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**A CASE STUDY OF THE WEST VIRGINIA REMOTE ONLINE COLLABORATIVE
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM**

A dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in
Curriculum and Instruction
by
Kandas Ann Queen
Approved by
Dr. Lisa A. Heaton, Committee Chair
Dr. Edna Meisel
Dr. Christine J. Schimmel

Marshall University
August 2020

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of Kandas Ann Queen, affirm that the dissertation, *A Case Study of the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the Curriculum and Instruction program and the Marshall University College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to educators that support online learning to assist all learners who do not have the access to higher education they need to achieve their dreams of earning a degree. I also dedicate this dissertation to my family for their support during the time I spent working towards my degree, and their understanding for the many evenings and family outings I missed in pursuit of my dreams in higher education.

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I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment to success and quality shown by my doctoral committee. Dr. Lisa Heaton, Committee Chair, worked tirelessly during the process and provided advice, instruction, and support over the course of many discussions and rewrites to develop my dissertation. I thank Dr. Heaton for chairing my committee and I know it was her guidance that helped me to complete my dissertation. Other committee members, Dr. Edna Meisel and Dr. Christine Schimmel, further supported my endeavor with words of encouragement and support. Dr. Meisel always provided supportive responses to questions and showed her support along the way. Dr. Schimmel further encouraged and supported my goal of a doctorate through numerous emails, text messages, and talks. It was her guidance on a committee chair that connected me with Dr. Heaton for which I am eternally grateful.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study provides intrinsic knowledge and perceptions about the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS). WVROCKS provides adult learners access to flexible, accelerated, online courses aimed towards completing a Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) degree or a Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) degree in West Virginia. Prior to this study, no empirical research had been conducted on the WVROCKS initiative. Procedures for data collection included website analysis and interviews using instruments created by the researcher. Fourteen higher education and related agencies' websites were analyzed. Interviews were conducted with 15 stakeholders across three groups: a) creators and collaborators, b) administrators and staff, and c) faculty and advisors, providing further data. Application of the non-probability snowball sampling technique helped to identify interview participants. Member checks were sent to interview participants to validate the data. Triangulation of collected data, along with information collected in the literature review, further served to validate findings. Inferences about WVROCKS relate to the purpose of WVROCKS, benefits and value, barriers and drawbacks, and the future of WVROCKS. Findings infer WVROCKS as a collaborative process between institutions to help adults earn a degree. Benefits and value include greater access to online courses and promoting degree completion. Barriers and drawbacks relate to concerns about resources, processes, and online education. The future of WVROCKS indicates a growing number of students utilizing WVROCKS, and the mission for WVROCKS expanding into new areas, such as certificates.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This is a qualitative case study on the role of West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) in higher education for students seeking a Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) degree or a Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) degree. Programs such as RBA and the BOG AAS offer adult learners a flexible pathway to complete their degree by taking compressed courses through WVROCKS (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2017). As noted by Ko and Rossen (2010), online education trends continue to grow worldwide. Eduventures reported in 2008 that the world of distance learning and online education was evolving into an “age of brands” (as cited in Gould, Mason, & Degenhardt, 2014, p. 92) rather than just competition. WVROCKS benefits learners by allowing them to complete their college requirements and graduate. This increase in graduates could assist governments and higher education institutions in furthering their goals for degree completions.

Many adults are motivated to complete their degree to get a better job or a promotion that would increase salary and work towards improving their quality of life and self-esteem (Holton, Knowles, & Swanson, 2012). However, access to higher education may prove difficult for some adults due to conflicts with work or caring for dependents, especially in single parent homes. Studies show single parent households tend to have higher levels of poverty than married couples. Gretchen Livingston (2018) reported “that 30% of solo mothers and their families are living in poverty... in comparison, 8% of married couple families are living below the poverty line” (para. 6). As both a non-traditional student and a single parent trying to complete my degree to improve the quality of life for my family, I understood these challenges all too well. If I had not been in the fortunate position of living close to family that had the time to help care for

my children while I worked and went to school, the goal of earning a degree would have been unattainable. Additionally, my only option for earning a degree was to take face-to-face courses. Without the access to these courses at a local college, earning a degree would have been out of my reach. Due to access and schedule flexibility, I was privileged enough to complete my bachelor's degree in four years and upon graduation become a productive member of the workforce at the managerial level.

An educated and skilled workforce will help the United States maintain a competitive economy (Erisman & Steele, 2015). In this age of growing globalization assisted by technology and the Internet, Ko and Rossen (2010) noted students are learning online in a variety of ways. Students who had previously lacked access to college campuses are now able to complete a degree with the assistance and flexibility of online learning (Ko & Rossen, 2010). Those without a degree among working age adults in the United States may find it more challenging to acquire full-time employment or jobs requiring specialization (United States Census Bureau, 2011b).

BACKGROUND

In 2009 President Barack Obama issued an educational challenge when he declared that by “2020 the United States should once again have the highest proportion of college graduates” (Duncan, 2010, para. 3). Arne Duncan (2010), United States Secretary of Education during the Obama administration, quoted President Obama in an article for Forbes stating, “America cannot lead in the 21st century unless we have the best-educated, most competitive workforce in the world” (para. 3).

According to reports conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States historically ranked high in tertiary, or postsecondary, degrees among the adult population (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

2011). However, by 2009 the OECD reports showed United States' tertiary completion rates had slowed while other countries' rates had increased more rapidly (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011). In a recent report by the OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, the United States (48%) ranked below Korea (70%), Canada (61%) and Japan (60%) in tertiary degrees.

In addition to the tertiary completion rates, Carnevale, Smith, and Strohl conducted a study and reported in 2010 that over 60% of jobs in the United States would require a postsecondary degree by 2018. According to their projections, based on the job trends and degrees awarded, there would be a shortfall of around three million graduates with degrees or certifications. In 2013, they released an updated report projecting by the year of 2020 an increase to 65% of jobs will require postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013).

Data collected from the United States Census Bureau (2015) shows levels of educational attainment rates and median earnings between levels of education for the state of West Virginia and the rest of the nation (see Table 1). This data was based on information available for the 12-month year of 2015. West Virginia had an 85% high school graduation rate compared to the national 86.7%. West Virginia's percentage of individuals with some college (no degree) was 18.5%, with the national percentage being 21.1%. The variance between West Virginia and the United States as a whole becomes more pronounced when comparing bachelors or higher degrees. In this category West Virginia's 19.2% was less than the national recipients of 29.8%. The percentage of West Virginians with a degree higher than a bachelor's is only 7.4% compared to 11.2% nationally.

A person's earnings have often been linked to educational attainment (United States Census Bureau, 2011b). Table 1 provides median earnings based on various levels of education

(United States Census Bureau, 2015). The 2015 median earnings in West Virginia were \$31,595 compared to the United States with \$36,231. In both West Virginia and the United States, people without a bachelor’s degree or higher earned below the median. Trends depicted in Table 1 were supported by United States Bureau of Labor Statistics median earnings trends for 2018 that showed \$932 weekly earnings for workers, which was below the weekly earnings of \$1,198 for a bachelor’s degree and \$1,434 for a master’s degree, but above the weekly earnings of \$730 for a high school diploma and \$802 for workers with some college, but no degree (Torpey, 2019).

Table 1. Educational Attainment and Median Earning

This table represents a comparison between West Virginia and United States on Levels of Educational Attainment and Median Earnings for Adults 25 and Older in 2015 according to data from the US Census.

	West Virginia	United States
Educational Attainment		
High school graduate *	85.0%	86.7%
Some college, no degree	18.5%	21.1%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	19.2%	29.8%
Percent higher than bachelor’s	7.4%	11.2%
Median Earnings		
High School Graduate *	\$31,595	\$36,231
Some college or 2 yr. degree	\$26,844	\$28,043
Bachelor’s degree or higher	\$30,245	\$33,820
Graduate degree or higher	\$42,183	\$50,595
	\$53,969	\$66,857

* Includes equivalency

Reports on slowing graduation rates compared to other countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011), coupled with growing workforce trends indicating educational needs might outpace United States degree or certification rates (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010), prompted numerous initiatives among government and institutions throughout the country (Erisman & Steele, 2015). Most of these initiatives were directed towards helping students in higher education complete their degree or gain certification within a field (Erisman & Steele, 2015). One initiative developed in Tennessee was the College

Completion Tennessee Act (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.b). The initiative developed in Tennessee for adult learners included the Drive to 55 and Tennessee Reconnect. Additionally, states such as Kentucky and Georgia focused on reform measures for higher education in efforts to increase degree completion rates and help their states' workforce have the educational skills needed by launching programs like KnowHow2GoKy and the Complete College Georgia (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016; University System of Georgia, 2016a). These initiatives were designed to increase the number of degree earning adults in the workforce to 50% or more by 2025 (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016; Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.a).

The state of West Virginia also set a goal to double the number of degrees conferred by state higher education institutions by 2025 (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015). Adult learners, usually identified as learners between the ages of 25-64 years, with some education at the college level but still without a degree, became a population of interest (Beasley, Gardner, & Johnson, 2014). The RBA is a bachelor's degree designed for adult learners to complete a degree, and the BOG AAS degree is for adults seeking to complete an associate's degree. WVROCKS is an online, cooperative initiative to help adult learners in West Virginia, seeking the RBA or BOG AAS, achieve their goal of obtaining a degree.

While students enrolled in the RBA degree can earn credits for qualifying life and work experiences, they are still required to take 39 hours of 300 to 400 level courses (Glenville State College, 2011; Marshall University, 2013). Through WVROCKS these upper level courses are offered in blocks of eight week courses allowing students to earn 12 credit hours a year taking one course at a time, or up to 36 credit hours a year by taking three courses during each block of eight week courses (State Journal, 2014). Upper level courses (300s and 400s) are for those

seeking the RBA degree, while lower level courses (100s and 200s) are geared towards the BOG AAS degree.

WVROCKS first piloted courses in three West Virginia institutions: a) Bluefield State College, b) Fairmont State University, and c) Marshall University in the fall of 2012 (State Journal, 2014). It initially offered only five different courses to the 55 students enrolled, but within a few years more than 40 courses were offered to over 650 students enrolled in the program (Leasure, 2016). These students were adult learners enrolled in RBA programs at various institutions throughout the state. WVROCKS continues to expand the courses they offer students by providing grants to full-time faculty within West Virginia colleges and universities to create courses, which in turn could be selected for the WVROCKS program. In the fall of 2017, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) sent out a request for faculty at institutions around the state to submit proposals for grants awarded in Spring 2018 (Humbert, 2017).

The growth of WVROCKS indicates the need for a program of this nature. WVROCKS continued to expand opportunities for students in the fall of 2016 by piloting the program in three Community and Technical Colleges: a) Bridge Valley Community and Technical College, b) Mountwest Community and Technical College, and c) Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College for students seeking a BOG AAS degree (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2017). WVROCKS is relevant because of the flexibility it provides students in helping them acquire the courses and credits they need to graduate in a timely fashion.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The focus of this case study is to gain intrinsic knowledge of WVROCKS. To date there has been no research conducted on WVROCKS. However, it did receive a cursory mention in a

case study focused on “increasing adult learner access and success in public colleges and universities across the state [West Virginia]” (Beasley et al., 2014, p. 203). This study looked at the initiative *DegreeNow*, which centered on adult learners with some college credit who had not yet earned a degree. The WVHEPC and the West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS) were among the collaborators to help bring about the WVROCKS initiative to both two and four year institutions in West Virginia through RBA Today and BOG AAS.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Two of the goals of this study are to research how the WVROCKS initiative has been implemented and gain more insight into the perceptions of WVROCKS among the realm of higher education. Insight into the program could assist those in higher education make informed decisions regarding the program and the role it is playing to help adult learners within the RBA or BOG AAS earn a degree.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What online information about WVROCKS is presented on participating West Virginia higher education and related agencies’ websites?
2. How has WVROCKS been implemented at select higher education institutions?
3. What are the perceptions of various stakeholders in the WVROCKS initiative?

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The operational definitions applied to this study are referenced below. These terms apply to this case study’s research questions and help define the operational concepts applied to the data collection process. Sources for data collection include the *Website Analysis Guide* located in

Appendix B and the *Interview Guide* located in Appendix C. Included in Appendix D is a list of additional definitions of terms related to this study.

1. Online information refers to details such as the availability of links to WVROCKS and the RBA or BOG AAS, programs offered, resources, degree completion strategies, and other relevant information identified from participating WVROCKS higher education institutions offering either the RBA or BOG AAS using the *Website Analysis Guide* located in Appendix B.
2. Implementation of the WVROCKS program includes information such as programs reviewed as models, training, the steps and processes needed to implement it, development and delivery of courses, and acceptance of credits identified using the *Website Analysis Guide* located in Appendix B and through stakeholders selected from institutions involved with WVROCKS using the *Interview Guide* located in Appendix C.
3. Perceptions of the WVROCKS program includes details such as benefits and value, barriers and drawbacks, and future directions identified through stakeholders selected from institutions involved with WVROCKS using the *Interview Guide* located in Appendix C.
4. Stakeholders selected from West Virginia institutions refers to those who have an interest or involvement in the WVROCKS program such as the creators and collaborators, administrators and staff, advisors and faculty, and students identified in Sections A, B, C, and D on the *Interview Guide* located in Appendix C.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research questions addressed in this study can assist in gaining a better understanding of WVROCKS and how the program is perceived within these institutions. Information gathered

as a result of answering the research questions can add to the body of knowledge regarding adult learners and college completion. This information should be of interest to policy makers and administrators involved in the realm of education whose focus is on improving college completion rates. Faculty members in higher education may also find the information useful both from the role of a faculty teaching a course for WVROCKS; or a faculty member advising a student interested in seeking RBA and BOG AAS degrees and the options available to accomplish that goal.

The potential for this program to expand and help students graduate with a degree may be additional information identified in answering these research questions. Gathering the perspectives of those involved in the program may provide valuable information. It may also help to identify possible barriers for the program preventing it from helping more learners utilize the program.

DELIMITATION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was confined to West Virginia higher education institutions that are involved in WVROCKS and stakeholders that have been identified for interviews. Initially, selected higher education institutions and stakeholders were identified through information gathered during the literature review, along with data collected using the *Website Analysis Guide*. A snowball sampling technique was employed following the initial selection step to gain additional contacts with information relevant to WVROCKS.

A limitation of this study lies in the fact little research was available on the topic of WVROCKS. Along with limited research on the WVROCKS program, it should be noted this program is still evolving and continuing to grow as more courses are developed to meet the needs of the students and the institutions it serves. Further limitations stemmed from the use of

online information as a data source. As is the nature of collecting online information, websites often change. These changes caused some difficulty when revisiting information reviewed as part of the research.

While snowball sampling was applied to gather names of those who might have relevant information for this case study, requesting data does not guarantee the willingness of a person identified to agree to participate in an interview or share information for the purpose of collecting data for this research. In some cases those identified to be interviewed may have relocated or changed jobs thereby limiting their access for the researcher to interview them, or they may no longer have access to information that could assist the researcher in conducting this study. In addition, any data collected on WVROCKS may offer a historical perspective rather than current perceptions on the program. This case study approach offers a snapshot of the population at the time the study was conducted. Over time changes in the population could result in varying perspectives.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary, the role WVROCKS plays in the realm of higher education could be important to helping improve educators' understanding of the intrinsic value that can be gained by utilizing the program. The following chapters provide additional information on the topics introduced in this chapter. Chapter two illustrates some of the background related to goals and initiatives regarding college completion rates and provides insight for data sources that were utilized by the researcher during the data collection phase of this research project. In chapter three research methods are detailed to explain how data were collected. Chapters four and five examine the data collected by the researcher in response to the research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the literature for the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) required consideration of the development of similar programs and initiatives. In this review, it was necessary to examine some of the political and economic pressures faced by those in higher education. Pressure stemmed from reports indicating areas of opportunity for developing an educated and qualified workforce in the United States. Challenges issued from the White House led many state legislative branches to develop policies, programs, and initiatives involving higher education institutions and the improvement of their graduation completion rates.

Tennessee, Georgia, and, Kentucky, along with West Virginia, were the states considered in this literature review regarding their efforts to improve graduation completion rates. Many of these initiatives and programs involved some form of online collaboration designed to make degree attainment more flexible for students. Adult learners with some college, but without a degree, were a group of interest for some of the initiatives seeking to achieve graduation completion goals set by the executive challenge.

CHALLENGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

In February of 2009, President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) into law in an attempt to help states improve the graduation rate among American education institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). An effort was made to develop an understanding of the information contributing to the educational challenge made by President Obama in 2009. Reports reviewed included perspectives from an

international viewpoint that compared the United States to a number of other countries on levels of educational attainment.

Among these were annual reports conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance* (Cook & Hartle, 2011). Other reports included *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018* by Carnevale et al. (2010), which looked at projections for educational needs within the United States to fulfill projected future jobs. *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education* (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2010) report *No Time to Waste* indicated decline in rank on graduation completion rates. Additional reports reviewed provided information related to West Virginia's educational attainment related to employment and graduation strategies as reported by the SREB (2016) in *West Virginia Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace* and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (2013) in *Leading the Way: Access, Success, Impact. (2013-2018) Master Plan* and *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card*.

International Standard Classification of Education Classifications

Before discussing the annual reports from the OECD, an explanation is required on the various levels upon which educational attainment is classified or ranked. The OECD compares levels of education based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), which “is the reference classification for organising [sic](of) education programmes [sic]” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016, p. 25) in order to make statistical comparisons on various educational systems across different countries. Under this classification, they equate levels of education to the various educational systems of the countries they monitor.

In November 2011, the revised ISCED 2011 classification was accepted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference at its 36th session (UNESCO, 2012). This classification previously included seven levels, but after the revision nine levels were included to measure students' academic progress. The two additional levels provided more specific coding for degree classifications.

Table 2 illustrates the equivalent levels of the ISCED 2011 classification with the educational levels found in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996; UNESCO, 2012). The information compiled in Table 2 was adapted from two data sources, the *International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011* (UNESCO, 2012) and the *Education Indicators: An International Perspective* (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). UNESCO's (2012) report detailed the changes to the previous ISCED classification and provided an updated version of the ISCED 2011 classification, along with the rationale for these changes.

Table 2. Equivalence of Educational Levels

This table represents the equivalence of educational levels between ISCED 2011 and the United States grade levels.

ISCED 2011	United States Grade Levels
Level 0 Pre-Primary	Kindergarten
Level 1 Primary	1 st – 6 th Grade
Level 2 Lower Secondary	7 th – 9 th Grade
Level 3 Upper Secondary	10 th – 12 th Grade
Level 4 Post-Secondary (Non-tertiary)	Vocational Training
Level 5 Short-Cycle Tertiary	Community College
Level 6 Bachelor's	Bachelor's Degree
Level 7 Master's	Master's Degree
Level 8 Doctoral	Doctoral Degree

Executive Challenge

In an annual report released by the OECD (2008) called *Education at a Glance 2008: OECD Indicators*, the expansion in tertiary attainment rates for the United States proved to be

markedly below countries like Japan and Korea. While “attainment levels in the total population... are above the OECD average in the United States” (p. 32), Canada had the highest level of tertiary attainment in the OECD 2008 report. On February 24, 2009, President Obama issued a challenge for the United States to be once again the country ranked highest in the world for proportion of college graduates (Duncan, 2010). As noted in the OECD (2008) report a “well-educated and well-trained population is essential for the social and economic well-being of countries and individuals” (p. 30).

OECD Reports

Review of OECD *Education at a Glance* (1999, 2008, 2011, 2016, 2017, 2019) reports ranged from 1998 to 2019 and provided international information on the position of the United States regarding education and degree completion. In the OECD *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators* (2011), a review spanning from 1997 to 2009 reported the United States graduation attainment rates had fallen behind compared to other countries. Although the United States attainment rates had risen, the attainment rate of other countries had done so at a faster rate leaving the United States with a lower average rate in comparison (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011).

Other countries’ rates, such as Japan and Korea, increased by an average annual rate of 3.2 and 5.3, respectively, during this time span (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011). This report showed slow growth rates for adults attaining tertiary degrees in Germany and the United States with only an average annual rate of 1.4. The United States economy also reflected a 1.3% drop in the median household income, or \$51,144 to \$50,502, from 2010 to 2011 (United States Census Bureau, 2011a).

Attainment Rates and the Economy

Historically, tertiary level attainment rates for the United States were high accounting for about one fourth of the tertiary degrees among the countries reported by the OECD (2011). However, the OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators* reported the United States' rates slowing on levels of tertiary degrees; one country making significant gains on levels of education attained by adults was Korea. The OECD (2017) report *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators* showed the United States (48%) to be above the OECD average (43%), but still behind Korea (70%) in tertiary degrees among 25-34 years old.

Economic conditions and the growth rate of the United States population compared to other countries is a factor affecting these changes in the rate (Cook & Hartle, 2011). During the time span of 1990 to 2011, the United States experienced approximately a 24% growth rate (Cook & Hartle, 2011). Although this rate was higher than most other countries, some still showed higher attainment rates while maintaining stable population growth (Cook & Hartle, 2011).

Another factor is higher education has become more available in Korea (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011). Educational reforms and policies implemented by Korea in the 1960s and 1970s that provided more higher education opportunities are reflected in the educational attainment of adults 25-34 years old (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). Higher education in the United States has long since been accessible to its citizens. According to the OECD (2019) *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* report, the United States ranked among the OECD countries that had less than 10% of adults aged 25-34 without an upper secondary education, but they were ranked 10th in terms of tertiary degrees with

the top three countries ranked in order showed Korea was first, Russian Federation was second, and Canada was third.

Without an educated workforce, the United States could face economic issues and may not have the skilled workers required for a 21st century workplace. The data reflected in the OECD (2011) report *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators* showed countries with a more educated workforce usually show higher income levels and greater employment levels. “Trend indicators trace a rapid growth in the proportion of young people undertaking upper secondary and tertiary education in many countries . . . and a consequent rise in spending” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1999, p. 7).

Workforce Predictions

In 2010, Carnevale et al. shared the results of a study *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018* on the number of jobs in the United States that would require postsecondary degrees by 2018 and projected a shortfall of around 3 million degrees. According to this report the “postsecondary system will not produce enough graduates” (p. 16) to meet the number of jobs requiring a postsecondary degree. Many of these jobs would require degrees and certification related to STEM, with technology being an important driver (Carnevale et al., 2010). They estimated by 2018, “more than 63 percent of prime-age workers would need some type of postsecondary instruction” (p. 16). As of the academic year of 2016-2017, the graduation completion rates for students in SREB regions was 57% compared to the national rate of 60% (Southern Regional Education Board, 2019).

