you envision this individual/these individuals aiding part-time faculty in improving student success?
14. Discuss three practices you expect part-time teachers to adopt in their classes in order to make students successful? Why do you think these particular practices are effective?

Appendix B

Adjunct Composition I Faculty Survey Tool

DIRECTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS HONESTLY AND COMPLETELY.

1) Are you currently teaching Composition I or have you taught Composition I during the 2014-2015 academic year?

- a) yes
- b) no

2) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, please mark the highest degree received.*

- a) Bachelor's Degree
- b) Master's Degree
- c) Professional Degree
- d) Doctorate Degree
- e) Other:

3) Which of the following best describes the field in which you received your highest degree?

- a) English
- b) Rhetoric
- c) Linguistics
- d) Creative Writing
- e) Education
- f) Educational Leadership
- g) English as a Second Language
- h) Other (please specify)

4) Do you currently hold a teaching certificate from New Jersey or another state?

- a) Yes
- b) No

5) If you answered yes to #4, please describe the nature and status of your certification.

6) How long have you been an English instructor at this community college?

- a) Less than a year.
- b) 1-2 years
- c) 3-4 years
- d) 5-6 years
- e) 7 or more years

7) Which best describes the location of your teaching assignment (choose one)?

- a) I teach the majority of my classes at Main Campus
- b) I teach the majority of my classes at City Campus
- c) I teach the majority of my classes at Rural Campus
- d) I teach the majority of my classes online
- e) Other (please specify):

8) When do you typically teach your classes? (Select all that apply)

- a) Days
- b) Evenings
- c) Weekends

9) How frequently do you have contact with the following college representatives. "Contact" can mean either an in-person meeting or electronic communication like an e-mail)

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times over the semester	Once a semester	A few times over the year	Once a year	Never
College President								
Vice President of Academics								
Dean of Liberal Studies								
English Department Coordinator								
ALP Coordinator								
Full-time Composition I Teachers								
Part-time Composition I Teachers								

10) How are you most likely to communicate with the following college representatives?

	E-mail	Formal College Events or Meetings	Informal face-to-face meetings on campus	Telephone	N/A
College President					
Vice President of Academics					
Dean of Liberal Studies					
English Department Coordinator					
ALP Coordinator					
Full-time Composition I Teachers					
Part-time Composition I Teachers					

11) When the college is about to undertake a change in philosophy or practice, from whom are you most likely to learn about that change?

- a) English Department Coordinator
- b) Dean of Liberal Arts
- c) Vice President of Academics
- d) College President
- e) A Full-time Faculty Member
- f) A Part-time Faculty Member
- g) other:

12) When the college is about to undertake a change in philosophy or practice, on whom do you depend upon most to help you understand that change in the context of your classroom practices?

- a) English Department Coordinator
- b) Dean of Liberal Arts
- c) Teaching colleagues in the English Department
- d) A mentor from off campus
- e) Vice President of Academics
- f) College President
- g) Myself
- h) Other:

13) Do you teach exclusively at this college?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

14) If you answered “no” to the question above, please describe your teaching assignments in addition to your work for this college.

15) Are any of these institutions undertaking change initiatives that reflect an increased commitment to improving student success? Please explain.

16) Have you altered your teaching practices in any way as a result of what you have learned from a student success initiative you experienced while working at another educational institution? Please explain and provide examples.

17) What is your definition of student success?

18) To what degree, have the following factors helped shaped your understanding of what helps students succeed in entry level college courses.

	No Influence	Minimal Influence	Moderate Influence	Great influence
My personal experience as a student				
My formal training as a teacher				
Classroom trial and error				
Informal conversations with leadership figures at East Coast				
Informal conversations with teaching colleagues at East Coast				
Informal conversations with teaching colleagues at a college other than East Coast				
Informal conversations with leadership figures at a college other than East Coast				
Formal meetings with leadership figures at East Coast				
Formal meetings with colleagues at East Coast				
Formal meetings with leadership figures at a college other than East Coast				
Formal meetings with teaching colleagues at a college other than East Coast				
East Coast-sponsored professional development activities				
Professional development activities sponsored by an educational institution other than East Coast				
Conversations with students				
Articles from professional journals				
The standardized texts and materials of Composition I				
Articles from popular periodicals				
Training to teach an ALP course				

19) Is it your responsibility as a college professor to help students succeed?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

20) Briefly describe what it looks like when Composition I faculty help their students succeed.

21) Has East Coast's mission always reflected a commitment to improving student success or has student success become a more pronounced concern over the last four years?

- a) The mission always reflected a commitment to improving student success.
- b) Student success became a more pronounced concern over the last four years.
- c) I haven't taught at East Coast long enough to be able to draw a conclusion.