Carnevale et al. (2013) shared an updated report *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020* projecting 55 million jobs opening between 2010 and 2020 due to new jobs being created and retirements. They further noted 65% of these jobs will require

postsecondary degrees. In this report they also noted a discrepancy between government data sources related to the number of jobs requiring workers to have a postsecondary education. Accordingly, “the U.S. Census, the American Community Survey (ACS), and the Current Population Survey (CPS)” (p. 6) reported 60% of the jobs in 2010 required postsecondary education, while the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) only reported 30%.

The state of Georgia predicts by the year 2020 “more than 60 percent of the jobs in Georgia will require a career certificate or college degree” (State of Georgia, 2011. para. 2). As of 2011, Georgia needed an additional 250,000 graduates in order to have an educated workforce by 2020, (State of Georgia, 2011).

In *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education*, Patrick M. Callan noted steady erosion in the United States as a world leader in college access (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). He reported American college students aged 18-24 ranked 15 out of 29 countries in college completion, and students aged 25-34 had slipped to 10th in ranking. However, adults over age 35 remained among the leaders for having a college degree (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). This report indicated in many states college tuition had risen sharply over recent years, partially due to budget constraints, yet the average family’s income had only marginally increased (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008).

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

The SREB (2016) report *West Virginia Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace* noted one in five adults in the SREB region fell into groups of adults with some postsecondary education, but no degree. The SREB (2010) report *No Time to Waste* noted unless the United States’ educational system achieves the goal of increasing graduation rates, today’s generation of

Americans will likely be less educated and have proportionately fewer graduates than previous generations for the first time in American history. As a nation, we could fall behind other developed countries regarding adults with degrees unless state and higher education leaders can make institutions not only accessible, but successful in producing graduates (Southern Regional Education Board, 2010).

The SREB (2016) ‘Challenge to Lead 2020’ set an educational attainment goal for adults aged 25 to 64, or working-aged adults, of 60% by the year 2020. This SREB goal is similar to the ‘Goal 2025’ set by the Lumina Foundation to have 60% of Americans with either a degree or certificate credential by the year 2025 (Lumina Foundation, n.d.). According to the SREB (2016) report *West Virginia Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace*, which was based on data collected in 2014, only 26% of working-aged adults held a postsecondary credential or a degree awarded beyond the level of high school, while 18% had some postsecondary education, but no credential. The SREB (2018) *West Virginia Looking Closer* report, based on data from 2016, showed West Virginia with 26% of working aged adults attaining a postsecondary credential. However, the report showed the percent of those with some postsecondary, but no degree, increasing to 19%. The SREB (2019) *Fact Book on Higher Education* report noted 30% of adults aged 25 or older in SREB states, of which West Virginia ranked among, had earned a bachelor’s degree by 2017, but this was still behind the national average of 32%.

The SREB (2016) in their *West Virginia Gauging Progress, Accelerating Pace* compared West Virginia employment rates for adults over 25, and noted adults with postsecondary credentials had a better chance of earning higher wages. In 2014, West Virginia employment rates were behind national and SREB averages (Southern Regional Education Board, 2016). Data

from the U. S. Census for 2015 showed income levels increased accordingly with higher levels of education (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

GOVERNMENTAL INFLUENCE ON GRADUATION RATES

The OECD (2008) *Education at a Glance* report was the stimulus for President Barack Obama's educational challenge for the United States to have the "highest portion of college graduates in the world" (Cook & Hartle, 2011, para 1). This challenge spurred a reaction throughout the country as states strived to implement plans to achieve this goal. Policy makers focused on higher education to answer the presidential challenge by 2020 (Duncan, 2010). The realm of higher education targeted pathways to develop initiatives and programs to provide more graduates. Philanthropic organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, along with others, offered their support to help promote college completion goals (Cook & Hartle, 2011).

Race to the Top

On February 17, 2009 President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) to help states improve graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The ARRA provided funding to states that were at risk of losing thousands of jobs in education due to budget cuts (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The stimulus provided funds for educational reform. Race to the Top was an incentive to improve states' educational systems and help with reform measures by providing funds reserved through the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Through the Race to the Top program, the United States Department of Education required states to make educational reform based on the following four areas:

- adopt standards and assessments to prepare students for success in college and for a global workplace;
- build data systems to measure growth and success of students, and provide feedback to educators on how to improve instructional methods;
- work on recruiting and retaining effective educators, along with development and rewards; and
- plan to turn around schools that are low achievers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a).

On March 29, 2010, Arne Duncan, who was the United States Secretary of Education, announced Tennessee as one of two states among the first granted funds during the “first phase of the Race to the Top competition” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a, para. 1). The United States Department of Education awarded Tennessee \$500 million to implement their reform measures.

During Phase II of the Race to the Top campaign, Georgia was awarded funding based on educational reform measures centered on four major areas:

- employing assessments and standards to help prepare students for success,
- recruitment and development to promote effective educators,
- implementing data systems to measure student success, and
- assisting in turning around schools that are low performing (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b).

Kentucky was among those awarded in Phase III of the Race to the Top funding, which supported many of the same reform measures introduced in the first two phases regarding educational reform and enhancing data systems, along with improving science, technology,

engineering and mathematics (STEM) education within Kentucky schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

In November 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) report *Fundamental Change: Innovation in America's Schools Under Race to the Top* noted this program helped to empower states on educational reform. It rewarded those who implemented improvements designed to increase student achievement by focusing on communication and networking to help eliminate silos erected in the past (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The report showed increases in higher education institutions' enrollment rates between the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years for Tennessee (3.3%) and Georgia (0.5%).

Complete College Tennessee Act 2010 (CCTA)

In 2010, Tennessee passed the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA) as part of their higher education reform (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.b). These changes affected how funding was delivered to institutions and affected changes from academic pursuits to administrative policies. One of the primary features of the CCTA included the “nation’s first outcomes-based funding formula” (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.a, para 4). Other features included quality assurance and differentiated mission statements, and “inter-institutional collaboration” (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.c, p. v). Many of these provisions were driven by the need to provide the state with a trained and educated workforce and assist in economic growth. Carnevale et al. (2010) projected by the year 2018, about 45% of the jobs in Tennessee would require a higher level of education.

INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

The educational requirements and workforce predictions projected by Carnevale et al. (2010) gave educators and policy makers information regarding the goals higher education

needed to achieve. This information forced more focus on student retention and barriers to graduating with a degree. Many states worked on initiatives and ways to improve degree completion rates in response to President Barack Obama's challenge and the Race to the Top initiative.

Tennessee

In 2013, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam challenged higher education when he launched an initiative called 'Drive to 55,' which was designed to get 55% of Tennessee's workforce to earn a degree or acquire a certification by the year 2025 (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.a). Business leaders and non-profits established an alliance with the Drive to 55 initiative to show their support (Tennessee Board of Regents, n.d.). 'Tennessee Reconnect' is part of 'Drive to 55' and is designed to help the nearly one million adults in Tennessee with some college, but no degree, complete their degrees (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.a). Other initiatives included Tennessee Promise and the Labor Education Alignment Program (LEAP) (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.a).

Georgia

On August 24, 2010, Georgia was awarded funds through Race to the Top during the second phase of the program (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). The grant was based on their plans for educational reform. The four areas of reform were to promote standards, help develop effective educators, assist with low performing schools, and build data systems.

Georgia, along with Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia, participated in the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) program (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.b). This program was designed to collect and effectively manage and analyze student data to help educators and stakeholders improve educational outcomes. Consistent with the goals of

Race to the Top the SLDS was part of Georgia’s educational reform to create an infrastructure and data hub capable of collecting and reporting information for analysis, such as validating graduation rates and capturing reliable data to assist in improving educational goals (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.c).

Information collected through the SLDS could assist the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in monitoring the educational performance of the United States with other countries. NCES is the entity primarily responsible for collecting and analyzing educational data relating to the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.a). NCES is housed within the U. S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The IES is an independent branch of the U.S. Department of Education responsible for conducting research, analyzing statistics and evaluating data used to provide scientific information on educational practices and policies that might be useful to educators, policy makers, and the public (Institute of Education Sciences, 2017).

In terms of higher education, Georgia is committed to improving completion rates and continuing the work they began on the SLDS as part of the Race to the Top with a commitment to three key areas:

- reporting and communicating,
- improving access to college and student readiness, and
- improving degree pathways (University System of Georgia, 2016b).

Accurate reporting and analysis of data needs to be communicated to key stakeholders. Individual institutions, the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, needed to communicate data and information effectively to help maintain the state’s accountability (University System of Georgia, 2016b). In an effort to improve communication

and coordination throughout the state, the two systems in Georgia recommended an early launch of the 2012 Complete College Georgia (CCG) event (University System of Georgia, 2016b).

In August of 2011, Georgia's Governor Nathan Deal announced the launching of the Complete College Georgia (CCG) program (University System of Georgia, 2016a). The goal in adopting this program was to improve a student's ability to graduate from higher education institutions (University System of Georgia, 2016a). There were five areas that the CCG planned in order to help students have improved access to higher education institutions and complete a degree. These key areas included:

- enhanced college readiness,
- improved access for students who are underserved,
- shortened time to acquire a degree,
- restructured delivery to improve quality, and
- modified remedial practices (University System of Georgia, 2016a).

As part of Complete College Georgia, a number of initiatives came about to improve access to college and the student readiness for it. Initiatives included best practices known for success in other states such as Guided Pathways to Success (GPS), Go Back Move Ahead, focusing on credits to graduate on time using 15 to Finish, and remediation programs designed to help students overcome barriers to completing college (University System of Georgia, 2016a). There was also support for initiatives such as the Common Core Standards and training of educators in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (University System of Georgia, 2016b). Other initiatives included the Dual Enrollment program, Georgia Apply to College events, and Near Peer mentorships in service learning (University System of Georgia, 2016b). A

report from Complete College America (2017) showed Georgia had made significant increases in the number of students on track to graduate through the initiative 15 to Finish from 2012 to 2015.

Kentucky

In the *Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997*, or House Bill 1 (HB1), Kentucky legislation focused on areas of postsecondary education (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2011). In order to implement the strategic agenda for 2011-2016 successfully, the following were considered critical:

- adequate funding to support postsecondary institutions,
- accountability regarding shared common goals and objectives with a commitment for all key stakeholders,
- selecting performance measures and agreed upon targets to measure progress,
- a plan of collaborative implementation to be supported between institutions and key stakeholders,
- a web-based performance reporting to benchmark improvement and accountability reports,
- incentive programs to help promote improvements and stimulate graduates with degrees, and
- balancing needs between quality education and credentials with the need to increase degree attainment rates in the state (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2011, p. 14).

At the beginning of 2016 as part of the strategic agenda for postsecondary and adult education, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (2016) drafted the report *Stronger by Degrees: A Plan to Create a More Educated and Prosperous Kentucky*. This plan was aimed

at having over half (58%) the citizens in Kentucky attain a degree or professional certificate by 2025. In 2016, the state had 45% of working aged adults with these “educational attainments levels” (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2016, p. 3). Strategies to help achieve the goal included support for programs like GEAR UP, GED Express, SOAR, 15 to Finish, and improving degree pathways to make transferring credits easier to promote completion of a degree. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education had an array of tools to help students gain access to and be successful in achieving a higher education. One tool, KnowHow2GoKy, provided resources to help students of all ages make decisions when seeking a college degree (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016). It was “modeled after the KnowHow2GO campaign developed by the American Council on Education, Lumina Foundation for Education and the National Ad Council” (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2016, para. 3).

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) offered a number of services designed to meet the goal of educating Kentuckians to provide for a solid economic future. KHEAA provided a website offering adults ways to make decisions on furthering their education, plans on paying for it, and tips for selecting the right college or university for them (Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, 2017). Illiteracy among adults is a challenge to Kentucky achieving its educational attainment goal (Commonwealth of Kentucky, 2017).

West Virginia

In 2014, the public colleges and universities in West Virginia awarded a number of degrees totaling more than 18,000 (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015). The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) and West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS) announced a goal to ‘Double Degrees’ by 2025 (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015). Research indicated in

West Virginia more than half of the jobs available by 2020 “will require at least an associate’s degree or higher” (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015, para. 5), yet in 2015 less than 30% of West Virginians held degrees. About “20 percent of the state’s adults” (Hohmann, 2016, para. 1) have attempted some college, but did not graduate with a degree. In the summer of 2018, the HEPC announced the goal for 60% of West Virginians to have postsecondary credentials by the year 2030, stating the need for an educated workforce (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2018).

Policies such as “Doubling the Degrees” by the year 2025 fostered by the WVHEPC and the CTCS can influence how educational institutions assist students through advising as they complete their degrees (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015). Programs like West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) can assist with degree completion for students enrolled in the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree (BOG AAS).

The former West Virginia State Board of Regents implemented the RBA degree in 1975 as the first program to assist West Virginia adult learners in earning a bachelor’s degree (Shepherd University, n.d.). Today it is a statewide program administered by the WVHEPC to help adult learners and non-traditional students gain a degree (Glenville State College, 2011; Marshall University, n.d.).

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Adult Learners

The *DegreeNow* initiative was designed through a collaborate effort to promote adult learners to complete their degrees (Beasley et al., 2014). The “West Virginia Higher Education Policy and the West Virginia Community and Technical College System partnered with NASPA

– Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and the Lumina Foundation to launch *DegreeNow*” (Beasley et al., 2014, p. 203). With a grant of \$800,000 from the Lumina Foundation, this collaborative partnership utilized the *DegreeNow* initiative to “create an integrated statewide adult degree completion program” (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011, para 1).

The initiative incorporated three separate components already in existence, “the West Virginia Board of Governors Associate in Applied Science, the Regents Transfer Agreement, and the Regents Bachelor of Arts” (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011, para. 1). Through the collaborative partnership between WVHEPC and WVCTCS, adult learners are provided a continuum upon which they can earn a two or four year degree (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011).

DegreeNow was designed to target adult learners who had been out of school a minimum of three years with some college but had not completed their degrees (Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, n.d.). This initiative “focused on enhancing student and academic services” (Beasley et al., 2014, p. 204) to assist adult learners. Along with working to help facilitate strategic partnerships, the initiative provided some strategies to help adult learners by creating awareness and focusing more attention on the needs of adults by offering training for student affairs professionals, key administrators, and faculty (Beasley et al., 2014).

Going into the second year of the grant the WVHEPC and the WVCTCS sent out a request for proposals seeking a partner to create and deliver academic affairs training that targeted faculty and academic advisors assisting adult learners (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011). The WVHEPC and the WVCTCS partnered with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) in the second year of the grant “to strengthen the

delivery of instructional services” (Beasley et al., 2014, p. 204). During the course of the *DegreeNow* grant, adults completing their associate’s degrees increased 33% with an increase of 18% for adults completing bachelor’s degrees (Beasley et al., 2014).

Online Learning and Collaboration

The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) combined a number of online learning initiatives into a comprehensive program available to participating colleges through what is now known as TN eLearning. The TBR system joins 46 institutions covering the majority of the state (TN eCampus, n.d.). This model is similar to the ideas found in West Virginia’s DegreeNow initiative, and later initiatives, including RBA Today and WVROCKS, that are designed to help students complete RBA and BOG AAS degrees.

The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2018) report *Sustaining Public Higher Education Services in Every Region of West Virginia: The Future of the Regional Comprehensive Colleges and Universities* that Governor Jim Justice requested from the WVHEPC in May 2017 addressed the threat of access to West Virginia higher education institutions based on economic and demographic conditions. In the report, WVROCKS was noted as a platform to aid at-risk institutions in delivering collaborative courses by sharing resources and providing more access to online education in institutions that might not have a fully developed online program and online courses.

WHAT IS WVROCKS

Mission and Creation

The mission of WVROCKS is “to provide a high quality, student-focused, engaging, online learning higher education collaborative to increase the college completion rate” (College

Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, mission section). Goals for WVROCKS listed on the WVROCKS RBA and WVROCKS BOG documents were to:

- “increase access to higher education for non-traditional learners,
- enhance the ability of adults to attain a... *bachelor's/associate's* [differed per flyer] degree through the existing... *Regents Bachelor of Arts/Board of Governors* [differed per flyer] degree program,
- support the delivery of high-quality instruction focusing on best practices in online learning,
- provide an environment for institutions to collaborate on course offerings” (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a, goals section; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, goals section).

WVROCKS provides adult learners the flexibility of taking compressed courses online to complete either the RBA degree or the BOG AAS degree. Courses are designed to be completed in eight weeks (West Virginia Network, 2017). WVROCKS credits transfer back to the participating colleges in which the students are enrolled to help them meet the requirements for their degrees (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c). Initially, WVROCKS offered only 300 and 400 level courses towards the completion of the RBA degree (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c; West Virginia Network, 2017). Later it expanded to 100 and 200 level courses for those seeking the BOG AAS.

WVROCKS was created by the following team of West Virginia Network (WVNET) and WVHEPC members: Dan O’Hanlon, Director, Dr. Roxann Humbert, Statewide Director of Higher Education eLearning, and Dr. Mary Stewart, Director of Distance Learning and Education Services (Leasure, 2016). The model for this portal was accomplished by studying

programs in other states and working with a group consisting of representatives from various offices around campuses offering RBA degrees, including admissions, bursars and registrars' offices, and academic affairs (Leasure, 2016).

PARTICIPATION WITH RBA

Collaboration between WVHEPC, WVNET, and participating statewide colleges and institutions helped further develop the educational portal. WVROCKS runs through the Blackboard learning platform hosted by WVNET. Bluefield State College, Fairmont State University, and Marshall University were the three higher education institutions to pilot the program in the fall of 2012 (State Journal, 2014).

Initially, WVROCKS consisted of 55 students in only five different courses (Leasure, 2016). However, in only a few years it grew into more than 40 courses with more than 650 students enrolled (Leasure, 2016). The WVROCKS initiative continues to grow through participating West Virginia institutions as it expands to the BOG AAS program.

WVROCKS Expands

In the fall of 2016, WVHEPC, WVNET, and the WVCTCS piloted the WVROCKS program in three of the state's community and technical colleges: a) BridgeValley Community and Technical College, b) Mountwest Community and Technical College, and c) Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2017). As with the RBA program, these courses are available online through WVROCKS and are designed to assist adult learners who are seeking to complete the BOG AAS (West Virginia Network, 2017). They offer 100 – 200 level courses, with three different start times throughout the year (West Virginia Network, 2017).

RBA Today

While WVHEPC and WVCTCS work towards goals of doubling degrees awarded in West Virginia by 2025, West Virginia HEPC and the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) provide information to students seeking to learn more about earning a degree (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c). They assist learners with step-by-step instruction on how to find the right college for them and learn about their financial aid options. Additional information provided through the CFWV includes contact information at participating institutions for adult learners interested in seeking the RBA degree or the BOG AAS degree. Permission to reference material located on the RBA Today website was requested and granted on July 27, 2017 as referenced in Appendix E.

West Virginia HEPC and West Virginia CTCS Report Card

The WVCTCS and WVHEPC (2013) document *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2013* noted West Virginia ranked last with “only 26.1 percent of adults in West Virginia” (p. 20) having earned a postsecondary degree. They noted it was important to develop initiatives to help adult learners earn their degrees. A “major initiative to enhance the ability of adults to attain a bachelor’s degree” (p. 42) was the addition of WVROCKS to the RBA Today program.

The WVHEPC (2013) report *Leading the Way* illustrated the role of the Commission in promoting the RBA program and implementing initiatives such as WVROCKS. In the report they noted the Commission’s “statewide agreement with Quality Matters” (p. 12) to provide a method for online classes to be peer reviewed. In the *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2014* it was stated that WVNET and the WVHEPC provided faculty training on improving online courses to achieve standards set by Quality Matters through a grant of \$28,765 (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2015).

In the *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2015*, it was noted that a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning & Telemedicine (RUS DLT) Grant, totaling almost \$500,000, was awarded to WVNET “to expand capabilities of the WVROCKS initiative... to include synchronous video classes” (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2016, p. 58). This grant would help make WVROCKS accessible to adult learners across the state and improve online technology components such as synchronous videos.

Reports on WVROCKS showed levels of success with record enrollments at 728 sessions, and exceeded national online learning statistics for student retention rates, completion rates, and pass rates as reported in *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2016* (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2017). The *West Virginia Higher Education Report Card 2017* indicated WVROCKS continued to grow with over 884 RBA students participating in courses through its portal, with online learning rates exceeding national averages (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2018). The retention rate was 93%, with “a completion rate of 92 percent, and a pass rate of 84 percent” (p. 55).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary this chapter shows some of the educational reform measures and initiatives in the United States over most of the past decade. The reports reviewed showed diminished standing of the United States’ educational ranking on a global level, along with a predicted shortfall of qualified and educated workers needed to meet the needs of future jobs in the United States. An important consideration regarding the timing of some of these reports was they occurred during an economic recession in the United States.

In the following chapter methods for data collection will be explained. The information gathered from the data collected will be analyzed and reviewed to gain a better understanding of the WVROCKS program.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative case study is designed to learn more about the implementation of West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) within West Virginia higher education institutions. This study also serves the purpose of gaining various perceptions regarding the program among the realm of higher education.

Research Design

The research design is based on an intrinsic approach. Case studies are a common research design in qualitative methods where “the researcher explores a... phenomenon (“the case”) bounded by time and activity” (Creswell, 1994, p. 12) to develop meaning for an experience (Merriam, 1988). Intrinsic types of case studies “are undertaken when a researcher wants to better understand a particular case” (Berg, 2004, p. 256). Stake (1995) noted with intrinsic case studies the case itself is of primary importance.

In a qualitative case study information is collected using a variety of procedures for collecting data (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1988). The research questions for this case study will be answered by collecting data utilizing a triangulation technique, which is a method requiring data collection via three or more different data sources (Berg, 2004). Using multiple sources as a means to collect data can help address possible issues with construct validity on how a case study design is constructed, providing the data collected is applied correctly to corroborate information about the same phenomenon (Yin, 1994).

The data sources for this study include a website analysis conducted on a variety of websites, including higher education institutions across West Virginia using a website analysis instrument created by the researcher (see Appendix B). Other data sources include using an

interview instrument constructed by the researcher (see Appendix C) applied to at least three different populations, with a possible fourth population depending on availability. Member checks were also conducted on interviews to validate information (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Participants

The population of this study includes various stakeholders in the WVROCKS program. In the website analysis, the population consisted of all statewide higher education institutions that participate in the WVROCKS program as identified through the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) website. Appendix F provides a listing of these institutions grouped by degree offerings: the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS).

The criteria applied in selecting participants for interviews required knowledge of WVROCKS from stakeholders that aligned with the four sections (A, B, C, and D) identified in the *Interview Guide* (Appendix C). Section A of the *Interview Guide* includes creators or collaborators of WVROCKS. The three identified during the literature review are listed in Appendix F, and others may be identified through the nonprobability sampling snowball technique as key personnel involved with the program. These were among the first targeted as participants for interviews.

Others were selected from purposefully selected higher educational institutions participating in the WVROCKS program. Analysis of websites proved helpful in selecting higher education institutions based on the availability and analysis of data found on the websites. Section B of the *Interview Guide* targets administrators and staff from WVROCKS participating institutions. This population included participants that fulfill roles such as administrators, admissions personnel, and registrars, along with coordinators for RBA or BOG AAS degrees

within a sample of the nine institutions identified in Appendix F. Three of these institutions were purposefully selected with contacts identified through information available on the CFWV website, website analysis, or from those identified through snowball sampling of participants in Section A. The remaining participants are defined in the *Interview Guide* as advisors and faculty, and students in sections C and D, respectively. Participants for these sections were selected from the purposefully selected higher education institutions following the website analysis, and from information collected from interviews with creators and collaborators of WVROCKS, along with administrators and staff, by applying the snowball technique. The total number of interview participants was expected to be from 12 – 16. A total of 15 stakeholders were interviewed. Creators and key personnel involved with WVROCKS were included as participants. Within the institutions, participants included administrators, staff, and faculty with knowledge or experience of WVROCKS. Students were also intended as a population because they could provide the unique perspective of participating in a WVROCKS course. However, a listing of these students was difficult to obtain and it was not possible to conduct interviews with students.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were created by the researcher to gather data, the *Website Analysis Guide* and the *Interview Guide*. The first instrument, *Website Analysis Guide*, has two parts and is located in Appendix B. Part one provides a graphical analysis of online information regarding WVROCKS presented on the institution's website. It begins with the institution's homepage and then provides two paths: one being to WVROCKS and the other being to RBA or BOG AAS, depending on whether it is a four-year or two-year institution. Under each path is a set of columns for yes or no responses as to whether or not information related to WVROCKS is referenced on the website. The path continues in a descending order mapping the information in

the following order: programs offered, student resources, completion strategies, and other relevant information found on the website.

Part two of the *Website Analysis Guide* includes a more detailed description of the information available on the websites. It is organized to follow along with the path mapped out in part one of the *Website Analysis Guide* and allows for a more detailed collection of data. It begins with listing the name of the institution under review and the website URL. Next, it collects information regarding the path to WVROCKS or the RBA or the BOG AAS. Then it collects descriptions of these programs, the resources available to students related to the programs, and any degree completion strategies, along with any other relevant information found on the websites. Together, parts one and two of the *Website Analysis Guide* provided data to assist in responding to research question one posed in this study.

The second instrument used to collect data is the *Interview Guide* located in Appendix C. The *Interview Guide* is divided into two parts. Part one of the *Interview Guide* contains four separate sections (A, B, C, and D) with each section having interview questions adapted for four separate audiences and their experiences related to WVROCKS: creators and collaborators, administrators and staff, advisors and faculty, and students.

Yin (1994) suggests basic skills for a researcher should include being able to “ask good questions... (and) be a good listener” (p. 56). Interview questions were designed to be open ended to allow participants to fully express their thoughts on the subject. Additional probing questions were included in the *Interview Guide* to help further the researcher’s understanding of the interviewees’ comments. These can be found under question one in sections A, B, C, and D of the *Interview Guide*; under question three in sections A, B, and C; under question four in section D; and under question six in sections A, B, C, and D. Yin (1994) noted open-ended

questions are the most common and allow interviewees to respond with not only facts, but their opinions regarding the topic of the interview question.

A panel of experts was consulted to test the *Website Analysis Guide* and the *Interview Guide*. These experts have experience in areas that included, web design, conducting interviews by phone, online education, and WVROCKS training. Feedback gathered from review of the instruments led to revisions to improve them. Berg (2004) and Creswell (1994) recommend testing an instrument prior to using it to collect your data to measure effectiveness and make improvements to build validity of the instrument. Both the *Website Analysis Guide* and the *Interview Guide* were tested by the expert panel. In part one of the *Interview Guide*, Section A contains 10 open-ended questions geared towards the creators and collaborators of the WVROCKS program. While all 10 questions are designed to be comparable among the different groups of the population, the third question in Section A references the level of experience with WVROCKS as it related to that group and was intended to gain data on how WVROCKS was formulated. In Section B (administrators and staff) and Section C (advisors and faculty), this question was more relevant to any training they might have received, along with providing demographic information on how long they might have been involved with WVROCKS. In Section D, this question only served as a demographic. Level of experience is more fully defined under additional definitions of terms in Appendix D.

Most of the remaining interview questions in part one of the *Interview Guide* relate to how the program was implemented and how it is perceived by all four groups. The exception is question 10 for sections A, B, and C, which applies the snowball sampling technique, and question 10 in section D, which asks that group of participants for any further information they felt was relevant.

In part two of the *Interview Guide*, data is grouped, or coded, by how specific interview questions relate to research questions two and three. Part two involves analyzing the data from the sections of part one of the *Interview Guide*. The researcher used the table in part two of the *Interview Guide* to analyze the data from part one. The table also shows how the data collected relates to research questions by listing the research question number in the first column, along with listing the sections from the *Interview Guide* (A, B, C, or D) that corresponds with the 10 interview questions. The data collected from both parts of the *Interview Guide* assisted in responding to research questions two and three.

Data Collection

This case study followed the guidelines set by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) with approval required prior to collecting data. IRB approval is located in Appendix A, with Appendix I being for the Informed Consent Form for face-to-face interviews, and the Verbal Consent for participants not available for a face-to-face interview who participated by Skype or phone. The protocols used to collect data for this study included conducting a website analysis on higher education institutions participating in WVROCKS and interviewing various stakeholders. In addition, a request for member checks was made from interview participants.

Appendix F contains a listing of the nine higher education institutions and five related agencies affiliated with WVROCKS, six including the WVROCKS website, that were utilized for the website analysis. Initial interviews were conducted with the population identified as the creators and collaborators (part one section A of the *Interview Guide*) that formulated WVROCKS. Data collected from the websites using the *Website Analysis Guide* and the interviews with those targeted in section A of the *Interview Guide* assisted with the purposeful

selection of higher education institutions and those who were interviewed following the protocol established in the remaining B – D sections of the *Interview Guide*.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, unless the participant was only available by Skype or phone, and lasted no more than one hour. Interviewees were initially contacted via an email to establish the interview. A follow up phone call was made to confirm the date, time, and place set by the participant for the interview. A phone call also served as means for initial contact if the intended interviewee did not respond to the email, or an email address was unavailable. The interviewer was prepared with the protocols for this study when conducting an initial phone call in the event the interviewee wanted to proceed with the interview at that time. Interviews were conducted within two weeks of the initial contact.

The snowball sampling technique was applied to the initial interviews with the creators of WVROCKS to gain knowledge of additional interviewees willing to share their perspective on WVROCKS. In the event no institutional contacts were garnered from the snowball sampling of the initial interview group, the CFWV website provided a list of institutional contacts for WVROCKS participating institutions and could serve as a starting point for interview candidates in selected higher education institutions (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c).

Yin (1994) noted interviews should be considered “verbal reports” (p. 85) and were subject to problems including bias and poor recall. He noted recording the interviews could assist in more accurate data collection from the interview process but should only be recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Interviews conducted in this case study were recorded to assist the researcher in the transcription of the interviews. Participants in the interviews were provided a transcript of their interview to review and edit any information they felt might be sensitive and

did not want to be part of the research. Recordings of the interviews were erased or destroyed after being transcribed.

Informed Consent forms included language letting participants know the interviews would be recorded. The forms were secured for the purpose of this research project in a locked private file cabinet. Although every effort was made by the researcher, there is the possibility that a participant could be identified based on the content of the information they provided. Conversely, most participants wished to be recognized for their contributions to WVROCKS and their names are included in the final report.

Member checks were conducted on the interpretations of the interviews to check for accuracy and increase validity (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). Drafts summarizing the interviews were given to participants willing to participate in a member check following the summations of data from the interviews, with a request to respond to the member check within one week of receiving the summary report.

The process of member checks did “help triangulate the researcher’s observations and interpretations” (Stake, 1995, p. 115). In this process, Stake (1995) noted those selected for interviews will be “requested to examine rough drafts” (p. 115) of written summations garnered from the interviews. The member checks provide those interviewed the opportunity to review a summarized report of the interviews and provide feedback to the researcher, which assists with accuracy of the information (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Data Analysis

The first research question relates to how accessible information is regarding WVROCKS to students and faculty viewing higher education and related agencies’ websites. Part I of the *Website Analysis Guide* includes a protocol for analyzing the availability of online

information related to WVROCKS and helps illustrate the mapping involved in finding data related to the program. It allowed for analysis of the number of yes and no responses pertaining to the data collected. The data was mapped and reported in charts. Part two provides an area to expand the data available on mapping the various steps related to WVROCKS and allowed for more detailed description of the data collected, which aided in grouping or coding data to gain insight and knowledge on the program. Both parts of the *Website Analysis Guide* helped to answer research question one.

The second research question relates to how the WVROCKS program was implemented in institutions of higher education offering RBA and BOG AAS degrees. In part one of the *Interview Guide*, interview questions two, three, four, five, and nine in sections A, B, C, and D, assisted in responding to research question two. The third research question seeks to gain an understanding of how selected participants perceived WVROCKS. Sections A, B, C, and D in part one of the *Interview Guide* used interview questions one, six, seven, eight, and nine to respond to research question three. Interview question nine could apply to either or both research questions two and three. Part two of the *Interview Guide* was used to help group or code data collected to gain knowledge of how the program was developed and how it was perceived in the realm of higher education. After collecting the data from the interviews, the researcher used part two of the *Interview Guide* to analyze the data, group responses to research questions in the table, and determine emergent themes related to each research question.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter details how the study was conducted. In the upcoming chapters, the data collected will be compiled and analyzed to gain a better understanding of how the program was created and how it works as a tool in helping adults complete their education and earn a degree.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents a summary of findings for this case study to advance the knowledge about the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) initiative. The information collected from web analysis and interviews was examined to respond to the following three research questions:

1. What online information about WVROCKS is presented on participating West Virginia higher education and related agencies' websites?
2. How has WVROCKS been implemented at select higher education institutions?
3. What are the perceptions of various stakeholders in the WVROCKS initiative?

The information provided by this research may help advance the initiative as a tool to promote higher education in West Virginia. While the roles of WVROCKS are expanding into new areas, including dual programs where high school students can earn college credits, at the time of this research the focus was more on improving degree completion of the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) degree and the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) degree.

SUMMARY OF WEBSITE ANALYSIS

This section covers analysis of information collected from West Virginia higher education institutions and other related agencies' websites affiliated with the WROCKS program. Information found on these websites was reviewed using the *Website Analysis Guide* (Appendix B). Institutions were divided into three categories: four-year institutions that offered the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA), two-year institutions that offered the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS), and other websites that were reviewed based on their

association with WVROCKS. Data collected from website analysis served to answer research question one. Website analysis of selected higher education institutions and related agencies was completed in March 2019 and updated through September 2019 as sites were revisited when referenced during interviews.

Website Analysis Participants

The total number of websites reviewed was 14. The goal was to analyze all websites of the higher education institutions that participated in the WVROCKS program. When this research was initiated there were 10 higher education institutions identified as WVROCKS participants. Four other related agencies' websites were added to the analysis based on their affiliation with the creation and continuation of WVROCKS. Appendix K provides a table detailing the relationship between selected institutions and agencies with the WVROCKS program.

The College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) website included a list of participating statewide higher education institutions that was discovered during the literature review. The website identified six, four-year institutions: (a) Bluefield State College, (b) Concord University, (c) Fairmont State University, (d) Glenville State College, (e) Marshall University, and (f) Shepherd University. Three two-year institutions were identified: (a) BridgeValley Community and Technical College, (b) Mountwest Community and Technical College, and (c) Southern Community and Technical College. These higher education institutions were noted as participants in WVROCKS as of March 2019. During interviews, Pierpont Community and Technical College was identified as a new participant in the WVROCKS program and was added to the analysis. In addition, four other websites: (a) College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), (b) West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

(WVHEPC), (c) West Virginia Network (WVNET), and (d) West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) were noted in the literature review to be linked to information related to WVROCKS and were added to the website analysis. Table 3 lists the 14 websites that were reviewed to gain a better understanding of the information available online regarding the WVROCKS program.

Table 3. West Virginia Institutions Affiliated with WVROCKS

Listed are West Virginia higher education institutions and related agencies with web addresses that participated in WVROCKS or provided relevant information related to the program.

Institutions	Home URLs
Four Year	
Bluefield State College	https://bluefieldstate.edu
Concord University	https://www.concord.edu
Fairmont State University	https://www.fairmontstate.edu
Glenville State College	https://www.glenville.edu
Marshall University	https://www.marshall.edu
Shepherd University	https://www.shepherd.edu
Two Year	
BridgeValley Community & Technical College	https://www.bridgevalley.edu
Mountwest Community & Technical College	http://www.mctc.edu
Pierpoint Community & Technical College	https://www.pierpont.edu
Southern West Virginia Community & Technical College	https://www.southernwv.edu
Related Agencies	
College Foundation of West Virginia (CVWV)	https://cfwv.com
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC)	http://www.wvhepc.edu
West Virginia Network (WVNET)	https://wvnet.edu
West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS)	http://webhost-wp.wvnet.edu/wvrocks

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked: What online information about WVROCKS is presented on participating West Virginia higher education and related agencies' websites? The website analysis started with a search for instances of WVROCKS on each institution's home page and then looked more in-depth at other sections such as programs offered, student resources, degree completion strategies, and other relevant information. Since WVROCKS served as a method to help complete the RBA or BOG AAS degrees, these degrees were included in the analysis.

Four-Year Institution Websites

Analysis of four-year higher education institutions' websites that offered the RBA showed online information about the RBA program was available. As shown in Table 3, all six of the higher education institutions referenced the RBA on webpages related to programs and student resources. Requirements for completing the RBA degree were similar across the websites and aligned with admission and degree requirements set by WVHEPC for the RBA degree program. The RBA was noted as a degree to help adult learners earn their bachelor's degree. While WVROCKS served as a tool to help students complete their RBA degree, only four higher education institutions referenced WVROCKS on webpages related to programs. Only two institutions' websites noted WVROCKS under student resources. The RBA program was mentioned by five of the six institutions in other relevant ways on different webpages, which corresponded with the number of higher education institutions that displayed information related to WVROCKS. Information or direct links to the RBA were found on four of the six home pages for the institutions, while only one institution referenced WVROCKS on the home page. Three of the six higher education institutions included information about the RBA when referencing degree completion strategies on webpages, but only one institution noted WVROCKS among the

information available on those webpages. General information related to the requirements for the RBA program was found on all higher education institutions' websites. Bluefield State College, Fairmont State University, and Marshall University referenced the WVROCKS program directly on their webpages. Concord University and Shepherd University only provided a listing of WVROCKS courses that were available to RBA students, which was represented in Table 4 under the heading 'Other Information.'

Table 4. Web Analysis of Four-Year Institutions

Listed in this table are the four-year institutions with headings that correlates with the *Website Analysis Guide* Part One (Appendix B) showing a summary of the information presented on the websites.

Website Analysis of Institutions	Home page		Programs		Student Resources		Completion Strategies		Other Information	
	WV		WV		WV		WV		WV	
	RBA	ROCKS	RBA	ROCKS	RBA	ROCKS	RBA	ROCKS	RBA	ROCKS
Four Year										
Bluefield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Concord			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Fairmont	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Glenville	✓		✓	✓	✓					
Marshall			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Shepherd	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

Information linked to WVROCKS located on higher education institutions' websites varied by institutions. However, a reference to WVROCKS did not always reflect the amount of information available. For example, Bluefield State College provided fixed links to programs, such as WVROCKS, which linked back to the same information via multiple paths since the fixed link was located on every webpage.

The data related to WVROCKS included links to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal, links to various documents with information about WVROCKS, courses available through WVROCKS, online news articles about the program, and links to the WVROCKS website. Additional material connected to WVROCKS involved webpages that provided

descriptions and details of the program, qualifications for faculty, and references to Quality Matters (QM). More information about WVROCKS was offered in some institutions' Regents Bachelor of Arts Handbooks and undergraduate catalogs. There were some cases when information related to WVROCKS, such as online news articles, could only be located by conducting an external search via Google to look for the higher education institution and the WVROCKS program.

The most frequent source of WVROCKS information linked to the iLearn Blackboard login webpage for the WVROCKS portal. This webpage was located on the WVNET website. The Blackboard WVROCKS portal webpage provided students with directions for how to login. It also included links to additional information such as a "Welcome to the WVROCKS portal" (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019a) document that served as a welcome letter for students, a link that listed the courses taught through WVROCKS, and contact information for the Helpdesk supported by WVNET.

Bluefield State College provided a fixed link that opened to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal webpage. Fairmont State University and Marshall University also provided links to the WVROCKS portal webpage. While all six of the higher education institutions were linked to the WVROCKS portal, Concord University, Glenville State College, and Shepherd University linked to it through an external search of their institutions and WVROCKS, which resulted in a path to the portal through CFWV. Some higher education institutions linked to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal login webpage only, while others provided additional links to documents and information about WVROCKS.

As referenced above, the document titled "Welcome to the WVROCKS portal" (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019a) was a letter that contained directions on how to access the WVROCKS

Blackboard portal and provided a link to open that webpage. The WVROCKS Welcome letter provided directions to students on how to access WVROCKS courses. The letter also enumerated basic instructions on where to begin the course to learn about course navigation within the learning management system, provided contact information for technical support, and listed who to contact for accommodation needs.

Additional documents involved with WVROCKS were the WVROCKS RBA flyer, the WVROCKS FAQ flyer, and the WVROCKS Course Description and Textbook information sheet. Those documents provided information and served to answer questions about the WVROCKS program. Some of the documents were available via multiple paths such as the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal login webpage and the CFWV webpage that linked back to the same or similar document. The WVROCKS RBA flyer explained the WVHEPC and WVNET developed WVROCKS as an effort to make college courses more accessible to students to complete the RBA degree in West Virginia higher education institutions (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b). The flyer provided information about the WVROCKS program that included who to contact about the program, along with the mission and goals of WVROCKS. The mission of WVROCKS was “to provide a high quality student-focused, engaging, online learning higher education collaborative to increase the college completion rate” (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, mission section). Four goals were also listed in the document for WVROCKS:

- “increase access to higher education for non-traditional learners,
- enhance the ability of adults to attain a bachelor’s degree through the existing Regents Bachelor of Arts degree program,

- support the delivery of high-quality instruction focusing on best practices in online learning, and
- provide an environment for institutions to collaborate on course offerings”
(College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, goals section).

The document further detailed the responsibilities of the campus, which included register students, manage financial aid and tuition, list WVROCKS courses, process grades, and share enrollment information. Areas of responsibility noted for the WVROCKS program were to provide a schedule of WVROCKS courses and access via a secure website, and train faculty on best practices related to online instruction. Students’ responsibilities included gain admission into the RBA program at a participating institution, enroll in WVROCKS courses from that institution, and check their school email for WVROCKS course announcements. The document also listed cost per credit hour for the course and provided a link to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal.

Included with the WVROCKS RBA flyer was a separate section that provided a series of frequently asked questions (FAQ) for the WVROCKS program. This section started with a list of West Virginia higher education institutions that participated in WVROCKS. Other information noted courses as upper level and discussed financial considerations that included fees, financial aid, and refund information. Furthermore, the information presented explained how to register, how to check for the five start dates for WVROCKS courses, how to get grades, along with some general information that included things like how to determine textbooks used for a course. The WVROCKS RBA flyer was updated for the Fall 2019/2020 academic year with the following changes: a) the contact information switched from Dr. Roxann Humbert to Dr. Mary Stewart, b)

the course fee went from \$223 to \$250, and c) Glenville State College was no longer listed as a participating institution (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c).

Fairmont State University's website linked to another document titled "WVROCKS RBA FAQ" (Fairmont State University, n.d.b), a flyer that answered WVROCKS questions for their students. In the document WVROCKS was described as a portal that allowed students in West Virginia to complete the RBA degree from one of the state's higher education institutions that participated in the WVROCKS program (Fairmont State University, n.d.b). It provided information on the cost of a course, how financial aid applied towards the cost, noted faculty were from various West Virginia institutions, explained why start and end dates differed from other courses taught at Fairmont State University, included links to course and textbook information, and provided information on who to contact at the university if they had further questions. The WVROCKS Course Description and Textbook information sheet was also a document on the Fairmont State University website that provided information on how to access your courses through the WVROCKS portal and how to view WVROCKS course descriptions and textbooks required for a course (Fairmont State University, n.d.a).

The WVROCKS courses listed in the Blackboard WVROCKS portal login webpage showed a variety of course offerings. Overall, there were approximately 80 courses listed on the webpage. Only Concord University listed all the WVROCKS courses available through the Blackboard WVROCKS portal. They provided a prefix of WVRK and stipulated they were for RBA students only. Marshall University allowed students to select WVROCKS courses by applying a filter when reviewing courses. Bluefield State College provided a listing of WVROCKS courses that were identified as such in the instructional method section and had a prefix of RBAD. Fairmont State University provided a listing of courses for RBA students with a

prefix of RBAS, which was identified as a WVROCKS course when clicked for more information. Shepherd University provided a link from the RBA webpage that opened a document listing the WVROCKS courses. Not all higher education institutions provided a path, discernable by the researcher, to WVROCKS courses on their websites, or they did not offer WVROCKS courses to students during the timeframe the institutions' websites were researched. Additionally, some descriptions of WVROCKS courses located on websites referenced QM standards that were applied to WVROCKS courses and that trained faculty from West Virginia institutions were who taught the courses.

Further noteworthy information related to WVROCKS included online news articles with information about the higher education institutions and WVROCKS. Many of the online news articles discussed the expansion of the WVROCKS program or related to helping adult learners complete their degree (Hughes, 2016). Shepherd University provided several online news articles related to WVROCKS via the search feature on the institution's website, such as "Howard-Bostic Gets Grant to Design Course for Adult Learners" (Owens, 2015). There were some cases when information related to online news articles could only be located by conducting an external search via Google for the higher education institutions and the WVROCKS program, such as "WVROCKS Assists Fairmont State Students in Completing RBA Degree" (Fairmont State University, 2014). Other information located via an external search revealed outdated references to Glenville State College as a participant in WVROCKS on the CFWV website, but it was not listed on the current WVROCKS website.

Other related data included descriptions of the WVROCKS program. Marshall University provided WVROCKS information along with their RBA program, where they described WVROCKS as a "statewide portal" (Marshall University, 2019) where students could access

courses to complete the RBA degree. Courses offered through the portal were “accelerated, accessible, and affordable” (Marshall University, 2019) and taught by West Virginia higher education faculty located throughout the state. Both Fairmont State University and Marshall University provided a link to information about WVROCKS that answered questions about the program. In addition, Fairmont State University included a link to the *FSU RBA Handbook* on the RBA webpage that supplied more information and noted WVROCKS as an alternative way for RBA students to earn college credits. They provided further information about WROCKS in the undergraduate catalog, which described WVROCKS as a program offering compressed courses online that could be applied towards completion of the RBA degree.