22) Do you have any concerns about East Coast's approach to helping students succeed?

23) Are you aware East Coast is a member of Achieving the Dream?

- a) Yes
- b) No

24) If yes, where did you first learn about the school's membership in Achieving the Dream?

- a) a professional development workshop or in-service meeting
- b) an English department meeting
- c) word of mouth
- d) an official e-mail from a college leader
- e) the college Web site
- f) a newspaper article
- g) minutes from a meeting of the school's board of trustees
- h) East Coast's newsletter/blog
- i) Facebook
- j) Twitter
- k) Other: (please specify)

25) To what degree has your concern about student success increased since the college joined Achieving the Dream?

- a) Very much
- b) Somewhat
- c) Not at all

26) Have you altered your teaching practices in any way as a result of the college's membership in Achieving the Dream? If so, please explain the changes you made and how the college's membership in Achieving the Dream contributed to your decision to make changes.

27) In what ways are you likely to communicate with students outside of formal class meetings? (check all that apply) (2)

- a) In the class meeting room, for a few minutes just before or just after class.
- b) In one of the campus-designated private meeting spaces for adjunct faculty to meet with students.
- c) In the library
- d) In the cafeteria
- e) E-mail
- f) Skype
- g) Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- h) Course blackboard shell
- i) Text Message

28) Of all the purposes listed below, for which are you most often compelled to speak with a student outside of class:

- a) To discuss a grade on an assignment
- b) To answer questions about an assignment
- c) To help edit or revise a paper
- d) To provide advice about the English program or scheduling
- e) Other:

29) How often do you employ the following teaching strategies in Composition 1?

	Every Meeting	Almost every meeting	Several times over the semester	Almost Never	Never
Small group projects					
Peer editing					
Lecture					
Service learning					
Large group discussion					
Grammar and punctuation drills					
Role playing					
Games					
Case studies					
Other					

30) On average, when do you return a graded assignment to students? (2)

- a) Within a day or two of receiving it
- b) One week following the due date
- c) Within a month of receiving it
- d) By the close of the semester
- e) Other:

31) Rate the frequency with which you employ the following assessment techniques in Composition 1?

	Every Class	Almost Every Class	Several times over the semester	Almost Never	Never
Essays					
Homework questions related to a reading					
Reading quizzes					
Quizzes on writing elements					
Group projects					
Grammar and punctuation drills					
Journal writing					
MLA Exercises					
APA Exercises					
Blog Writing					
Writing process exercises (e.g. freewriting, outlining)					

32) What methods do you employ to communicate your expectations to students in Composition I? Check all that apply.

- a) Distribution and review of syllabus at the beginning of the semester
- b) Written directions for assignments
- c) Modeling/Samples of good work
- d) Grading rubrics for assignments
- e) Written feedback on graded assignments
- f) Individual conferences with students
- g) Other (please specify)

33) Name three support strategies you employ to help students meet your expectations in Composition I.

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

34) What steps do you take to ensure your feedback on student assignments is understood and useful for each learner?

35) Have you heard of a national movement referred to as "The Completion Agenda"?

a) Yes

b) No

36) If yes, briefly describe your understanding of "The Completion Agenda" and how it has impacted your work as a teacher?

37) Are you familiar with President Obama's "2020 Challenge"?

- a) Yes
- b) No

38) If yes, Briefly describe your understanding President Obama's 2020 Challenge, and explain how is it impacting your work as a community college teacher.

39) Were you an active participant in the formal advisement activities scheduled by Atlantic Cape for March?

- a) Yes
- b) No

40) Please rate the value of the following college-sponsored professional development activities in the context of your efforts to help students succeed in Composition I. If you did not attend the activity, please mark the NA column.

	Great influence	Moderate influence	Minimal influence	No influence	Not applicable
A formal orientation session for adjunct faculty					
Student Success Retreat (August 2014)					
Faculty in-service (August, 2014)					
An information session about ALP (various times through the year)					
A formal training to teach an ALP course					
Getting started with Blackboard Learn 9 Workshop					
Classroom assessment techniques for student success					
20 New Tools for your Toolbox					
Getting off to a good start					
Tech tools for the classroom					
Managing classroom behaviors and accommodations					

41) Did you pilot East Coast's Early Alert System in any of your English classes this year?

- a) Yes
- b) No

42) Have you collaborated with a member of the Student Affairs Department to administer a lesson on career planning or career development to your Composition I students?

a) Yes

b) No

43) Do you have any final thoughts you would like to share about East Coast Community College's commitment to improving student success and how this movement is impacting your work as a Composition I teacher?