Two-Year Institution Websites

Table 5 summarizes the appearance of information about the BOG AAS and WVROCKS on the websites of four two-year institutions. Information about the BOG AAS degree was found under programs on all the websites, but there was no mention of WVROCKS. Two of four websites included information related to the BOG AAS under student resources, with one referencing WVROCKS. Only one reference each was found for the BOG AAS degree and WVROCKS under completion strategies and other information. There was no mention of either BOG AAS or WVROCKS on the institutions’ home pages.

Table 5. Web Analysis of Two-Year Institutions

This table lists the two-year institutions with headings that correlate with the *Website Analysis Guide* Part One (Appendix B) showing a summary of the information presented on the websites.

Website Analysis of Institutions	Home page		Programs		Student Resources		Completion Strategies		Other Information	
	BOG AAS	WV ROCKS	BOG AAS	WV ROCKS	BOG AAS	WV ROCKS	BOG AAS	WV ROCKS	BOG AAS	WV ROCKS
Two Year										
BridgeValley			✓							
Mountwest			✓							
Pierpont			✓		✓				✓	✓
Southern			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		

There was little information available related to WVROCKS on the two-year institution websites. Two websites, BridgeValley Community and Technical College and Mountwest Community and Technical College, offered no data directly related to WVROCKS and could only be connected to WVROCKS as participating institutions via other sources after an external search. The direct information about WVROCKS was available on Pierpont Community and Technical College and Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College websites, including course lists and the credit hour fee for WVROCKS courses. The main external source of data that connected participating institutions to WVROCKS was in the WVROCKS BOG flyer (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b).

Pierpont Community and Technical College and Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College provided the only direct information connected to WVROCKS, which related to courses. Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College referenced WVROCKS in the college catalog where they stated the WVROCKS course fee was \$145.00 per credit hour for online classes available to students in the BOG AAS program. Pierpont Community and Technical College listed courses reserved for students in the BOG AAS that mirrored the titles and descriptions of courses also listed as WVROCKS courses under the WVROCKS portal in Blackboard, but the courses were not identified as such on the Pierpont Community and Technical College website.

External searches via Google provided additional links between the institutions and WVROCKS through websites such as the CFWV and the WVHEPC. Information related to WVROCKS could be located on both websites. The CFWV provided links to a WVROCKS BOG flyer (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a) that mirrored information presented in the WVROCKS RBA flyer in terms of how the program was developed, the mission and goals of

the WVROCKS program, areas of responsibility related to WVROCKS at participating institutions with BOG AAS students taking courses, and frequently asked questions. Differences between the two documents were the BOG AAS degree was referenced instead of the RBA and courses were noted as lower, 100-200, levels. The information explained to students how they could become involved with WVROCKS to work towards degree completion. Additionally, the WVROCKS BOG flyer was also updated in the Fall 2019/2020 academic year with the following changes: a) the contact information switched from Dr. Roxann Humbert to Dr. Mary Stewart, b) the course fee went from \$145 to \$160, and c) Mountwest Community and Technical College was no longer listed as a participating institution, but Pierpont Community and Technical College, West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College, and WVU Parkersburg were added (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b).

Affiliated Agencies Websites

Table 6 shows the results of website analysis for four additional agencies affiliated with WVROCKS. Paths related to the RBA or BOG AAS were available under programs, student resources, and completion strategies for three of the four agencies. All the agencies provided information related to WVROCKS under programs and student resources, while only three referenced the WVROCKS initiative under completion strategies. Other information about these degrees was noted on one of the four agencies' websites, while three referenced WVROCKS. There was no mention of these degrees on the home pages of the four agencies' websites, but WVROCKS was referenced twice.

Table 6. Web Analysis of WVROCKS Affiliated Agencies

This table lists affiliated agencies with headings that correlate with the *Website Analysis Guide Part One* (Appendix B) showing a summary of the information presented on the websites.

Agencies Affiliated with WVROCKS	Home page		Programs		Student Resources		Completion Strategies		Other Information	
	RBA / BOG	WV ROCKS	RBA / BOG	WV ROCKS	RBA / BOG	WV ROCKS	RBA / BOG	WV ROCKS	RBA / BOG	WV ROCKS
Related Agency										
CFWV			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
WVHEPC			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
WVNET		✓		✓		✓				✓
WVROCKS		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Information about WVROCKS varied by website across the related agencies. The website dedicated to WVROCKS was included with related agencies and caused part of the variance. Likewise, WVNET hosted the WVROCKS website and directly linked to more information related to WVROCKS than CFVV and WVHEPC websites. Data related to WVROCKS provided details about participating institutions and courses available through the WVROCKS portal, along with helpdesk information. Faculty training and QM standards were part of the data related to courses. Additional information available included links to the iLearn Blackboard login portal for WVROCKS and links to a WVROCKS RBA Flyer and WVROCKS BOG Flyer documents. There were also links from one website to another within the list of related agency websites. For example, WVHEPC linked to CFVV, and WVROCKS linked to CFVV, WVHEPC, and WVNET. External searches were also conducted to search for WVROCKS information that linked to related agencies.

The West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS) webpage provided information about the program and how it was developed by WVHEPC with assistance from WVNET to provide more West Virginians access to a college degree. On the home page, the first step noted was to find a participating institution that offered RBA or BOG AAS degrees that fit what the student needed to complete a degree. Information provided included lists of courses available for both RBA and BOG AAS degrees, along with information

related to an area of emphasis, which could be obtained through WVROCKS courses. The website included information about WVROCKS courses that described them as eight-week courses with five start dates, which could allow a student to complete degree requirements faster because of the compressed format. In addition, there was information that reported higher education faculty who taught WVROCKS courses had completed training on best practices, and courses were designed to QM standards. Links to the WVROCKS helpdesk were available for both students and faculty. The website also provided links to the WVHEPC, WVNET, CFWV, and West Virginia Community and Technical College System (WVCTCS).

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) website did not contain a direct path to WVROCKS, but provided information related to West Virginia CLIMB, which was a collaborative goal to increase higher education attainment rates in West Virginia to show that 60% of the workforce had earned either a certificate or degree by 2030. On the home page of the WVHEPC website was a link to CFWV, which provided a path to WVROCKS. Searches for the program on the WVHEPC website revealed numerous news articles about the program, which included information about a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Distance Learning and Telemedicine program to expand educational opportunities for adult learners, and that WVROCKS was used to help expand online accessibility (Hughes, 2016). Other news articles included information about how the WVROCKS program helped students complete their RBA degree by taking online courses through the Blackboard WVROCKS portal.

The West Virginia Network (WVNET) website provided information about WVROCKS as a collaborative endeavor between the higher educational institutions in West Virginia that offered the RBA and BOG AAS degrees. Further online information included links to the iLearn

Blackboard webpage, which listed courses available through the WVROCKS portal for RBA or BOG AAS. Additional information located under Distance Learning provided a description about the WVROCKS program being compressed into eight-week courses at the 100-400 levels.

The following statistics were also noted on WVNET (2019) news blog:

- increased enrollment to 2,317 in 2018
- generated \$600,000 from students enrolled in courses through the seven participating institutions
- exceeded national averages on retention rates with 96% of students completing courses and 87% earning a passing grade.

The site also noted WVROCKS began in the fall of 2012 with only 50 enrollments in three participating institutions (West Virginia Network, 2019). Additional information available on the website included mention of WVROCKS among the online news articles. There were also support links for the program in terms of IT helpdesk and contact information.

The College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) provided information about the RBA and BOG AAS degrees under a link to “finish your degree.” The link provided steps to help with the decision process to find the right institution, and make financial aid decisions, and provided information about the WVROCKS program. This website included a list of participating institutions and a link with contact information for each institution. There was also a link to the previously mentioned documents, WVROCKS RBA flyer and the WVROCKS BOG flyer, that outlined the WVROCKS program, which included mission statement, goals, contact information, areas of responsibility, QM standards, and a list of frequently asked questions.

All four-year higher education institutions listed in Table 3 awarded the RBA as a degree. The BOG AAS degree was offered in all the two-year education institutions. As depicted in

Tables 4 and 5, the four-year institutions and the two-year institutions sections, there were fewer references to WVROCKS on the two-year versus the four-year websites. Four-year institutions had participated in WVROCKS longer since it first piloted in the fall of 2012. The program just expanded into the two-year institutions in the fall of 2016 when it piloted in three of the four that were listed in Tables 3 and 5. Further external searches conducted on WVROCKS at the institutions' websites referenced in Table 3 resulted in locating previously mentioned documents or linked to the CFVW websites that contained a listing of participating institutions. Those external searches also revealed several news articles related to the selected institutions and the WVROCKS program. In some cases, there was more external information available that related WVROCKS to the institutions than direct pathways on the institutions' websites about WVROCKS program. Other news articles located via external searches revealed stories from students who shared views about WVROCKS as a means to help them complete their degree, such as comments from the article "Statewide Online Learning Portal Increases Enrollment, Helps Busy Families Complete Degrees" (West Virginia Executive: Business News, 2017). Student related goals were reaffirmed by Dr. Humbert in another article, "WVROCKS Courses Help Students Achieve Degree Goals" (West Virginia's News, 2015).

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

This section covers the analysis of the interview responses provided by the participants based on questions in the *Interview Guide* (Appendix C). Interview participants were divided into four stakeholder groups represented by Sections A (creators and collaborators), B (administrators and staff), C (advisors and faculty), and D (students). Interview questions two, three, four, five, and nine from the *Interview Guide* corresponded to research question two. Interview questions one, six, seven, eight and nine answered research question three. Interview

question nine helped answer both research questions two and three. Interview questions two and three served to collect demographical data related to participants and their experience with WVROCKS. Interviews began in March 2019 following IRB approval and were concluded in August 2019. The first email request for an interview was sent on March 19, 2019 to some of the creators using contact information located on the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) website and information identified during the literature review. Those requests resulted in the first two interviews being conducted on March 25, 2019.

Interview Participants

The total number of interview respondents was 15. The goal was to interview 12 to 16 participants across the four stakeholder groups. Creators and collaborators (4) included retired WVHEPC Vice Chancellor, Executive Director of WVROCKS, WVNET Deputy Director, and Chief Information Officer. Administrators and staff (6) included WVHEPC Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, WVHEPC Director of Academic Programming, Institutions' RBA Program Director and Coordinator, BOG AAS Coordinator, and Registrar. Advisors or faculty (5) included participants who had taught and/or created courses for WVROCKS based on their content area expertise. Students (0) were to include participants who had taken courses through WVROCKS as the end users of the initiative.

Application of the nonprobability snowball sampling technique began with Honorable Dan O'Hanlon, Dr. Roxann Humbert, and Dr. Mary Stewart whose names were discovered during the literature review. The snowball sampling identified 48 unique prospective participants with accurate contact information. Five of those were removed from consideration in the research, as they were not among the selected institutions following the website analysis and initial interviews. From the remaining 43 participants, 33 interview requests were emailed. No

students responded to requests to schedule interviews. Table 7 summarizes the interview snowball sampling results and responses.

Table 7. Snowball Sampling Data

Represented in this table are the results from the snowball sampling related to requested interviews and interviews granted.

Snowball Sampling:	Creators / Collaborators	Administrators / Staff	Advisors / Faculty	Students	Total
Results of Sampling	4	16	26	2	48
Requested Interviews	4	11	16	2	33
Interviews Granted	4	6	5	0	15

Appendix J includes a table that provides demographical information on interview participants. It details the names of the interview participants by stakeholder groups and provides additional information pertaining to their job titles, their roles with WVROCKS, and a general summary of the contributions they have made to the program. Participants provided the information related to contributions and which stakeholder group they identified with when interviewed. Positions and job titles were relative to their positions at the time of the interview and may have changed since the writing of this dissertation. One notable change was the retirement of Dr. Roxann Humbert as Director of WVROCKS during the summer of 2019 and Dr. Mary Stewart becoming the Director of WVROCKS.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked: How has WVROCKS been implemented at select higher education institutions? Data collected from interview questions two, three, four, five, and nine served to provide information related to implementing the WVROCKS program. This section includes information related to participants’ pathways to WVROCKS, their experience and

training utilized in preparing for the program, the steps involved in implementing it, changes with the program, along with additional information.

WVROCKS Pathways

The second interview question asked how the various stakeholders became interested in WVROCKS or how they came to be involved with the program. Two pathways were revealed. The first indicated participants came to be involved with WVROCKS as part of their job, or they were recruited for a job based on their skills and knowledge. The second pathway noted their interest in distance learning or developing online courses for WVROCKS. In some instances, these pathways overlapped. For example, someone could have a job related to distance education and an interest in distance learning. Likewise, it should be noted participants may have had an interest in distance learning or online education, but did not reveal this information during the interview in response to how they became involved with WVROCKS. Figure 1 demonstrates how participants came to be involved with WVROCKS.

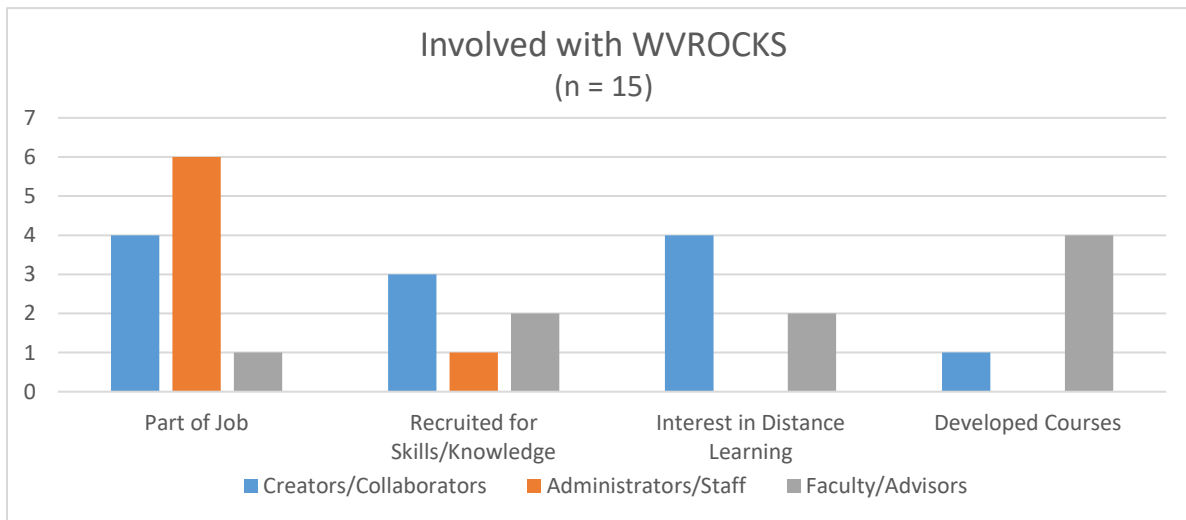


Figure 1. WVROCKS Involvement

This figure represents the various pathways stakeholders came to be involved with the WVROCKS program.

The collected data represented in Figure 1 showed 11 of the 15 stakeholders interviewed came to be a part of WVROCKS as part of their job responsibilities. The Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) worked as one of the creators for this program as part of his job with the WVHEPC as Vice Chancellor for Technology and Director of WVNET. He had reviewed a study noting West Virginia needed around 20,000 additional college graduates than were enrolled in college at that time to meet the projected job needs for the state. He suggested WVROCKS as a vehicle to help reach the 168,000 adults in West Virginia who already had some college experience or credits, but no degree, return and complete their degree via this flexible online portal. This collaboration between West Virginia’s participating higher education institutions would allow them to share online courses with students using the portal to help enhance their RBA programs. Marshall University was among the first to become involved with early supporters such as Dr. Jan Fox and Dr. Monica Brooks (Dan O’Hanlon, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Dr. Fox (personal communication, May 29, 2019), who was the first Chief Information Officer for Marshall University, had worked in developing collaborative courses and a model for online learning that helped pave the way for online learning initiatives such as WVROCKS. Others were interested in WVROCKS and promoting online education to reach adult learners. Dr. Brooks (personal communication, April 19, 2019) was interested in being part of WVROCKS since it combined both her jobs as Dean of Marshall University Libraries and Director of Online Learning, along with her interest in digital literacy and online learning.

A connection to the RBA program frequently appeared among participants involved with WVROCKS as part of their job, such as Dr. Corley Dennison, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at WVHEPC (personal communication, June 27, 2019) whose area of responsibility

included the RBA program, or Dr. Mark Stotler, who “coordinated the RBA program since the early 1980s” (personal communication, June 10, 2019) in his role as the Director of Academic Programming at WVHEPC. The RBA was first established in 1975 to help adult learners complete their degree and is administered by the WVHEPC. Others were directors or coordinators of RBA or BOG AAS programs within the institutions selected as part of this research project. Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019), who is the RBA Program Director of Marshall University, commented that while Marshall “already had a robust online presence,” Dr. Rudy Pauley, his former supervisor and Vice President of Outreach and Continuing Studies, thought WVROCKS was a good program and supported it as part of the university’s RBA program. Dr. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019), who is the Director of the Center for Educational Support Programs and Coordinator for RBA Degree Programs at Fairmont State University, first became involved with WVROCKS when she was recruited by former Fairmont State University Provost, Dr. Maria Rose, as the institutional representative for this initiative. Marshall University and Fairmont State University were among the first institutions to pilot the program.

Another had been aware of the program for many years, but only became involved with WVROCKS as part of her job. Ms. Nancy Parks, who is the BOG Coordinator for Pierpont Community and Technical College, noted her “direct relationship with WVROCKS” (personal communication, April 17, 2019) began when Pierpont Community and Technical College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to participate in WVROCKS the fall of 2018. The program was first piloted in three other community and technical colleges, offering 100 and 200 level courses in the fall of 2016.

Others were recruited to a job with WVROCKS based on skills and knowledge.

Honorable Dan O’Hanlon recruited Dr. Roxann Humbert, who had previous work experience at WVNET and with “distance learning in the state” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). He noted her collaboration with various institutions across the state to promote the development of the program. Dr. Humbert in turn recruited Dr. Mary Stewart who had previously worked with her at Fairmont State University and was one of the “early adopters teaching online” (Mary Stewart, personal communications, March 25, 2019). Dr. Humbert and Dr. Stewart applied their prior knowledge and skills in the operational components of WVROCKS. Dr. Stewart noted Dr. Humbert’s focus was on coordinating grants for the program and analyzing statistical information, while her focus was on student issues, instructional design, and instructional development components, such as the course orientation process. Dr. Roxann Humbert further commented her focus for instructional design centered on course alignment and ensuring the template used to develop WVROCKS courses was “based on quality standards as outlined in the Quality Matters Rubric” (personal communication, July 21, 2020). Overall, Figure 1 shows six were recruited based on their knowledge or skills, and six indicated an interest in distance learning that made them interested in WVROCKS.

Most of the faculty indicated they became involved by creating an online course for WVROCKS. Dr. Mark Stotler commented that WVROCKS came about as part of “a rebranding of the RBA program” (personal communication, June 10, 2019) with the RBA Today initiative. Five of the courses created by RBA Today were used in an accelerated format to help develop the first WVROCKS courses. After those initial courses were used to launch the program, they needed to add additional courses. Dr. Roxann Humbert was influential in helping faculty become familiar with developing online courses and “put out a call for people to develop online courses”

(M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019). As shown in Figure 1, four of the faculty interviewed stated they had developed courses for WVROCKS. Other participants from different stakeholder groups also contributed to the development of courses for WVROCKS. Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) created courses for the WVROCKS portal noting it was an opportunity for faculty to create a course based on their knowledge and interest in the course subject rather than just the curriculum they normally teach.

Preparing for WVROCKS

The third interview question asked stakeholders to describe their level of experience with WVROCKS. This question provided demographical information related to how long and to what extent stakeholders had been part of the WVROCKS program. It also included a prompt asking the participants about training they had participated in related to WVROCKS. An exception to this question involved the creator and collaborator group, which included an additional prompt that asked if they were involved in reviewing other programs or models from other states to help formulate WVROCKS. Responses from participants revealed a range of experience beginning with developing the program and some of the early courses, to only one year of experience with WVROCKS. In terms of training, QM training was the foremost theme evolving from interviews with the participants. Additional training involved collaboration in early workshops and training sessions, and continued with training on the WVROCKS program at conferences, and for those teaching courses in the program.

Table 8 summarizes the stakeholders' years of experience with the program. Twelve were involved with WVROCKS from the early years of the program when it was piloted the fall of 2012 in three West Virginia higher education institutions offering the RBA degree: Bluefield State College, Fairmont State College, and Marshall University. The three who had the least

experience became involved because they worked at one of the participating community and technical colleges, or they had a job change that connected them to the WVROCKS program. BridgeValley Community and Technical College, Mountwest Community and Technical College, and Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College piloted the WVROCKS program in the fall of 2016. Pierpont Community and Technical College joined as a WVROCKS participating higher education institution in 2016.

Table 8. WVROCKS Stakeholder Groups

This table represents a demographical summary of interview participants beginning years of experience with WVROCKS.

WVROCKS Stakeholders	Beginning Experience with WVROCKS		
	7+ years	4 to 6 years	1 to 3 years
Creators / Collaborators	4	0	0
Administrators / Staff	4	1	1
Advisors / Faculty	4	0	1
Students	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: This chart was created in Fall 2019 and seven years represents the pilot of WVROCKS in the Fall 2012, along with the initial (+) time spent developing the concept.

The level of experience varied between creators as some worked on earlier development of components related to developing online courses and a model for an online program. Dr. Jan Fox (personal communication, May 29, 2019) worked on earlier models of collaboration for online delivery that helped conceptualize WVROCKS. Others such as Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) began working on the concept of WVROCKS in 2010 when Chancellor Noland, who was formerly involved with the HEPC in Tennessee, wanted to further promote online education in West Virginia. Dr. Roxann Humbert was recruited by Honorable O’Hanlon in 2011 for WVROCKS. She in turn brought Dr. Mary Stewart to work with the program in the spring of 2012. Many of those interviewed had experience with the

WVROCKS program from the beginning, in 2012. There were three that had become involved with the program either one to five years prior. While two of the three had prior knowledge of the program, their direct experience with WVROCKS did not occur until they assumed a new position, or the institution in which they worked began to participate in the program. Regardless of their level of experience with WVROCKS, most of the participants recognized Dr. Humbert and her collaborative efforts in promoting the program.

Dr. Roxann Humbert noted other than her professional background and experience in student information systems, WebCT, and education, she had no specialized training in WVROCKS (personal communication, March 25, 2019). In order to gain more knowledge towards developing a model for WVROCKS, Dr. Humbert (personal communication March 25, 2019) spent a year looking at how other states, such as Tennessee and Georgia, were developing online programs using portals to deliver courses. This information was vetted through an advisory committee and others to help develop a model for the foundations of how the WVROCKS program would work. Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication March 25, 2019) remembered reviewing models for WVROCKS with Dr. Humbert when she joined WVROCKS, including those related to business processes such as how to pay faculty.