Appendix C

Adjunct Composition I Faculty Interview Protocol

Opening: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today for this conversation. My name is Denise Coulter, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Rowan University. I am in the process of constructing a case study that will report on how adjunct faculty are making sense of change at East Coast Community College. Prior to this meeting, I e-mailed you a copy of the human consent form for your review and signature, so you are aware of your rights as a participant in this study. Though I will be recording our conversation, I will also be taking notes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

- 1) What is your current title at this college?
- 2) How long have you been an adjunct professor of English at East Coast Community College?
- 3) Approximately how many times have you taught Composition I during your tenure at this school?
- 4) What other employment do you hold in addition to teaching for East Coast?
- 5) What is your definition of student success?
- 6) How did your experience as an undergraduate student shape your understanding of what makes undergraduate learners succeed?
- 7) What is the highest degree or level of schooling you completed? In what disciplines did you earn your degrees?
- 8) Do you hold a teaching certificate from New Jersey or another state? Describe the nature and status of that certificate.
- 9) How has your training as a teacher – either formal education or professional development – contributed to your understanding of how to make students successful?
- 10) Is student success a part of the community college's mission? What elements of the culture made you aware of this?
- 11) Is making students successful an important aspect of your teaching? How is this reflected in your practice?
- 12) How have your English colleagues influenced your understanding of what makes students successful?
- 13) How has college leadership helped you understand what makes students successful?
- 14) How have institutional-sponsored professional development activities shaped your understanding of how to make students successful?
- 15) How has your understanding of student success been shaped by information conveyed through journals published by professional organizations?
- 16) Have you had experiences at other educational work sites that influenced your perception about how to make Composition I students successful?
- 17) In what ways have the standardized course textbooks and materials helped you understand how to make students successful?

- 18) Do you have any concerns about East Coast Community College's commitment to student success?
- 19) Name three strategies you employ to help students be successful.
- 20) Did you play a role – either formally or informally – in the advisement day activities in March?
- 21) Did you participate in the early alert pilot here at the college?
- 22) How does the new report in/report out requirement for adjunct faculty contribute to student success?
- 23) What role does the college see you playing in helping Composition I students succeed?
- 24) Is there anything you would like to add regarding messages you are receiving about the college's mission to improve student success and how it is impacting your work as a teacher?

Appendix D

Adjunct Composition I Faculty Class Observation Protocol

Campus:

Name of Instructor:

Start/End Time of Class:

Date of Observation:

Physical Layout of Classroom:

Number of students in attendance:

Time	Activity	Description
00:00		
00:05		
00:10		
00:15		
00:20		
00:25		
00:30		
00:35		
00:40		
00:45		
00:50		
00:55		
00:60		
00:65		
00:70		
00:75		

Code: HE: clearly stated high expectations; TSI: teacher-student interaction; AL: active-learning activity; CL: collaborative learning activity; CF: constructive feedback.

Appendix E

Informed Consent Forms

Informed Consent for Leadership

TITLE OF STUDY: Adjunct faculty sensemaking in the context of institutional change.

Principal Investigator: Monica Kerrigan

Co-Investigator: Denise-Marie Coulter

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

Denise-Marie Coulter will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

Why is this study being done?

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of how part-time faculty members are making sense of the shift in community college mission toward student success. I feel this is vital information for leadership to have since a large number of community college courses are taught by adjunct faculty. This research is being conducted as part of a graduation requirement for the doctoral program in educational leadership at Rowan University.

Why have you been asked to take part in this study?

To understand how adjunct faculty are making sense of change, it is important to determine what messages are being sent to them by the primary change agents of the community college: the institution's leadership. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a leader who communicates with adjunct faculty.

Who may take part in this study? And who may not?

The participants of this study are college leaders who have communication with adjunct faculty and Composition I adjunct faculty. No other members of the college community will take part in this study.

How many subjects will take part in this study?

Approximately twenty-nine – seven college leaders and twenty-one adjunct Composition I faculty.

How long will my participation in this study take?

As a participant, you are being asked to meet with me one time for no longer than two hours for an interview.

Where will the study take place?

The study will be conducted on all three campuses of Atlantic Cape Community College. We can meet in your office, my office, or another private space on campus to complete the interview.

What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?

As a leader, you will be asked to answer a series of questions about the school's student success mission and how adjunct faculty are being oriented to that aspect of the school's mission.

What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?

It is possible that you might receive no direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your participation may lead to a discovery about English adjunct sense making processes that can inform college administrators at your institution and other institutions about ways to better serve and prepare members of this population for future service to your students.

What are your alternatives if you don't want to take part in this study?

Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?

There is no cost for participating in the study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information. All recordings and transcripts from the study will be maintained on my personal computer with backup copies stored on a personal USB drive. Both devices will be stored off campus. Information on these devices will be protected by security codes to which I only have access.

What will happen if you are injured during this study?