Quality was also a consideration during the development of the program. QM training was a recurring theme mentioned during interviews, with all 15 of the participants mentioning it as the primary training standard for WVROCKS. Dr. Roxann Humbert acquired “the initial subscription for QM” (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019) during the early part of the program to provide the right standards for courses in WVROCKS. References to QM were reported as part of the early training sessions for WVROCKS and were still referenced by those newest to WVROCKS. Dr. Corley Dennison stated hundreds of West Virginia faculty

members “have received Quality Matters training” (personal communication, June 27, 2019). He further noted training for WVROCKS was primarily QM. This training was noted by each stakeholder group as a requirement for developing courses for WVROCKS, which are “based on the QM rubric” (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). While not all stakeholders had direct training in QM, they noted the importance of QM to develop online courses. Dr. Mark Stotler noted “all the courses accepted for WVROCKS have to go through that Quality Matters standard” and “that it is an integral piece of all the courses” (personal communication, June 10, 2019).

Stakeholders from the faculty or advisors group noted prior training in QM standards for teaching or developing a course for WVROCKS. Dr. Nancy McClure noted developing a course for WVROCKS was a “rigorous process” (personal communication, June 11, 2019) and QM training was needed to meet the required standards. Many higher education institutions have also incorporated QM training as part of the requirements for online course development. Dr. Jan Fox (personal communication, May 29, 2019) stated she worked to establish QM standards at Marshall University for online courses by writing the policy including it as a requirement. In addition to providing quality standards, QM can also serve to provide quality for the course in terms of delivery. Some noted the readiness of adult learners to be successful in online courses due to a variety of reasons, including the fact that many have only taken face-to-face courses. Dr. Mary Stewart noted her perception of QM was “more about humanizing the virtual environment” (personal communication, March 25, 2019).

Additionally, collaboration was a theme that seemed apparent among those who participated in the early stages of WVROCKS. In terms of collaboration, 9 of the 12 participants involved with the program for 7+ years (see Table 8) noted the collaboration involved in the

program, with 10 of the 15 total participants noting collaboration. This collaborative training process was developed through the utilization of workshops and committees involving members of higher education who served to help develop best practices by providing feedback and collaborating on solutions. Information and ideas about how to develop WVROCKS was shared with a committee that helped to serve as an advisory board with people from various offices in institutions across the state offering the RBA degree (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. Roxann Humbert held regular meetings with an online committee, collaborated with various stakeholders, and held annual conferences to share information and gather feedback on ideas for WVROCKS (Dan O’Hanlon, personal communication, March 28, 2019).

Various stakeholder groups, including administrators and faculty, noted attending early workshops in various locations across the state. Dr. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) noted attending a meeting at Morgantown in the WVNET conference room during an early phase of the program where they brainstormed on ideas for WVROCKS. She later helped facilitate training sessions for faculty on how to effectively teach eight-week courses compared to 16-week courses. Faculty training workshops included best practices related to pedagogy, alignment of assignments with course learning outcomes, and tools available to faculty teaching in an online environment (M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019; Nancy McClure, personal communication, June 11, 2019). Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) noted he attended semiannual meetings that Dr. Roxann Humbert led to keep them updated on the WVROCKS program. In addition to meetings, Dr. Monica Brooks (personal communication, April 19, 2019) commented on equipment, such as Cisco units, that were purchased with a Telemedicine grant to promote distance learning. She

noted these units provided “two-way video” that allowed everyone to connect through WVNET. Two-way video allowed for virtual training sessions for faculty teaching or developing WVROCKS courses, including orientation training for faculty.

Steps to Implement WVROCKS

The fourth interview question asked the stakeholders to talk about the steps involved in implementing WVROCKS, including how courses are developed and delivered, and how credits are awarded for a course taught through this portal. Responses revealed a series of steps formulated under two main areas, developing and implementing WVROCKS. The first area provided a historical perspective generalizing the steps of how WVROCKS was developed. The second involved the general steps of implementing WVROCKS. The implementation phase included two sub components, developing and delivering courses. Each of these two sub components had a series of general steps that worked together to implement the WVROCKS program in higher education institutions across West Virginia, including those offering RBA or BOG AAS degrees. These steps are outlined on the following pages in Figures 2 and 3 on developing and implementing WVROCKS.

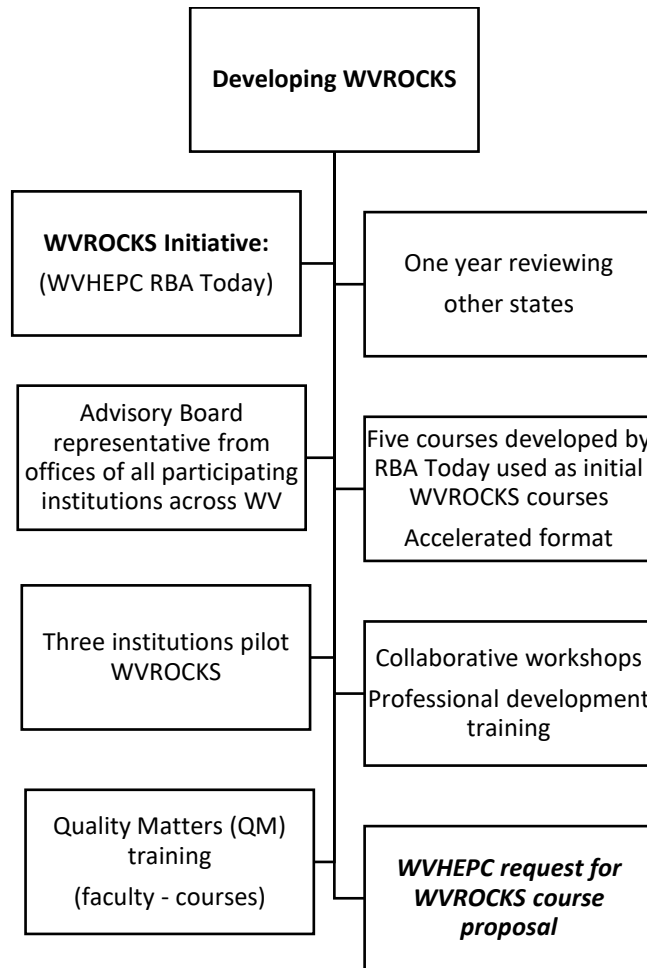


Figure 2. Steps Developing WVROCKS

This figure shows the general steps involved in developing WVROCKS. Bold and italicized words show the relationship between developing and implementing (See Figure 3).

An initial step in the WVROCKS initiative was derived by understanding it was developed to help deliver online courses via a portal to adult learners in the RBA program. It was built on some of the tools developed by the prior RBA Today initiative to promote the RBA program across West Virginia. Another step required additional knowledge on how to use portals to deliver online courses. Dr. Roxann Humbert spent a year reviewing other states’ online portals and programs and shared that information with “an advisory board that consisted of someone from every institution that offered the RBA degree from a given office” (personal

communication, March 25, 2019) to gather feedback. This step provided feedback that served in developing the operational foundation for WVROCKS and helped facilitate buy-in from institutions to participate in the program (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019).

The next step after deciding on a model to outline the foundations of how the program would operate were decisions on what courses would be used to pilot the program. The RBA Today initiative had developed seven “online courses for the RBA program, specifically upper-division courses” (Mark Stotler, personal communication, June 10, 2019) as an enhancement tool during the rebranding of the RBA program. Dr. Roxann Humbert contacted the instructors who had created the seven courses under the RBA Today grant to see if they were interested in these courses being part of the pilot for WVROCKS. Five of the original seven courses developed for the RBA Today initiative were used as the first courses for WVROCKS (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Mark Stotler, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Additionally, feedback from students indicated adult learners preferred courses delivered in an accelerated format resulting in WVROCKS courses being developed in an eight-week format (Dan O’Hanlon, personal communication, March 28, 2019).

In the fall of 2012, these steps led to the pilot of WVROCKS program in three higher education institutions in West Virginia, Bluefield State College, Fairmont State University, and Marshall University. Ms. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) helped implement the WVROCKS program at Fairmont State University. She noted the approval process to pilot it involved an agreement from the provost, the chief financial officer, and the registrar showing a willingness to do the program. She further noted this process included

showing the institution's ability to participate in WVROCKS in accordance with the funding models developed by Dr. Roxann Humbert for the program.

Further steps involved faculty interested in WVROCKS attending collaborative workshops and professional training, such as a seminar "conducted by instructional designers at West Virginia University" Dr. Monica Brooks noted attending in Morgantown, West Virginia (personal communication, April 19, 2019). It was also noted early workshops served to provide feedback on the program as faculty and administrators collaborated on ideas of how to improve the program. Numerous faculty commented on attending training workshops and WVROCKS orientation training for faculty to prepare them for delivering online courses and gain an understanding of the pedagogy related to online education. Ms. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) noted she assisted in training to help faculty understand adult learners in the online classroom. Training included practices on how to develop eight-week courses compared to the 16-week courses many faculty members were used to developing. Dr. Brooks commented she helped conduct training on the topic of copyright to assist with compliance and keeping up with the legal aspects of copyright related to the use of materials in online courses (personal communication, April 19, 2019).

QM training was also an important step for faculty who wanted to be part of WVROCKS. Dr. Corley Dennison noted "Quality Matters is the primary training vehicle" (personal communication, June 27, 2019) for WVROCKS and hundreds of faculty members across West Virginia have received training in QM. Courses designed for WVROCKS followed along with the rubric designed by QM (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) noted experience in teaching online and certification in QM, especially 'Applying the Quality Matters Rubric' training, was part of

the requirements for faculty involved with WVROCKS. A faculty Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) detailed requirements and expectations of faculty who teach WVROCKS courses (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Faculty who responded to the WVHEPC request for proposal (RFP) to develop a WVROCKS course followed the guidelines outlined in the RFP, which included alignment with QM standards.

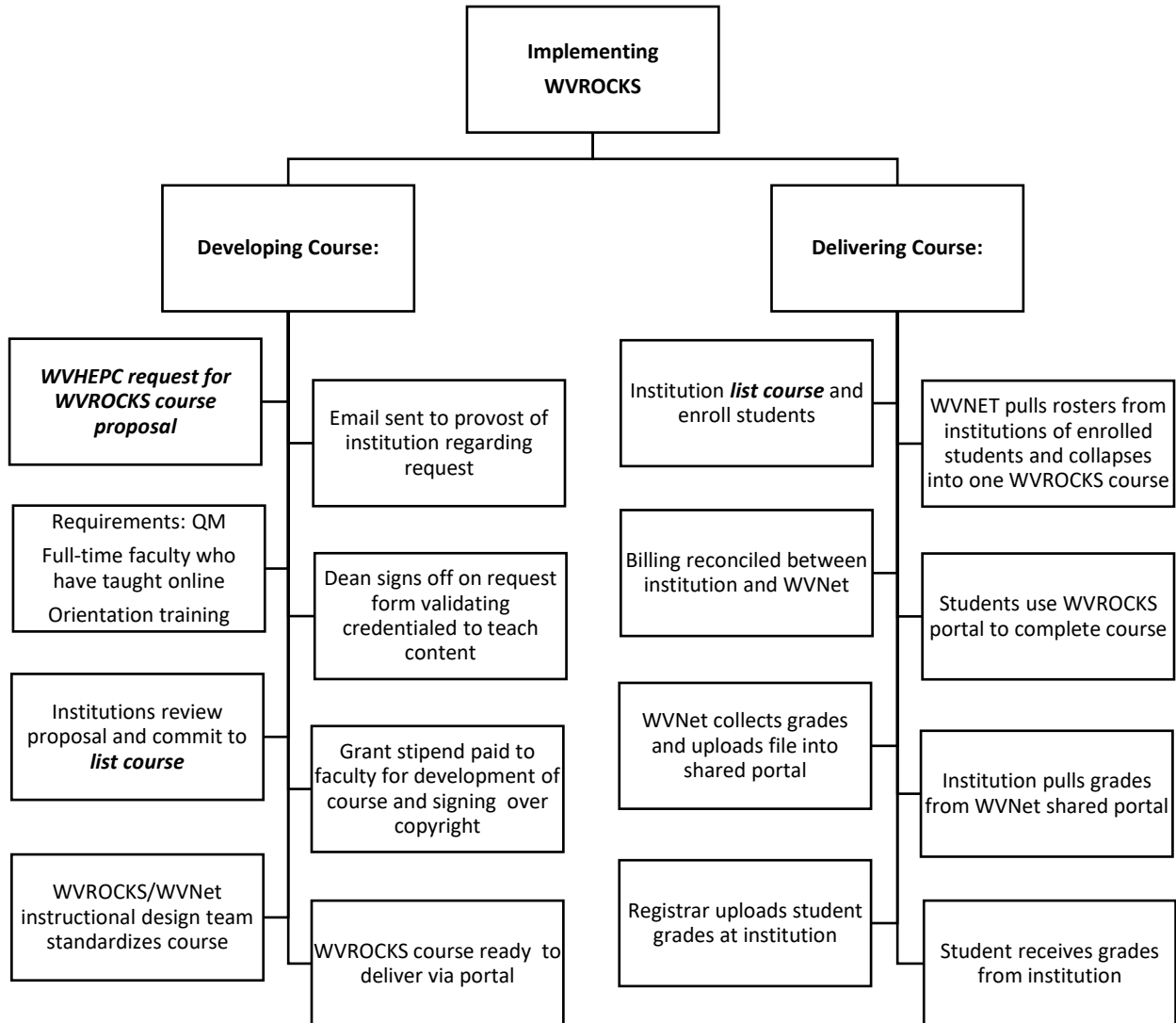


Figure 3. Steps for Implementing WVROCKS

This figure shows the general steps involved in implementing WVROCKS. Bold and italicized words in the columns show the relationship between developing (Figure 2) and implementing.

The process of implementing WVROCKS involved a series of steps in developing and delivering courses for the program at participating institutions (See Figure 3). The RFP from the WVHEPC offered grant money to develop a course for WVROCKS. In the past, this step was accomplished via email sent from Dr. Roxann Humbert to the provosts of higher education institutions across the state (M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). In this step, the RFP alerted institutions of the requirements for faculty interested in developing a course for WVROCKS, including information regarding QM training and certification. Faculty must be full-time with online teaching experience, and agree to participate in new faculty orientation training, which can be delivered remotely through Cisco units that connect with WVNET and were purchased with grant money to help improve components of online technology for distance learning (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019; Mary Stewart, March 25, 2019). In addition to the training, faculty needed to meet the requirement standards on content knowledge. In this step, the dean from the faculty's institution must validate faculty's subject matter expertise to maintain compliance with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019).

The next step happened after faculty submitted proposals for courses. Listings of the proposed courses are sent to the participating institutions in West Virginia. The institution's RBA or BOG AAS representatives are tasked with reviewing the courses and vetting them, often through the academic departments, to see which courses they could add to their course schedules (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019). These courses become available to RBA or BOG AAS students providing there are enough institutions willing to commit to listing them on their course schedules. "If more than three schools will list them" (Mary Stewart,

personal communication, March 25, 2019), WVROCKS will move forward in developing the course, and will notify institutions of their availability. In another step, faculty awarded the grant are paid a stipend for developing the course content and signing over the copyright of the course to WVROCKS and WVHEPC giving them ownership of it (M. Angelia Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). WVNET and WVROCKS then begin the process of formatting the course into a WVROCKS course. There are “two people who serve as the course designers” (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019) who work to format the course in Softchalk to standards based on the QM rubric and then put the course into the WVROCKS portal via Blackboard. While the WVHEPC sends out the call for course development proposals for WVROCKS, since it is officially housed with them, it is delivered through WVNET, which supports the technology for the program such as Blackboard and Softchalk (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019).

The first general step in delivering a course begins when institutions list the course as part of their schedule. A couple of stakeholders interviewed noted some schools denote WVROCKS courses from their own by using a different prefix for the course, such as: RBA101. Students can enroll for the course through their institution and receive credit for it the same as other courses from that institution. Mr. Andrew Gooding stated on the Marshall University campus “WVROCKS courses count as Marshall’s for tuition purposes” (personal communication, April 11, 2019). He further noted they count towards residency and are part of the student’s GPA for that institution. The WVROCKS course counts towards the student’s full-time status of 12 hours and is eligible for financial aid in most of the participating institutions (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019; Pamela Stephens, personal

communication, April 18, 2019). Once the RBA or BOG students are registered in a course, WVNET can complete the step of pulling the rosters and combine those students from the different institutions “into a single course” (Timothy Oxley, personal communication, May 16, 2019) where faculty and students can access the course in Blackboard through the WVROCKS portal.

Other than the step of logging into a separate Blackboard portal for WVROCKS, courses taken through the program work much the same as a course from the institution in which students are enrolled and seeking their degree. However, an issue was noted for students who are military, or going through Veteran Affairs (VA), in maintaining a continuous status of full-time when taking eight-week courses (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019). There is a difference in how the continuous enrollment requirement is calculated for these students that affects VA educational benefits. Institutions tend to count full-time/part-time status based on the number of credit hours taken in a semester, but the VA programs may determine full-time/part-time status based on the timespan of a course, when a course began to when a course ended.

Another step requires participating institutions to sign a MOU covering information related to courses and credit hours awarded (Nancy Parks, personal communication, April 17, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). It helps to outline expectations of what and when things need to happen (M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019). The MOU is signed annually by institutions outlining an agreement with WVROCKS on what the higher education institutions will do as participants in the program (Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019). WVNET pays the faculty teaching WVROCKS courses, but they bill institutions for the number of students enrolled and split part of the money

collected with the institutions (Corley Dennison, personal communication, June 27, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). “WVROCKS collects 60% of the fees students are charged and honors campus refund policy” (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Tuition for a WVROCKS course is based on “the average tuition per credit hour of all the institutions in the state” (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019), which remained the same for seven years, but was revised in 2019. Mr. Andrew Gooding stated the rate for Marshall was going from \$223 to \$250 per credit hour in the fall of 2019 (personal communication, April 11, 2019).

Students enrolled in WVROCKS courses received a welcome letter from Dr. Mary Stewart. In this step, she provided students with information and instructions they needed to login to the WVROCKS Blackboard portal to complete the course, which included an orientation component to train and document the students’ ability to access and use course materials (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. Stewart stated another step was grades for students in WVROCKS courses are shared with each institution at mid-term and at the end of the course by student per course “in a protected area in Content Collection” (personal communication, March 25, 2019), or shared portal. Institutions had access to the shared portal and could access the grades (Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019). At Marshall University, the registrar had the “IT department download the file from the portal” (Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, personal communication, July 26, 2019). In the next step, the registrar manually entered the grades for the WVROCKS course. In the final step, the registrar from Marshall University, Dr. Sonja Cantrell-Johnson (personal communication, July 26, 2019), noted a student’s grade for a

WVROCKS course will look the same as a grade for any Marshall University course for the student.

Changes with WVROCKS

The fifth interview question asked stakeholders to describe changes they had witnessed during their participation with WVROCKS. The main theme that emerged related to the growth of the program. The three main areas that accounted for growth of the program included courses, students, and participating institutions. Additional themes related to changes that helped to support the growth of the program through course design and communication processes, both of which included technological improvements.

Many of the stakeholders noted growth as the most significant change for WVROCKS. This growth can be subdivided into three separate areas, number of courses, number of students, and the number of participating institutions. The first area relates to the number of courses available in the WVROCKS catalog. Nine of the 15 stakeholders commented specifically about the growth of the program in terms of the number of courses offered. Courses have grown from the original five to around 80, and the number continues to grow with grants requesting faculty to develop courses for the program based on QM standards (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). It was also noted the variety and depth of courses grew as more courses became available (Timothy Oxley, personal communication, May 16, 2019; Nancy Parks, personal communication, April 17, 2019).

Additionally, in response to student preferences, courses were delivered in an eight-week format rather than 16-weeks (Dan O'Hanlon, personal communication, March 28, 2019). This compressed format allowed for faster completion times for students. However, Dr. Roxann Humbert noted not every course is offered every eight-week semester based on an agreement

with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) regarding faculty teaching just one eight-week course, and the goal of WVROCKS to only “use full-time faculty in West Virginia” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. Angela Schwer (personal communication, June 17, 2019) noted courses utilized for WVROCKS originated from courses taught in higher education institutions across the state and would have undergone a curriculum review process at their home institutions.

The next area of growth was the number of students taking courses through the WVROCKS portal. The program had around 50 students enrolled in the five original courses, but as of March 2019 there were over 1,200 students enrolled in the program (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Corley Dennison, personal communication, June 27, 2019). The number of participating institutions has also grown from the first three pilot institutions in the fall of 2012 to nine, including community and technical colleges. With the pilot of community and technical colleges, Ms. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) noted a change in the level of courses offered to include lower-division courses in WVROCKS.

Originally, only upper-division courses were developed to meet the needs of the institutions offering the RBA degree. Dr. Mark Stotler (personal communication, June 10, 2019) stated since the pilot of WVROCKS in participating community and technical colleges to help towards completion of the AAS BOG degree, which was only a two-year degree, it would need more lower-division courses. He noted these courses could help meet general education requirements for the degree. The WVROCKS program continues to grow as it gains momentum and serves the needs and goals of higher education in West Virginia. Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) commented the RBA degree is the largest degree

awarded at several higher education institutions in West Virginia. He further noted WVROCKS online courses fit with adult learner needs in completing their degree.

Several interview participants noted a change related to course design when the software, SoftChalk, was used to standardize all WVROCKS courses through a template aligned with QM. Dr. Monica Brooks (personal communication, April 19, 2019) noted prior to using SoftChalk, courses tended to look and feel different between institutions based on who had developed the course. She further stated following the old model did not always benefit the students, who tended to perform better when courses were developed with a similar feel and things were located in relatively the same location from course to course. Dr. Nancy McClure commented it was a good change “adding SoftChalk to it so everything is more standardized” (personal communication, June 11, 2019). Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) noted changes occur every time QM updates their rubric, which requires updates to the WVROCKS course template. The template is based on the QM rubric with standardized content areas and syllabus (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Several faculty noted they would check links and such to make sure they were working when teaching a course since these tend to change over time. However, the WVROCKS model using SoftChalk does not allow faculty to make changes to a course without going through WVNET to apply any content changes (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Nancy McClure, personal communication, June 11, 2019). Additional changes noted in course design related to assessment and alignment mapping (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. McClure (personal communication, June 11, 2019) also noted a course design change involving technology with the addition of more course tools being available in the Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard. She noted tools such as Blog and Journal were added, which

improved communication and interaction between student-instructor and student-student within an online course.

Other technological changes related to communication included processes on how training occurred for WVROCKS. Dr. Monica Brooks noted originally new faculty training was conducted in person, but then “gradually migrated to the electronic version” (personal communication, April 19, 2019). Previously, she had noted the addition of Cisco units providing two-way video technology that could be used for training. This method provided a more cost-effective means to train participants on WVROCKS considering the growth of participants and “the state budget situation” (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019).

Along with improvements and updates to technological components, other improvements in processes and communication assisted in better delivery of expectations and sharing of information. Mr. Andrew Gooding noted “in the first few semesters... there was a disconnect” (personal communication, April 11, 2019). Since then systems or processes for communicating have been set up to allow for better sharing of information, such as the ability to see what students have logged into, or not logged into, a course (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019). A common error made by students was trying to access the wrong Blackboard portal, which led to Marshall University adding a redirect link into their Blackboard for students taking WVROCKS courses (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019; Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019). While communications processes were noted to have improved, Mr. Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) commented on glitches with Argos technology and a change that prevented WVROCKS from being able to check and track the enrollment of current students if they dropped the course via Marshall University.

Additional communication process improvements included students being sent a formal welcome letter from Dr. Mary Stewart providing instructions on how to access the correct Blackboard portal and information for technical support, along with communication from the instructor teaching the course through a WVROCKS email, allowing for communication within Blackboard (Monica Brooks, personal communication April 19, 2019). Since students in WVROCKS could also be from other schools, using a WVROCKS email to contact students within the WVROCKS Blackboard portal provided smoother communications. Dr. Monica Brooks (personal communication, April 19, 2019) and Dr. Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) both commented on the importance of having good instructor-student and student-student communications in online courses as indicated by various studies and QM standards. Dr. Stewart also viewed the “amount of peer mentoring” (personal communication, March 25, 2019) as a significant communication change over the course of the program and noted it was a component they looked for in newly developed courses.

Support for Implementing WVROCKS

The ninth interview question asked stakeholders to share any additional information regarding WVROCKS they felt to be important. Responses from stakeholders to this question supported the need to implement a program such as WVROCKS. In this section, two themes in support of the program evolved, growth and sustainability. The first theme related to supporting the growth of the program. The second theme discussed the need for strategic planning to sustain the program, as well as help it grow. Information contained in this section may build on previous information provided in prior sections as this interview question asked for additional information.

In terms of growth, Dr. Roxann Humbert stated “over 20,000 credit hours” (personal communication, March 25, 2019) had been awarded through the WVROCKS program. This growth supports the goal to have 60% of West Virginians earn a postsecondary education by the year 2030. Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) commented on the study conducted by Georgetown University that predicted West Virginia needed to produce 20,000 more graduates if they wanted to meet the study’s projections on workforce needs for the 21st century. He remarked in 2014 the state awarded about 14,000 degrees, which grew to awarding about 18,000 degrees in 2018. While this growth in degrees awarded is an improvement, there is still progress needed to meet the goals set by the state to provide more graduates for the workforce. Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) noted the WVROCKS program had a 93% retention rate. This rate supports the program by retaining a large percentage of the students that take courses through its portal.

Honorable Dan O’Hanlon commented institutions participating in WVROCKS earn money back and that “tens of thousands of dollars” (personal communication, March 28, 2019) had been given to different institutions. It was noted by a couple of stakeholders that institutions get a percentage of the tuition paid by each student using the WVROCKS portal to complete a course. Dr. Roxann Humbert (personal communication, March 25, 2019) stated WVROCKS only collected 60% of the tuition students paid for a course. Several others questioned why more institutions did not participate in the program, especially since a model for implementing it already existed. Some wondered if administrators at institutions fully understood the benefits of WVROCKS, or if they supported online learning. Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) noted the MOU was structured to help institutions with their RBA program, not compete with them. Ms. Pamela Stephens commented part of the WVROCKS

collaborative model and the MOU was for institutions to decide what courses they wanted to offer, and she had “created an approval form” (personal communication, April 18, 2019) to help departments at her institution in reviewing the classes they might want to offer. Both Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) and Dr. Mark Stotler (personal communication, June 10, 2019) remarked institutions played a role in promoting the program to the target audience, adult learners.

Dr. Mary Stewart reflected on growing “areas of emphasis” (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019) in the program, but expressed resources, human more so than technical, might require cut backs in the grant when deciding which courses to develop. In addition to planning which courses to develop and models used for the program, Dr. Stewart commented on the need to consider a business plan to help “future proof” (personal communication, March 25, 2019), or provide sustainability to the program. This plan included developing a formula on how WVNET and WVROCKS should manage the level of “activity on the portal, [and] at what point have you exceeded your ability to handle the load” (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). She commented on the need for a “formal board of advisors ... to collaborate on the scope and the direction” (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019) of the program, noting its importance as those more familiar with the program retire.

Stakeholders also remarked on other areas, including further support for the program by reiterating concepts about qualifications of faculty and expectations. WVROCKS classes are taught by credentialed faculty members who are experts in the content being taught, and WVROCKS instructors are QM trained and certified. It was also noted in the contract, or faculty MOU, signed to teach a course in WVROCKS that faculty are expected to engage with students

through daily communications and checking into the class every 24 hours during weekdays. Faculty who maintain a strong presence benefit online students and are helpful to students who are less comfortable taking classes in the online environment. These points were reinforced in the faculty orientation process. Dr. Nancy McClure also mentioned the need for additional support for faculty with issues related to technology such as Blackboard, noting responses to requests might happen in a timelier manner.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked: What are the perceptions of various stakeholders in the WVROCKS initiative? Data collected from interview questions one, six, seven, eight and nine were analyzed for emerging themes and information related to perceptions about WVROCKS. Information found in this section refers to the purpose of WVROCKS, the benefits and value of the program, along with barriers and drawbacks of it, thoughts on the future of WVROCKS, and additional information.

Purpose of WVROCKS

The first interview question asked stakeholders to describe the purpose of WVROCKS. Four themes emerged after analysis of the responses from across the stakeholder groups. As shown in Figure 4, the first three focused on goals for the WVROCKS program, including making higher education more accessible to adult learners, improving degree completion rates, and preparing a more educated workforce. The fourth theme focused on methods promoted by WVROCKS to achieve program goals.

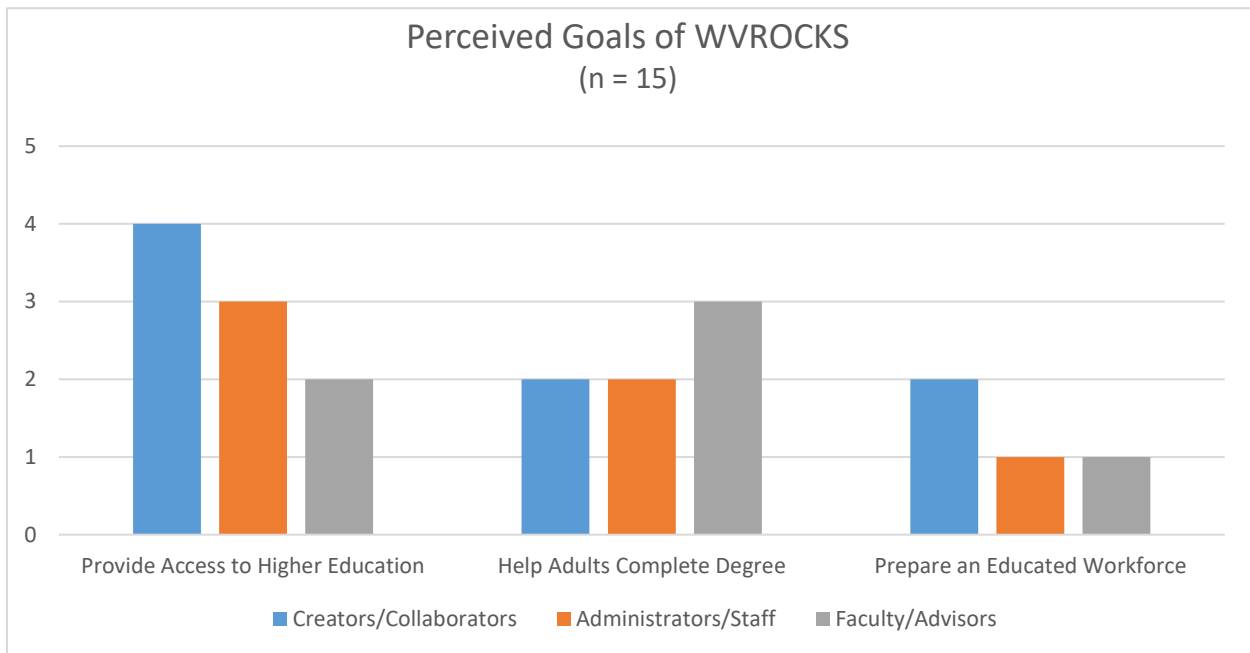


Figure 4. Perceived Goals of WVROCKS

This figure represents the perceptions held regarding the purpose and goals of WVROCKS. Note some interview participants might have more than one perception of goals for WVROCKS.

When discussing the purpose of WVROCKS, nine of the 15 stakeholders interviewed concentrated on the goal of making higher education more accessible to help adult learners complete their degrees. Comments from across the stakeholder groups emphasized WVROCKS helped adult learners gain access to higher education institutions in West Virginia. Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) from the WVHEPC commented many West Virginians have some college listed on their resume, but not a degree. Dr. Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) and Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) referenced over 150,000 people in West Virginia had some college yet never graduated with a degree. Dr. Roxann Humbert noted not all adult learners had the ability or opportunity to complete a degree through the traditional path “of attending a college campus, face-to-face classes” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). Both Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) and Dr. Angela Schwer (personal communication, June 17,

2019) commented many adults in West Virginia lived and worked in rural areas where access to higher education institutions was limited. Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) further noted some smaller colleges lacked the resources and enough students to offer access to online courses.

Seven participants commented on the second theme of improving degree completion rates by helping students complete their degree. Dr. Mary Stewart stated WVROCKS was able to “reach students who would otherwise not have access to completion of their degrees” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). It should also be noted seven of the participants did not distinguish a difference between helping adult learners earn a degree and improving degree completion rates. Access to education was fundamental to earning a degree, which improved degree completion rates. As Dr. Timothy Oxley noted, the WVROCKS program worked as an opportunity “to provide access to help adult learners for degree completion” (personal communication, May 16, 2019).

Helping adults earn a degree also helped provide a more educated workforce and helped West Virginians prepare for future jobs. Dr. Jan Fox (personal communication, May 29, 2019) noted the purpose of WVROCKS was to help West Virginians’ gain access to higher education thereby providing the state with a more educated workforce. Changes in demands related to workforce qualifications can affect the ability of getting or keeping a job. Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, May 16, 2019) referenced a study that showed West Virginia “would have jobs that would require 20,000 more degree holding individual[s]” than the number of graduates produced during the time of the study. The study referenced was conducted at Georgetown University on job trends and forecasting future requirements for those jobs. Dr. Corley Dennison stated West Virginia has a goal to have “60% of West Virginians’ ... have some

type of postsecondary credentials by the year 2030” (personal communication, June 27, 2019). He noted it was important “to reach that goal to have a workforce ready for the 21st century” (personal communication, June 27, 2019).

A common thread between the first three themes was access to education. Methods cited by participants for improving access to higher education within the WVROCKS program included the following:

- provided collaboration between institutions across West Virginia to increase the availability of online courses (Corley Dennison, personal communication, June 27, 2019; Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019; Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Dan O’Hanlon, personal communication, March 28, 2019),
- offered flexible pathway to higher education attractive to adult learners and aligned with state goals for adults to complete their degrees (Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, personal communication, July 26, 2019; Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Nancy Parks, personal communication, April 17, 2019),
- developed accelerated, online courses that worked in conjunction with the RBA and BOG AAS degrees to provide more options to complete a degree (Monica Brooks, personal communication, April 19, 2019; Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; Mark Stotler, personal communication, June 10, 2019),
- overcame geographical challenges some students faced by providing online access to courses needed to graduate (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019; Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019; M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal

communication, March 25, 2019; Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019).

Dr. Roxann Humbert (personal communication, March 25, 2019) emphasized WVROCKS was a collaborative process between West Virginia institutions offering the RBA to help the states' higher education institutions provide online course access for adult learners to complete their degree. Several of the participants interviewed explained courses created for WVROCKS could be shared between participating institutions through the online WVROCKS portal in Blackboard. Another participant added courses provided a flexible learning pathway for adult learners by utilizing eight-week online courses "to expedite finishing their bachelor degree" (Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, personal communication, July 26, 2019). WVROCKS served to help adults complete their degree in "a user-friendly way... attractive to adult learners" (Nancy Parks, personal communication, April 17, 2019) by providing "accelerated online opportunities for RBA students" (Mark Stotler, personal communication, June 10, 2019). Mr. Andrew Gooding noted this process was also beneficial in providing online access to students living in rural areas and helping smaller institutions that might not "have much of an online presence" (personal communication, April 11, 2019). In addition to providing access, WVROCKS "helps adult learners who are distributed geographically throughout the state complete their bachelor's degree" (M. Anegela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019).

Benefits or Value of WVROCKS

The sixth interview question asked stakeholders to describe what they perceived as the benefits or value of the WVROCKS program and completing the RBA or BOG AAS degree. Three themes emerged as a result of analyzing interview data gathered from the stakeholders. The first theme focused on completing a degree. The goal of completing a degree was embedded

into the remaining two themes as either a supportive structure or the student's motivation to complete a degree. The second theme focused on the supportive structure of WVROCKS courses to help a student complete a degree based on components such as accessibility of courses, selection of courses, flexibility, affordability, and quality. The third theme related to student motivation and the advantages of completing a degree to advance at work, to further their education, or to satisfy their own personal goal of earning a degree.

The RBA program has been around since the mid-1970s to support adult learners in completing their degree. A unique feature of the RBA degree noted by Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) was credit awarded for life experience that counted towards degree completion. The WVROCKS program added value to the RBA by providing adult learners "alternatives to completing their degree" (Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). WVROCKS provided adults with an alternative to complete a degree by taking online courses in an accelerated format (Nancy McClure, personal communication, June 11, 2019). That format accommodated adult learners who also had to manage family responsibilities and work obligations (Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, personal communication, July 26, 2019). Furthermore, the flexibility of WVROCKS included five start dates throughout the year for completing the accelerated eight-week courses (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019; Roxann Humbert, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Both Honorable Dan O'Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) and Dr. Angela Schwer (personal communication, June 17, 2019) commented on the opportunity WVROCKS provided students to complete a degree from home in a format that worked around their schedules.

The courses offered through the WVROCKS portal provided students “courses that are affordable, accessible, and accelerated to help... towards degree completion” (Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Dr. Monica Brooks provided similar comments and added there was “a robust array of classes” (personal communication, April 19, 2019). The number of courses accessible through WVROCKS was referenced as a benefit to students that added value to the program. There is “a deep course inventory” (Timothy Oxley, personal communication, May 16, 2019) with a variety of courses to appeal to many students. Ms. Nancy Parks (personal communication, April 17, 2019) also commented on the importance of advising students in the selection of courses needed to achieve their goals and graduate. In addition to the variety and selection of courses, it was noted the format of online-accelerated courses benefited adult learners and provided them with more flexibility to complete their degrees more quickly. Dr. Roxann Humbert (personal communication, March 25, 2019) noted students frequently commented to her they had spent years trying to complete their degree and were finally able to complete it through the WVROCKS program. Along with the flexibility of course format, the affordability of courses was mentioned as a plus for WVROCKS. Mr. Andrew Gooding noted tuition was “slightly cheaper” (personal communication, April 11, 2019) than regular courses on campus and after seven years of no change in the tuition charged for WVROCKS courses, it had the first increase when it raised from \$223 to \$250 per credit hour in the fall of 2019. Further comments included the quality of courses provided through WVROCKS. “The courses are rigorous” (M. Angela Schwer, personal communication, June 17, 2019), and they were designed to follow QM best practices. Dr. Brooks noted WVROCKS courses were taught in “very disciplined areas [by] Quality Matters certified faculty who hold terminal degrees in their fields” (personal communication, April 19, 2019).

The third theme emphasized areas that motivated students to complete a degree. Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) commented WVROCKS offered an opportunity for adults to finish a degree and earn more money, which could help them pay back student loans. Related benefits noted for completing a degree included the prospective student not being able to “get a promotion or keep their job” (Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019) without the degree. Participants noted areas of emphasis or concentrations were added to the RBA and BOG AAS degrees, which could benefit adult learners and serve to advance their career goals. Honorable O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) explained WVROCKS helped support the needs of West Virginia to have a more educated workforce for the future. Dr. Nancy McClure noted some students used WVROCKS to finish their RBA “as a steppingstone to a master’s degree program” (personal communication, June 11, 2019). Several reasons were mentioned as to why students wanted to complete their degree. The most common reasons included to keep a job or get a promotion, further their education and get a master’s degree, or satisfy their own personal goal of completing a degree after they had reached a place in life where that was an option (Nancy Parks, personal communication, April 17, 2019; Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019). Ms. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) described the personal satisfaction gained by students from completing their degree. Multiple interviewees also noted this was often accomplished after students had reached a point and time in their life that allowed them the opportunity to finish a degree (Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, personal communication, July 26, 2019; Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019; Mary Stewart, personal communication, March 25, 2019).

Barriers or Drawbacks of WVROCKS

The seventh interview question asked stakeholders to describe what they perceived as the barriers or drawbacks of the program and to give some examples. Four themes emerged related to technology and technical skills, student readiness and time management, quality of online learning, and resource issues.

Related to the first theme, the stakeholders interviewed noted technology as a barrier for some participants in the WVROCKS program. Stakeholders commented access to the Internet or a good Broadband connection was important. Dr. Angela Schwer stated students taking WVROCKS courses needed to have a “secure...or reliable internet connection” (personal communication, June 17, 2019). Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) also mentioned technology and connecting to Broadband as a barrier. In addition, another barrier associated to technology included comments about logging into a different portal. Mr. Andrew Gooding stated students had to “switch from a Marshall mindset to a WVROCKS mindset in terms of where they access stuff” (personal communication, April 11, 2019). Dr. Sonja Cantrell-Johnson provided a similar comment stating when students used “a separate portal” (personal communication, July 26, 2019) it might look similar, but it differed from what they were familiar with at their own institution. Stakeholders further indicated a student, especially an adult learner who is the target audience for the WVROCKS program, might not have the technical skills to use the technology needed to complete an online course. This problem could include skills needed for using Microsoft Office tools, such as Word, as noted by Dr. Nancy McClure (personal communication, June 11, 2019).

The second theme focused on student readiness and time management. Both Dr. Nancy McClure (personal communication, June 11, 2019) and Dr. Angela Schwer (personal

communication, June 17, 2019) noted it was important to have good reading and writing skills. Dr. McClure (personal communication, June 11, 2019) further commented students also needed the ability to be a self-motivator, stay organized, and be a good time manager. Dr. Mary Stewart commented along with technical issues many adults were dealing with various “level[s] of life responsibilities” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). While it was important for students to have a level of comfort using technology, stakeholders also noted students needed to be ready to take online courses, especially in an accelerated format. Honorable Dan O’Hanlon noted students working full-time could find an accelerated course a burden on their time, but he and his team had worked hard to provide “the highest quality of video” (personal communication, March 28, 2019) while trying to reduce the amount of time required to access the course content online. Stakeholders noted students who lacked readiness skills, which included reading, writing, motivation, organization, and time management, could experience barriers when taking compressed, accelerated courses online, such as WVROCKS. Dr. Mark Stotler remarked the online learning format may not be for everyone, and he thought, “the program has to advise students” (personal communication, March 25, 2019) on the requirements and expectations needed for completing a course online.

The third theme related to the quality of online learning in terms of the quantity of courses developed and how the delivery of courses related to course design and content. While all courses are QM certified, the quality of online learning was perceived as a drawback, both in the selection of courses developed and the delivery of courses. In terms of quality as it related to developing courses, Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) commented there needed to be a more deliberate effort in development of courses to support the areas of emphasis available under the RBA and BOG AAS programs. While stakeholders referenced the

areas of emphasis to better suit students' goals, they noted it needed to be promoted more to make sure everyone was aware of the options. Perceptions of quality in online courses related to more than just their development. Ms. Pamela Stephens noted concerns related to online courses stating sometimes the nature of online courses can be "faceless and anonymous" (personal communication, April 18, 2019) and lack the rich feedback available in face-to-face courses, especially when students have questions related to grades. Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) referenced the level of responsibility of students as a drawback and related it to the design of online courses. She commented courses should be broken down into smaller learning modules that allowed adult learners the opportunity to complete a section at a time rather than large module activities, along with the development of assessments that checked for student understanding of module objectives. She further recommended assignments should not have due dates set for a Friday, as many adult learners might use the weekend to complete course material due to work obligations during the week. Dr. Jan Fox expressed concern that while the goal was to provide quality courses there was "no guarantee on the quality of the course" (personal communication, May 29, 2019) developed across different institutions. Issues related to the quality of online courses delivered in a compressed eight-week format were also commented upon. Stakeholders expressed concerns in terms of course content being insufficient or too overloaded to support learning objectives. Dr. Timothy Oxley commented some courses might be "a little light" (personal communication, May 16, 2019) on content. He further expressed concern an accelerated eight-week course might not allow for mastery and "synthesis of information" (Timothy Oxley, personal communication, May 16, 2019) using a research paper as an example and the time required to complete that type of assignment. Another noted courses needed to meet the proper requirements to earn credit for the course. Dr. Monica

Brooks explained a difficulty with eight-week accelerated courses could be the course content is “a little overboard” (personal communication, April 19, 2019), which could be caused by faculty trying to make sure they legitimize the “Carnegie hour” (personal communication, April 19, 2019) to equal the credit given for the course and to provide the student with a quality course.

A final barrier related to the need for resources to develop and continue the program. Stakeholders referenced human resources needed to promote areas related to development and delivery of the program, such as training and personnel to accomplish tasks required to provide a quality program. Throughout the interviews, stakeholders referenced Dr. Roxann Humbert and her accomplishments in developing and promoting the program. Honorable Dan O’Hanlon stated Dr. Humbert did a “fantastic job putting this whole thing together” (personal communication, March 28, 2019). Stakeholders noted she accomplished success even though resources were limited and the program lacked adequate funding and investments. Dr. Humbert indicated her biggest barrier was not having “more resources and more help put towards the program” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). She also noted growth of the program happened much faster than anticipated and WVROCKS was only part of her job duties. She felt more support was needed to manage program enrollments, human resource tasks such as faculty employment, and coordinating courses.

WVROCKS Future

The eighth interview question asked stakeholders what they thought of the future direction of the program. Two main themes evolved from the information collected from stakeholders. The first theme focused on growth of the program in terms of expansion to other institutions, additional course offerings, new specializations, and progress toward state goals.

The second theme related to evolving processes and resources needed for continued growth and development of WVROCKS.

Most of the stakeholders stated they felt the WVROCKS program would continue to grow. Dr. Mark Stotler noted he thought the future for WVROCKS included continued growth and looked “very bright” (personal communication, June 10, 2019). The continued growth of the WVROCKS program lends support to that belief. Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) noted the expansion of WVROCKS to more campuses since it was piloted at Marshall University. Dr. Stotler (personal communication, June 10, 2019) noted growth of the program could be furthered as more community and technical colleges offered WVROCKS as a path to complete the BOG AAS degree. He questioned why more four-year and two-year colleges in West Virginia had not supported the program for the RBA and BOG AAS degrees. He further noted finances seemed to be “holding steady,” and he hoped “resources, both money and personnel,” would be available to grow the program.

Along with growth, stakeholders commented on the expansion of the WVROCKS program. Dr. Timothy Oxley felt WVROCKS would continue to grow in the future and he could see “WVROCKS... becoming RBA” (personal communication, May 16, 2019). Dr. Mary Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) commented on opportunities for adding more course offerings in the WVROCKS portal to support areas of emphasis or concentrations that had been added to RBA and BOG AAS. The WVROCKS initiative also started to evolve outside the RBA program. Dr. Corley Dennison stated he thought the program would continue to grow because he saw “the mission expanding” (personal communication, June 27, 2019). He thought the WVROCKS program was a good tool to expand into other areas such as certifications. Dr. Roxann Humbert indicated WVROCKS was already expanding into other

initiatives following the “collaborative concept” (personal communication, March 25, 2019). She also stated they were using WVROCKS to deliver a certificate in early childhood in community and technical colleges, along with dual credit for math classes in high schools. She further noted people in other areas, such as social work, had contacted her to see about further expansion of the WVROCKS program. Both Dr. Stewart (personal communication, March 25, 2019) and Ms. Pamela Stephens (personal communication, April 18, 2019) noted expansion of the WVROCKS program by using its portal to deliver the dual credit courses. Dr. Stewart stated they were looking at a “new subset of students... to matriculate into higher education” (personal communication, March 25, 2019).

Since his early days formulating the concept of WVROCKS to promote online education in West Virginia, Honorable Dan O’Hanlon stated he believed “online education is the future” (personal communication, March 28, 2019). Stakeholders indicated they believed WVROCKS to be an important resource to meet the educational needs of West Virginians. Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) stated growing WVROCKS could serve as a tool to achieve West Virginia’s educational attainment goal promoted by WVClimb, which aimed to have “60% of West Virginians obtain some type of postsecondary credential by the year 2030” (Corley Dennison, personal communication, June 27, 2019) to meet the demands of a 21st century workforce. He further noted the need for a “marketing campaign” (Corley Dennison, personal communication, June 27, 2019) to inform people how to accomplish the goal of 60% by 2030.

In addition to adult learners, Mr. Andrew Gooding (personal communication, April 11, 2019) also commented as the instructor of record for WVROCKS at Marshall University he had traditional students not enrolled in the RBA program who requested to take WVROCKS courses.

This request from students indicated an additional path for WVROCKS to support higher education as a resource for learners seeking a degree. Dr. Monica Brooks further noted involvement of WVROCKS with the community and technical colleges helped to “create a 2+2 environment in this program and ... broadens opportunity for a wider group of individuals” (personal communication, April 19, 2019) who were seeking their degree.

Additionally, it was expressed that expanding processes for WVROCKS, such as improving communication between faculty in participating institutions to offer more guidance and direction to those who taught and developed WVROCKS courses could be accomplished in the future. Dr. Nancy McClure noted courses needed to be rigorous enough to be considered college level, and input from departments could help make sure the courses met departmental standards for “curriculum goals and objectives” (personal communication, June 11, 2019).

Another thought related to courses and curriculum was the use of online textbooks and open source materials for WVROCKS courses as a future trend. Dr. Angela Schwer responded she was intrigued by a suggestion made by Dr. Roxann Humbert for courses to be “developed completely without texts so that the only thing the student is paying for is the course and all reading material would be embedded in that course” (personal communication, June 17, 2019).

Furthermore, stakeholders expressed concern about the future of the program after Dr. Humbert retired during 2019. Ms. Nancy Parks commented Dr. Humbert provided “what they call bench strength” (personal communication, April 17, 2019) for the WVROCKS program. Resources for WVROCKS would be required to provide growth and sustainability for the WVROCKS program. Investing in resources to support and promote the program, such as personnel and incorporating WVROCKS into marketing promotions to help grow the program could help West Virginia meet educational attainment goals.

Additional Perceptions about WVROCKS

The ninth interview question asked stakeholders to share any additional information regarding WVROCKS they felt to be important. The first theme supported the ongoing need for the program based on educational goals and workforce projections. The second theme focused on the WVROCKS faculty experience. The third theme considered the need to improve the course evaluation process. Most participants built on ideas discussed in previous sections.

Degrees awarded in West Virginia higher education institutions were on the rise. Dr. Corley Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) noted from 2014 to 2018 degrees awarded in West Virginia were up 23%. He also commented on the WVClimb attainment goal, which aimed to have 60% of West Virginians awarded a certificate or degree by the year 2030. However, he reflected there was still more to be done based on the Georgetown University study that projected West Virginia needed to award 20,000 more degrees and credentials in order to have an educated workforce to meet job requirements. Dr. Dennison (personal communication, June 27, 2019) viewed the adult population as a primary target and WVROCKS as a tool needed to help get people back to college to complete their RBA or BOG AAS degree. He also considered the need to expand into other areas such as certifications. Dr. Timothy Oxley remarked “WVROCKS has been a shot of adrenaline into the RBA arm” (personal communication, May 16, 2019). Stakeholders such as Honorable Dan O’Hanlon (personal communication, March 28, 2019) and Dr. Mark Stotler (personal communication, June 10, 2019) questioned why all the institutions in West Virginia eligible to participate in WVROCKS had not taken advantage of the benefits offered by the program. Dr. Oxley further commented he felt it was “a tremendous program” (personal communication, May 16, 2019) that helped underserved communities develop educational partnerships to deliver courses through a collaborative process.

Overall, many stakeholders commented on the benefit of WVROCKS. Dr. Sonja Cantrell-Johnson stated the “collaborative program... can benefit West Virginians and our non-traditional populations in actually completing their degrees” (personal communication, July 26, 2019).

In addition to helping students, faculty found the program rewarding. Dr. Monica Brooks noted her experiences with WVROCKS led to “extremely rewarding transactions with students” (personal communication, April 19, 2019) when they walked across the stage at graduation. Dr. Brooks also noted Dr. Roxann Humbert worked “hard to cultivate a positive faculty environment” (personal communication, April 19, 2019) among the people teaching and participating in the program. Part of the collaborative model Dr. Humbert helped develop required faculty teaching WVROCKS courses to be content experts, knowledgeable in their fields (Pamela Stephens, personal communication, April 18, 2019). Faculty were also QM certified and familiar with areas of assessment and standards for their courses.

Other thoughts raised by stakeholders related to the need to improve the course evaluation process for WVROCKS course. Ms. Nancy Parks raised the question about the course evaluation process, which involved a survey to assess the course and student satisfaction, with students providing feedback after the course to “gauge the quality of instruction” (personal communication, April 17, 2019). While the collaborative process of WVROCKS allowed for a WVROCKS course to be shared among multiple institutions through one portal, it was counted as a course from the students’ home institutions with the RBA or BOG AAS coordinator listed as the course “instructor of record” (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019) rather than the WVROCKS instructor who taught the course. It was further noted the institution’s evaluation process could result in the person listed as the instructor of record from that institution receiving the institution’s course evaluations rather than the WVROCKS

instructor who actually taught the course (Andrew Gooding, personal communication, April 11, 2019). Stakeholders identified this process as an area for improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reviews the basis for this qualitative case study and the research questions that guided the methods used to collect data. Conclusions and inferences are drawn based on the data collected and analyzed. Additionally, thoughts related to future research are supplied to continue growing the body of knowledge related to the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS).

Review of Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain intrinsic knowledge on how the WVROCKS program has been implemented and to gain insight into the perceptions of WVROCKS stakeholders. Results of this research could assist those in higher education make informed decisions related to implementing the program and learning more about the role of WVROCKS to help adult learners earn the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) degree or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) degree. The results also identify other opportunity areas in higher education where WVROCKS can benefit learners to earn the credentials needed to meet workforce needs and support West Virginia's economic system.

Review of Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What online information about WVROCKS is presented on participating West Virginia higher education and related agencies' websites?
2. How has WVROCKS been implemented at select higher education institutions?
3. What are the perceptions of various stakeholders in the WVROCKS initiative?

Methods and Participants

The *Website Analysis Guide* (Appendix B) was applied to the websites of 14 higher education institutions and related agencies (Appendix K) across West Virginia that either participated in WVROCKS or provided information related to the program. The data collected from those websites was analyzed to gather responses for research question one.

The *Interview Guide* (Appendix C) was used to respond to research questions two and three. The information collected from interviews related to how the WVROCKS program was implemented in higher education institutions and how those in the realm of higher education perceived the program. Data were collected from each of three stakeholder groups: a) creators and collaborators (4), b) administrators and staff (6), and c) faculty and advisors (5), for a total of 15 interviews. A fourth section, students, was part of the *Interview Guide*, but no stakeholders from this group participated in an interview. Interviews started with WVROCKS creators identified through the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) website and proceeded using a nonprobability snowball sampling technique to gain additional information about possible interview participants, as each interview was conducted.

Interviews were recorded to assist the interviewer with detailed and accurate transcription of the collected data. The transcript from each interview was sent to the respective interview participant to validate the accuracy of the information and allow the participant to make corrections or adjustments to the data before analysis. Out of the 15 participants, 11 responded to this member check and validated the information. Four of the 11 participants made minor adjustments to their transcripts. The remaining seven responded with statements that the information provided was accurate. A summation of the interviews was sent out to interview participants for further validation on the accuracy of the data, after analysis, as a final member

check. Seven of the 15 participants responded to this final member check. Out of those seven participants, four noted adjustments to improve accuracy. Adjustments included a name correction, a title correction, two timeframe corrections, and an additional comment to clarify job tasks. The remaining three participants replied with a statement the information in the final member check was accurate.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following conclusions are supported by the data collected during the research. Triangulation of the data provided construct validity. Material related to WVROCKS noted in the literature review was reinforced with data collected from the web analysis and through information shared during the interviews. Findings inferred from the data gathered in response to each research question were summarized into four categories: a) program information, b) course information, c) user-instructional information, and d) public relations information.

Research Question 1

What online information about WVROCKS is presented on participating West Virginia higher education and related agencies' websites? The website analysis revealed a) program information, which outlines history, mission and goals, and frequently asked questions; b) course information, which notes course listings, course descriptions, details about the accelerated format, and information about Quality Matters (QM) standards; c) user-instructional information, which includes resources and beginning steps for WVROCKS participants, and d) public relations information, which shares news articles and statistical information about WVROCKS.

Program information was provided through webpages and documents that outlined the history of the program, listed the mission and goals of WVROCKS, and answered frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the program. Descriptions found during the website analysis

aligned with program descriptions noted during the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2017), indicating WVROCKS was designed to help make education more accessible and flexible for adult learners to complete their degree and improve completion rates. Among the information located on the websites analyzed were two documents, WVROCKS RBA flyer (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c) and WVROCKS BOG flyer (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b), which contained the WVROCKS mission and goals. Based on these two documents, the focus of WVROCKS was to provide greater access to higher education for adult learners to complete their degree via quality online courses delivered through a common portal with institutional collaboration. As noted in the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a), the WVROCKS mission stated the program was “to provide a high quality, student-focused, engaging, online learning higher education collaborative to increase the college completion rate” (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a, mission section; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, mission section; iLearn WVROCKS 2019b, mission section; iLearn WVROCKS 2019c, mission section). The goals for the program are to:

- increase adult learners’ access to higher education,
- enhance adult learners’ ability to obtain either an associate or a bachelor’s degree,
- support online learning with focus on best practices to deliver quality instruction, and
- provide a collaborative environment for institutions to offer courses (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c).

The backside of the WVROCKS RBA flyer and the WVROCKS BOG flyer included a FAQ section that provided additional information related to the WVROCKS program (College

Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c).

Course information referenced descriptions of courses as online and in a compressed format with various websites that included descriptions of individual WVROCKS courses offered across higher education institutions. Descriptions of courses were also linked with WVROCKS courses listed on course schedules and catalogs available on higher education websites. Both the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c; West Virginia Network, 2017), and analysis of the WVROCKS website stated WVROCKS courses designated from lower level (100-200) to upper level (300-400) were restricted to students enrolled in either the RBA or BOG AAS degree. QM standards were noted in relationship to WVROCKS courses in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2015; West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2013) and analysis of the WVROCKS website. Further information found during the website analysis noted online WVROCKS courses were accelerated and delivered in an eight-week format, which allowed for WVROCKS courses to have five start times during the year. The literature review (West Virginia Network, 2017) reported WVROCKS courses were eight-week courses with three different start times per year, which demonstrated a growing number of opportunities between 2017 and 2019. As noted in the literature review (Ko & Rossen, 2010), adult learners prefer the flexibility of online learning.

The main user-instructional information found on websites included links to resources available to aid students and faculty on steps for students to follow in order to participate in WVROCKS, such as a FAQ flyer and how to contact the helpdesk (Fairmont State University, n.d.b). Information that aided users of the WVROCKS program included steps on how to select a participating institution and contact information, found in both the literature review (College

Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c) and the website analysis (iLearn WVROCKS 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS 2019c). FAQ information and steps for selecting a WVROCKS participating institution, connected to RBA Today noted in the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c) referencing the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) and the CFWV, instructed learners about options for college and financial aid. There was also information about how to login to WVROCKS courses using the iLearn Blackboard portal available in website analysis data (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c). Furthermore, the website analysis provided users with information on how to view a description of WVROCKS courses and how to see what textbooks, if any, were needed for a course.

Public relations information focused on links to articles or webpages that promoted success stories about WVROCKS. There was also a link to an article about a federal grant, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service Distance Learning & Telemedicine (RUS DLT) that was first discussed in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2016). A news article indicated, “WVROCKS expands online degree opportunities for adult students with new grant” (Hughes, 2016). Additionally, statistical information provided in news articles (Fairmont State University, 2014; West Virginia Network, 2019) supplemented information located in the literature review (Southern Regional Education Board, 2019). The SREB (2019) report, *Fact Book on Higher Education*, noted as of the 2016/2017 academic year, adult learners in the SREB region had graduation completion rates of only 57% compared to the national rate of 60%. Statistics collected during the website analysis also aligned with data gathered during the interviews related to growth of the program, money earned by participating institutions, and retention of students in WVROCKS courses. Statistical information on the West Virginia

Network (2019) website showed in 2018 the number of students enrolled in WVROCKS courses was over 2,300, with \$600,000 earned from course enrollment. Furthermore, the West Virginia Network (WVNET) website indicated WVROCKS had a retention rate (96%) above the national average, of which 87% earned a passing grade in their WVROCKS course (West Virginia Network, 2019). These statistics showed improvement over information in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2018) that noted WVROCKS retention rates at 93% with 84% earning a passing grade. Another notable change between the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2018) and website analysis (West Virginia Network, 2019) was the growing number of students enrolled, from 884 in 2017 to over 2,300 in 2018.

Research Question 2

How has WVROCKS been implemented at select higher education institutions? Data from interviews revealed insights into how the collaborative program began and how WVROCKS has been implemented in participating institutions. This section summarizes data into the same four information categories: a) program information, which relates to the history of the program, importance of collaboration, and a model outlining the steps for developing and implementing WVROCKS; b) course information, which examines the grant process for developing upper and lower level courses and details the QM standards built into WVROCKS courses; c) user-instructional information, which includes training for faculty related to WVROCKS and student challenges and support accessing the WVROCKS portal; and d) public relations information, which covers program changes and growth supporting the need for WVROCKS.

Program information provided during interviews included a history on the creation of WVROCKS. Data collected from the interviews correlated with information from the literature review and data identified in the website analysis, providing triangulation and supporting

validity. Information pertained to the pilot of the WVROCKS program in the fall of 2012 in three higher education institutions: a) Bluefield State College, b) Fairmont State University, and c) Marshall University (State Journal, 2014). Institutions that piloted WVROCKS provided a working model for how to implement the program in other higher education institutions.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) were also maintained with participating institutions to provide guidance on the roles and expectations of the parties involved. The MOUs detailed expectations, ability, and willingness of higher education institutions to participate in WVROCKS, and included that institutions had to offer agreed upon WVROCKS courses to students in the RBA and BOG AAS programs. Interview data showed WVROCKS maintains a MOU with the institutions annually. Stakeholders stated WVROCKS only collected 60% of the course fees, leaving 40% for the participating institution. Also, WVNET pays the faculty teaching WVROCKS courses, eliminating the expense for participating institutions.

Collaboration was also a key term in the creation of WVROCKS that was significant enough to be incorporated into the name, with the letter 'C' representing 'Collaborative.' Stakeholders commented that WVROCKS was never meant to compete with higher education institutions, but rather to aid them with an option to provide access to online courses students might need to complete their RBA and BOG AAS degrees online. The literature review (Leasure, 2016) noted a collaborative group with members from offices and campuses across the state. Colleges and universities offering the RBA comprised this collaborative group with representatives from academic affairs, admissions, bursar, and registrar offices developing a model for WVROCKS. The model was based on information collected by Dr. Roxann Humbert reviewing other states' programs. During the interviews, Dr. Humbert made a reference to time she had spent researching information related to platforms like WVROCKS in states such as

Tennessee and Georgia. She noted she shared the information with an advisory board that represented various offices and higher education institutions across the state, collaborating and providing feedback on developing the WVROCKS model.

General steps detailed by stakeholders showed how WVROCKS was developed and implemented in higher education institutions. Many interview participants provided similar statements about the steps involved in developing (refer back to Figure 2) WVROCKS and implementing (refer back to Figure 3) the program across higher education institutions in West Virginia. An early step in developing WVROCKS began with Dr. Roxann Humbert reviewing other states and working with an Advisory Board to develop a model for WVROCKS. These steps reiterate information from the literature review (Leasure, 2016). The next step was about creating courses in an accelerated format, which was also referenced in the literature review (West Virginia Network, 2017). Information from the literature review (State Journal, 2014) also supported the step related to three institutions piloting WVROCKS. Implementation (refer back to Figure 3) was a two-part process involving developing and delivering WVROCKS courses and making them accessible to students. Developing a WVROCKS course involved faculty responding to a request for proposal that also detailed the requirements to develop a WVROCKS course. These requirements were further supported by information from the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2015) regarding faculty training and QM standards. Implementing a WVROCKS course involved steps where institutions review and decide which WVROCKS courses they would like to offer, then enrolling students and uploading grades for their students participating in a WVROCKS course. It was further noted in the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c) that credits for WVROCKS courses transferred back to the participating institutions where students are enrolled, which correlated with the final steps (refer

back to Figure 3) in delivering WVROCKS courses with the registrars uploading students' WVROCKS grades at their institutions.

Courses for WVROCKS were described as accelerated, online courses delivered in an eight-week format. The first five WVROCKS courses were developed from courses created for the RBA Today program. Originally, WVROCKS courses targeted RBA students who needed upper level courses to complete their degree. Further development of courses came about through a grant process requesting qualified West Virginia faculty to develop upper level (300-400) courses, and lower level (100-200) courses as WVROCKS expanded to include the BOG AAS degree in the community and technical colleges. Quality standards for WVROCKS courses are based on QM, which is part of the required training for developing and teaching WVROCKS courses. The WVHEPC (2013) report *Leading the Way: Access, Success, Impact*, referenced in the literature review, noted West Virginia has an agreement with QM to provide educators with training to develop quality standards for developing online courses. QM standards are built into the standardized WVROCKS course template that is updated every time QM updates their standards and rubric.

Information provided for the users of WVROCKS noted collaborative workshops as part of the early training, along with training in QM. Faculty workshops provided training on best practices for developing and teaching WVROCKS courses in an eight-week format and pedagogy related to online learning. Other faculty requirements included knowledge on the course content they were developing, which was verified by the faculty's home institution regarding credentials and expertise in the content. A MOU between faculty and WVROCKS explained the expectations of the faculty teaching a WVROCKS course. Live video experiences were made available through grant funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities

Service Distance Learning & Telemedicine (RUS DLT) Grant (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2016) to purchase equipment that helped expand the WVROCKS program. The equipment allowed for synchronous video classrooms that could be used for teaching online students and for live training for faculty. This grant was noted in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2016), in public relations information located during the website analysis (Hughes, 2016), and was corroborated by information provided during the interviews. Comments noted the grant provided equipment that helped to expand WVROCKS and was used to improve distance learning.

An issue concerning user-instructional formation related to a problem experienced by students when accessing the WVROCKS portal. When students attempted to access WVROCKS courses located in the WVROCKS portal, they would often access the wrong Blackboard and not be able to find their WVROCKS courses. It was noted that Marshall University added a link within their Blackboard system to redirect students to the WVROCKS portal, which served to assist students in getting to their WVROCKS courses.

Public relations information shared during interviews and referenced in the literature review revealed an ongoing need for the WVROCKS program. Two reports by Carnevale et al. (2010; 2013) predicted workforce demands would require a more educated workforce. Multiple stakeholders commented on the need to have an educated workforce and for more West Virginia adults to earn a degree. It was also noted during the interviews West Virginia had about 168,000 adults with some college credits, but no degree. Information in the SREB (2019) *Fact Book on Higher Education* reported West Virginia (30%) ranked behind the national average (32%) of adults that had earned a bachelor's degree by 2017. These forces continue to drive the need for the WVROCKS initiative.

Furthermore, WVROCKS grew faster than anticipated, which could be a further indication of the need for the program. Participants noted growth of the program as one of the primary changes in WVROCKS. Statistics quoted by participants related to the number of courses growing from five to over 80, students in WVROCKS courses growing from 50 to over 1,200 a semester, and participating institutions growing from three to nine. It was also noted during the interviews the WVROCKS program had a 93% retention rate and had awarded over 20,000 credit hours towards degree completion. This information was also noted in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2018) and in the website analysis (West Virginia Network, 2019).

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of various stakeholders in the WVROCKS initiative?

Stakeholders considered the purpose of WVROCKS, along with possible benefits and barriers, and thoughts about the future of WVROCKS. Findings are summarized into the four key informational areas: a) program information, which discusses the perceived purpose, goals, and growth of WVROCKS; b) course information, which notes WVROCKS' accelerated courses with five start dates, quality, and areas of emphasis; c) user-instructional information, which includes advising students, student readiness issues, and communication and course evaluation processes; and d) public relations information, which further discusses the growth and need for WVROCKS.

Program information from participants revealed thoughts that WVROCKS was a means to provide adult learners access to online courses for completing their degree. Perceptions of WVROCKS included concepts of collaboration between institutions to increase access and flexibility of accelerated online courses adult learners could apply towards completing their RBA

and BOG AAS degrees. These perceptions aligned with the mission of the WVROCKS program “to provide a high quality student-focused, engaging, online learning higher education collaborative to increase the college completion rate” (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a, mission section; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b, mission section), as noted in the literature review. Furthermore, participants’ perceptions of the program supported the WVROCKS mission and three of the four goals set by WVROCKS as noted in the website analysis (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c), and the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b). The following is a list of perceptions participants had regarding WVROCKS:

- WVROCKS was a means to provide collaboration between West Virginia higher education institutions across the state,
- WVROCKS offered a flexible pathway to higher education that was attractive to adult learners seeking to complete their degree.
- WVROCKS courses were developed as accelerated, online courses that served to help adult learners complete the RBA or the BOG AAS degree.
- WVROCKS allowed students the ability to overcome geographical challenges by providing them online access to courses needed to graduate with a degree.

These perceptions of WVROCKS aligned with the goals listed on the WVROCKS RBA flyer and the WVROCKS BOG flyer, documents that were identified in both the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016a; College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016b) and website analysis, which noted:

- “increase access to higher education for non-traditional learners,

- enhance the ability of adults to attain an *Associate's/Bachelor's* [differed per flyer] degree through the existing... degree program,
- support the delivery of high-quality instruction focusing on best practices in online learning,
- provide an environment for institutions to collaborate on course offerings” (iLearn WVROCKS 2019b, goals section; iLearn WVROCKS 2019c, goals section)

In comparison, the perceptions about the purpose of WVROCKS and the goals denoted for WVROCKS included many similarities. The ideas that access to higher education is enhanced by a collaborative learning environment that supports delivery of online courses, showed strong alignment between perceptions of WVROCKS and the stated goals. Many stakeholders commented on the collaboration of the program in order to provide flexibility that supported access and delivery of online education, along with the standards of the program and faculty credentials. However, in spite of efforts that aligned with the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2015) on faculty training and QM standards, participant comments implied concerns about the consistency of WVROCKS’ courses in terms of content being too little for mastery of subject, or too much for an eight-week course. These concerns pose as barriers towards the goal of “high-quality instruction... practices in online learning” (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b, goals section; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c, goals section).

The growth and expansion of the program was noted by participants as the collaborative process of WVROCKS was applied to more areas to benefit learners, such as dual credit programs and certificate initiatives. Stakeholders explained the primary benefit of WVROCKS is completing a degree. Helping students earn a degree could help them get a job or become eligible for a promotion at work. Earning a bachelor’s degree could also allow students to

continue their education and earn a master's degree, along with the benefit of personal satisfaction. Reducing illiteracy by helping adults further their education was noted in the literature review (Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, 2017) as a means to support economic stability.

Stakeholders noted in course information not only were WVROCKS courses available through a collaborative arrangement, they also provided flexibility for the adult learner. WVROCKS courses were designed with adult learners in mind to allow for constraints on their time such as work and family obligations that might have prevented them from finishing their degree and becoming part of an educated workforce. WVROCKS provided learners with supportive structures that included a variety of online courses to aid in completing their degree online. As noted in the literature review (Beasley et al., 2014; West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011), *DegreeNow* was another initiative that supported adult learners in completing their degree by focusing on adult learner needs and improving instructional services. Other supportive structures that related to the flexibility of the program included WVROCKS provided five start dates throughout the year, at affordable prices, and were based on QM standards. Online courses also helped overcome geographical challenges for West Virginians who might not have easy access to higher education or the ability to attend traditional classrooms. Furthermore, WVROCKS courses could be applied to help learners add an area of emphasis to their degree. However, while participants described the WVROCKS courses as varied and the number of courses continue to grow, stakeholders suggested the need to develop more courses to support areas of emphasis.

User information included comments about the advising process as it related to courses, and to the program, in terms of student expectations. In the website analysis, the WVROCKS

RBA flyer (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c) and WVROCKS BOG flyer (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b) noted three levels of responsibilities: a) campus, b) WVROCKS program, and c) student. Noted in the literature review (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2015) was the role of advising students about WVROCKS. Stakeholders commented advising was an important step to assist learners in making good decisions regarding WVROCKS and whether or not online, accelerated courses would serve them best in completing their degree. Steps to help adults in selecting the right higher education pathway were noted in the literature review (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c). Advising could also help students develop areas related to technical skills, academic readiness, or time management needed for online learning. Stakeholders identified technical skills, such as Microsoft Office tools like Word, and readiness skills, such as reading and writing, self-motivation, organization, and time management, as potential barriers when taking online courses, especially in an accelerated format.

The process of communication between faculty developing a WVROCKS course and the academic departments accepting the WVROCKS course was also noted as an area to improve collaborative communications. Recommendations for improving communication included guidance in developing the WVROCKS course to assure the course met curriculum standards and supported departmental goals for quality. While faculty developing WVROCKS courses complete QM training, and courses are designed to QM standards, this collaborative communication could assist in meeting curriculum standards and perceived quality. The importance of meeting QM standards was referenced in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2015), but these standards focus on course design and do not provide specific guidance for quality online teaching, which was a concern for some interview participants.

Additionally, the course evaluation process was another area noted as an area for improvement. While institutions use course evaluations to assess their courses, concerns about course evaluations for WVROCKS were noted in the interviews. Stakeholders commented on the process as confusing since institutions listed their faculty as the faculty of record rather than the WVROCKS faculty who actually taught the course. During the interviews it was suggested WVROCKS courses should be assessed using a survey or course evaluation with the data being collected and shared with the WVROCKS faculty and participating institutions. This information would help with reporting and assessing courses in terms of quality design and instruction.

Public relations information supported the ongoing need for WVROCKS. The need was demonstrated throughout the research in terms of growth and how WVROCKS can benefit the realm of higher education in West Virginia. Recent initiatives, such as WVClimb, were mentioned by stakeholders. The goal of WVClimb, also identified in the literature review (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2018), is to have 60% of West Virginia's workforce attain a postsecondary credential by the year 2030. In the literature review, the SREB (2019) *Fact Book on Higher Education* report noted West Virginia's bachelor attainment rate was behind the national average. The WVROCKS program could serve as a tool to help achieve the goals of WVClimb and improve West Virginia's educational attainment ranking. Other literature (Carnevale et al., 2010; 2013) provided further need for a program such as WVROCKS with national predictions that 60% of the workforce needed for future jobs would require higher education attainment. The flexibility and ease of access incorporated into WVROCKS could make achieving educational goals set by governmental agencies more attainable. Furthermore, there were a number of forces that drove college completion rates. Adults with some education, but no degree were the targeted population for initiatives such as *DegreeNow* (Beasley et al.,

2014; West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, 2011) and WVROCKS (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2016c; Hughes, 2016; Leasure, 2016; State Journal, 2014; West Virginia Network, 2017). Educational challenges showed U.S. degree completion rates falling behind other countries (Cook & Hartle, 2011; Duncan, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). As noted during the literature review (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019), the United States ranked among the countries that have less than 10% of adults without an upper secondary education, but they were ranked 10th in terms of tertiary degrees. Job prediction studies predict our nation could fall short in producing a workforce with the educational requirements needed for future jobs (Carnevale et al., 2010; 2013). Workforce predictions indicate programs like WVROCKS are needed to help support our economic status. Noted in the literature review (Hohmann, 2016) was 20% of West Virginians had some college, but no degree. The RBA program helps non-traditional students gain a degree (Glenville State College, 2011; Marshall University, 2013; Shepherd University, n.d.). Stakeholders referred to WVROCKS as a path to earn an RBA or BOG AAS degree, and predicted the future for WVROCKS would involve growing the program. It was noted in the literature review (WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2017; WVCTCS & WVHEPC, 2018) WVROCKS was having record enrollments with retention (93%) and passing (84%) above national averages. Furthermore, the National Center for Higher Education Management System (NCHEMS) (2018) report *Sustaining Public Higher Education Services in Every Region of West Virginia: The Future of the Regional Comprehensive Colleges and Universities* named

WVROCKS as a vehicle to help sustain access to higher education and online courses for West Virginians, further supporting the need for the WVROCKS program.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Educational needs related to higher education attainment goals and preparation of a qualified workforce supported the development of initiatives such as WVROCKS. The following section relates to the implications inferred from this research related to the WVROCKS initiative. Implications are organized around the four informational areas, a) program, b) courses, c) user-instructional, and d) public relations, as they connect to key areas identified during the research such as opportunities for the WVROCKS initiative related to resources, training, development, and promotion. Areas related to resources include funding for training and workshops for faculty and students, reviewing human resource needs related to WVROCKS, and funding for grants to develop specific courses needed to support WVROCKS. Training and workshops related to further application of online pedagogical concepts and best practices to advance understanding of online education. Development areas related to opportunities identified that could benefit WVROCKS by creating online courses needed for areas of emphasis and improving the processes of the program. Promoting WVROCKS as a resource in the state to achieve educational goals could aid in sustaining higher education in the state of West Virginia.

Program Information

Resources should be reviewed and allocated to support the expanding mission of the program, provide training for higher education institutions to support and promote WVROCKS, and provide for qualified personnel to support the mission and goals of WVROCKS. Analysis of the research data revealed the WVROCKS program was growing and expanding to promote access to higher education for learners. The flexibility and benefits of the program serve to meet

educational needs in West Virginia. However, the pace of program growth raises concerns about capacity, personnel, and budgetary issues related to the ongoing growth and sustainability of the program. Research indicated the mission for WVROCKS was expanding. Reviewing and further developing the mission and goals of WVROCKS to better guide the new growth and direction of the program could aid in sustainability and help redefine the purpose of WVROCKS in higher education. Redefining the mission of the WVROCKS program could also provide an opportunity to revisit the goals of the program and make sure they support the mission of the program. It was observed during this research while many stakeholders commented on the benefits of WVROCKS and the application of QM for faculty training and course design, there were still concerns raised about the quality of online education. Training and workshops focused on pedagogy and best practices related to online learning and course development could serve to support faculty readiness to teach online courses. Expanding the mission of WVROCKS could also better serve student readiness needs through training programs to help adult learners become more comfortable taking online courses. Budgeting and allocating resources, such as additional personnel, would aid in the expansion and promotion of WVROCKS. Resources spent towards training and developing faculty and student online skills could strengthen the online education environment in West Virginia and promote WVROCKS by expanding opportunities for the program.

Course Information

Resources regarding courses include developing more online courses to support areas of emphasis, or certificates, and training to promote WVROCKS and online education. The availability of online areas of emphasis or certificates that students can incorporate into their RBA or BOG AAS degree supports the goal of building a more qualified workforce and

improves students' career options. Both the RBA and the BOG AAS degrees offer students the ability to add an area of emphasis to their degree. While the increase of courses from the original five to over 80 was impressive and many commented on the array of courses available, others commented on the need to focus more on the purposeful development of WVROCKS courses to support areas of emphasis. Developing courses with the purpose of supporting areas of emphasis or certificate completion could become an added benefit to learners and provide them with more access to courses. The additional courses would allow students to customize their learning experiences in a more meaningful manner. Providing resources such as grant money to fund the development of specific courses in the needed areas would enhance the WVROCKS program.

Other relevant course information came from stakeholder comments about the quality of online courses. While many noted the worth of WVROCKS, there were some that noted issues with the efficacy of online courses and online learning. The differences in how stakeholders viewed the value of online courses was also reflected in variance between how interview participants perceived the purpose of WVROCKS and the goals of WVROCKS. The varying viewpoints related to the delivery of online courses could stem from a number of causes, including the need for a more standardized training process or enhanced focus on best practices for online course development based on QM standards along with best practices during the delivery of online courses. In consideration of the recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, more training to promote an understanding of what represents best practices in terms of online education and course development could benefit those teaching in higher education and improve student retention.

User – Instructional Information

Implications related to improving user experiences focus on collaboration and processes to ensure courses meet academic standards, improve evaluations, enhance web presence, streamline student access, and enrich advising. Stakeholders noted the communication process for faculty developing WVROCKS courses and the institutions could be expanded to help provide guidance and assurance that courses being developed meet the curriculum standards and goals for departments across institutions. This form of collaboration could further strengthen the course content and the instructional design by applying best practices to meet curriculum standards. Collaborative best practices could also support the goal of WVROCKS to deliver “high-quality instruction” (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c) and further improve how WVROCKS is perceived by those in the realm of higher education.

Another process requiring more collaborative communication was the course evaluation process. Improving this process might be another way to support the WVROCKS goal of “high-quality instruction” (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019b; iLearn WVROCKS, 2019c). Many institutions use course evaluations to measure instruction and quality. Concerns related to course evaluations for WVROCKS were about the process being confusing since evaluations conducted by the institutions might list one of their faculty rather than the WVROCKS instructor as the person teaching the course. This discrepancy was due to the fact that a faculty of record had to be listed at the institutions, but that did not mean this person taught the course. It was suggested WVROCKS include an assessment survey or course evaluation that could collect data on WVROCKS courses to be analyzed and shared collectively. This level of collaboration during online course evaluation could improve understanding about the course quality, or help to

identify areas for improvement, including areas such as faculty readiness to teach in an online environment, or the student's readiness to take online courses.

The online information available about WVROCKS varied among participating institution websites. Some only provided a link to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard login portal or the "Welcome to the WVROCKS Portal" (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019a) welcome letter, while others only listed courses available through WVROCKS at their institutions. Developing a process for higher education institutions to communicate information about WVROCKS on their websites could help promote WVROCKS. Information could include links to the WVROCKS website, which would make access to WVROCKS easier for students and faculty interested in the WVROCKS program. Information on WVROCKS varied between the four-year and two-year institutions with some four-year institutions providing more information related to the program. This variance could be due to the fact the four-year institutions have been participating in the WVROCKS programs since it was piloted in 2012 to support the RBA, while the two-year institutions just piloted WVROCKS in 2016 for the BOG AAS program. Developing a process to provide consistent information and improve access to information related to WVROCKS could benefit users and promote the program. Additionally, access to information about WVROCKS, such as frequently asked questions about the program or links to webpages with WVROCKS information, could help answer questions on how the WVROCKS program works and what students might expect if they take a WVROCKS course. During the interviews concerns with student access to WVROCKS courses via the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal were noted by participants. While the WVROCKS portal in Blackboard might be similar to what students regularly use, some students still struggled with the differences between the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard access point and the online learning access point, or Learning Management System

(LMS), used at their home institution. This difficulty caused some institutions to add information into their LMS with links redirecting students to the iLearn WVROCKS Blackboard portal.

While the “Welcome to the WVROCKS Portal” (iLearn WVROCKS, 2019a) welcome letter provided students with all the access information needed to reach the iLearn WVROCKS portal in Blackboard, developing a process linking students with WVROCKS from their home institutions LMS could be beneficial and aid in improving student access.

Advising students on the program and helping them understand the expectations required to be successful in online education is another method of supporting the goals of the program and helping students be successful. Advising sessions with students could incorporate discussion of technical and academic readiness skills required by students to be successful in an accelerated, online environment. A student’s comfort level taking online classes and the technological skills required for them to be able to navigate an online environment, communicate effectively online, and utilize these skills to manage online tools and technology could affect their ability to fully participate and perform successfully. A pre-assessment to help students identify areas of proficiency needed to promote their success in the program could benefit learners.

Public Relations

Public relations areas of opportunity center on the need to promote WVROCKS as a resource that benefits higher education institutions and supports students, along with serving West Virginia. WVROCKS benefits higher education institutions financially through shared tuition fees and online courses, supports students with access to courses needed for their degrees, and serves West Virginia’s goal for an educated workforce. Statistical information showed WVROCKS was growing in terms of the number of courses offered, the number of students taking WVROCKS courses, and the number of participating institutions. Other data indicated

tuition collected for WVROCKS courses is shared with participating institutions. WVROCKS course fees are also low and in fall 2019 underwent the first increase since the program pilot in fall 2012. The continued growth of the program represents a market and need for WVROCKS in the realm of higher education. Ongoing growth could support rural institutions that might not have a fully developed online program and/or an array of online courses to meet the needs of students, who for various reasons, cannot attend traditional paths to complete a degree. WVROCKS supports learners completing a degree online. The flexibility designed into WVROCKS serves many needs, from the adult learner with a busy lifestyle, to the rural student who does not have ready access to a higher education without undergoing undue hardships, such as lost wages or travel expenses. Furthermore, educational goals related to higher education attainment and the preparation of a qualified workforce also underscore the need for WVROCKS. The WVClimb initiative was mentioned during interviews with the goal to have 60% of West Virginia's workforce attain a postsecondary credential by 2030. Attainment rates support the need to increase degree completion among learners and support the projected needs for a more educated workforce.

Additionally, per Governor Jim Justice's request to the WVHEPC, a report by the NCHEMS (2018), *Sustaining Public Higher Education Services in Every Region of West Virginia: The Future of the Regional Comprehensive Colleges and University*, indicated at-risk institutions should build more on collaboration and shared resources in an effort to sustain operations of the institutions. In the report, it was recommended to establish an efficient platform to share online courses, with WVROCKS identified as such a platform. The report further noted WVROCKS and platforms like it could be helpful based on the fact that West Virginia is not at an advanced stage in terms of developing online courses. The NCHEMS report commented at-

risk West Virginia institutions may not have enough online courses developed, or a fully developed online program, to support students' access to higher education. Part of the mission of WVROCKS is promoting online education by improving access for more learners to earn a degree. Providing more access to education benefits both students and the economic health of West Virginia. Students with access to higher education have a better chance of completing a degree, which benefits the state of West Virginia by providing a more educated workforce to sustain our state's economy and meet workforce demands for more technical and skilled jobs. Expansion of WVROCKS into more higher education institutions across the state could be an advantage to institutions, students, and West Virginia. The literature and research data support the need for a collaborative model such as WVROCKS to sustain West Virginia's higher education institutions and meet today's educational needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following areas are topics for consideration of future studies related to WVROCKS. Further research in these areas could help develop the body of knowledge associated with WVROCKS and the future development of the program, along with other programs that might be interconnected or similar in nature to WVROCKS.

1. Little research has been conducted on WVROCKS. While the snowball sampling process provided intrinsic knowledge about WVROCKS as it was designed, it did not allow for broader perceptions to be gathered on the program, nor did it allow for data collection to indicate a lack of knowledge about WVROCKS. The body of knowledge related to WVROCKS could be expanded by conducting surveys with a larger sample of all stakeholder groups to help further identify barriers related to the program and assist with

the growth and utilization of WVROCKS. Researching possible barriers to WVROCKS and finding solutions could help better serve educational needs in West Virginia.

2. The use of snowball sampling also posed limitations with interview participants. Students who participated in the program to complete their degrees were an important stakeholder group that did not participate in any interviews. Had their information been provided and added to the data, their thoughts on WVROCKS would have presented a unique perspective in the research as the end users of the program. WVROCKS is still evolving, but learning more about how WVROCKS assists learners would benefit those in higher education to better develop WVROCKS to serve targeted areas.
3. Participants in this study expressed a desire to know why more West Virginia higher education institutions, eligible to participate in WVROCKS, did not do so. Further studies focused on institutions across the state, not participating in WVROCKS, could be conducted to gain a broader understanding of why these higher education institutions chose not to participate and whether it relates to what they know, or do not know, about the program.
4. There could be additional research conducted with specific stakeholder groups across all participating higher education institutions to gain a more in depth look at how each perceives the program and the benefits and challenges derived from it. Developing and conducting a survey with all participating administrators and staff could help gain quantitative data related to WVROCKS that could serve the needs of higher education by gaining a quantifiable perspective on the program. A survey designed for all advisors and faculty who have worked with WVROCKS could provide quantifiable data about the program to help make improvements for this user group of WVROCKS.

5. Conduct a longitudinal study to research and compare statistics, such as retention and number of courses passed in WVROCKS courses to other West Virginia institutions, along with regional and national rates, to see what variables can be identified in terms of promoting the program and improving degree completion rates overall in higher education. Comparing topics such as those identified in this research on the promotion and growth of WVROCKS, the use of Quality Matters for training and standards of the program, along with the development of specific areas of courses for the WVROCKS program might benefit those in higher education to identify possible areas to grow the program in the future.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205

IRB2 #00003206

March 15, 2019

Lisa Heaton, PhD
College of Education and Professional Development

RE: IRBNet ID# 1292295-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Heaton:

Protocol Title: [1292295-1] A case study on the perceptions of the WVROCKS program in participating West Virginia higher education institutions

Site Location: MUGC

Submission Type: New Project APPROVED

Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.104(d)(2), the above study was granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee. No further submission (or closure) is required for an Exempt study unless there is an amendment to the study. All amendments must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Kandas Queen.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director, Office of Research Integrity

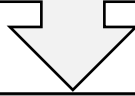
APPENDIX B: WEBSITE ANALYSIS GUIDE

Part I:

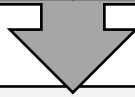
Name of institution:

Dates:

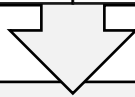
HOMEPAGE (Provides Link:)			
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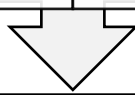
Related to WVROCKS		Related to RBA or BOG AAS	
Yes	No	Yes	No



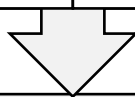
Review of Programs Offered			
Yes	No	Yes	No



Review of Student Resources			
Yes	No	Yes	No



Degree Completion Strategies			
Yes	No	Yes	No



Other Relevant Information			
Yes	No	Yes	No

Part II: Web Analysis Guide – Description of Collected Data

Name of institution:

URL:	
What is the path to WVROCKS:	
Description of the WVROCKS program:	
What is the path to RBA or BOG AAS:	
Description of RBA or BOG AAS program:	
Description of admission requirements for RBA or BOG AAS program:	
Description of resources available to students:	
Description of degree completion strategies:	
Other relevant information:	

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part I: Interview Questions

Section A

(These questions are for the creators and collaborators identified as the person of contact in the literature review or website analysis and can provide additional contacts through the application of snowball sampling.)

1. What is the purpose of WVROCKS? **RQ3**
 - a. Is the focus on degree completion rates or trying to help adult learners earn a degree?
 - b. Can you tell me any examples?
2. Can you tell me about what interested you in WVROCKS? How did you come to be involved in the collaborative creation of this program? **RQ2**
3. Could you describe for me your level of experience with WVROCKS? **Demographics**
 - a. Could you tell me if you were involved in reviewing other programs or models from other states to help formulate WVROCKS? **RQ2**
 - b. Can you tell me about any training you have participated in regarding WVROCKS? **RQ2**
4. What can you tell me about the steps involved in implementing WVROCKS, how courses are developed and delivered, and how credits are awarded for a course? **RQ2**
5. During your participation with WVROCKS, what kind of changes have you witnessed? **RQ2**
6. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), how would you relate it in terms of benefits and value? **RQ3**
 - a. What are the benefits or value of completing the RBA or BOG AAS degree?
7. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), what do you perceive as barriers or drawbacks of the program, and would you share any examples? **RQ3**
8. What do you think about the future direction of this program? Would you explain why? **RQ3**
9. What additional information regarding WVROCKS do you