If at any time during your participation and conduct in the study you have been or are injured, you should communicate those injuries to Denise-Marie Coulter, the co-investigator for this study.

What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with me will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you.

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with me.

Who can you call if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about taking part in this study, you can call or e-mail me:
Denise-Marie Coulter
(609) 698-7967
coulte51@students.rowan.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:
Office of Research
(856) 256-5150 – Glassboro/CMSRU

What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

I am asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape our conversation as part of my research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the principal researcher.

The recording(s) will include the names of both the research participant and the principal researcher.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

I give permission to the investigator to record me as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Informed Consent for Interview & Classroom Observation of Adjunct Composition I Faculty

TITLE OF STUDY: Adjunct faculty sensemaking in the context of institutional change.

Principal Investigator: Monica Kerrigan

Co-Investigator: Denise-Marie Coulter

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

Denise-Marie Coulter will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

Why is this study being done?

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of how part-time faculty members are making sense of change at the community college. I feel this is vital information for college leadership to have since a large number of community college courses are taught by adjunct faculty. This research is being conducted as part of a graduation requirement for the doctoral program in educational leadership at Rowan University.

Why have you been asked to take part in this study?

As a part-time teacher of Composition I, you have vital information to share about how you are receiving, understanding, and applying messages about institutional change.

Who may take part in this study? And who may not?

The participants of this study are college leaders who have communication with adjunct faculty and Composition I adjunct faculty. No other members of the college community will take part in this study.

How many subjects will take part in this study?

Approximately twenty-nine – seven college leaders and twenty-one adjunct Composition I faculty.

How long will my participation in this study take?

As a participant, you are being asked to do three things:

- 1) Meet with me one time for a conversational interview. This should last no longer than two hours.
- 2) Allow me to observe one of your Composition I class meetings.
- 3) Permit me to follow up with questions – if needed – in person, via telephone, or via e-mail.

Where will the study take place?

The study will be conducted on all three campuses of East Coast Community College. For the conversational interview or in-person follow up, we can meet in my office or another private space on one of the college campuses. The classroom observation will take place in the regularly assigned space at the traditional meeting time.

What will you be asked to do if you take part in this research study?

You will be asked to answer a series of questions about how you conceptualize student success inside and outside of the context of the community college setting and how your understanding of student success impacts your pedagogy. You will also be asked to allow me to be an unobtrusive observer at one meeting of your Composition I class. Finally, you will be asked to respond to follow up questions.

What are the risks and/or discomforts you might experience if you take part in this study?

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

Are there any benefits for you if you choose to take part in this research study?

It is possible that you might receive no direct personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your participation may lead to a discovery about English adjunct sensemaking processes that can inform college administrators about how to better serve and prepare adjunct faculty for teaching and helping our students.

What are your alternatives if you don't want to take part in this study?

Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

How will you know if new information is learned that may affect whether you are willing to stay in this research study?

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

Will there be any cost to you to take part in this study?

There is no cost for participating in the study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be kept private or confidential?

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal

information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at scientific conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information. All recordings and transcripts from the study will be maintained on my personal computer with backup copies stored on a personal USB drive. Both devices will be stored off campus. Information on these devices will be protected by security codes to which I only have access.

What will happen if you do not wish to take part in the study or if you later decide not to stay in the study?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with me will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you.

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with me.

Who can you call if you have any questions?

If you have any questions about taking part in this study, you can call or e-mail me:
Denise-Marie Coulter
(609) 698-7967
coulte51@students.rowan.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:
Office of Research
(856) 256-5150 – Glassboro/CMSRU

What are your rights if you decide to take part in this research study?

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

I am asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape our conversation as part of my research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the co-investigator.
The recording(s) will include the names of both the research participant and the co-investigator.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

I give permission to the investigator to record me as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Alternate Consent Form for Survey of Adjunct Faculty

(The following letter was placed on the face page of my online survey instrument.)

Dear instructor:

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Making Sense of Student Success. You are included in this survey because, according to college records, you are a part-time employee of the college who taught at least one section of Composition I over the last year. Approximately twenty-one people will be invited to take part in this survey.

The survey is part of a research study intended to determine how part-time teachers are making sense of campus change. There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how adjunct faculty make sense of change, and this can help college administrators at your institution and other institutions discover ways to better serve and prepare adjunct faculty for teaching and helping our students. The overall study with which this survey is attached should last approximately one year.

The survey may take approximately one half-hour to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, do not respond. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the study.

Your response will be kept confidential. I will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me via the information provided below:

Denise-Marie Coulter
P.O. Box 794
Barnegat, NJ 08005

609-698-7967

coulte51@students.rowan.edu

You do not have to give your personal identification.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older. Place a check box here

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey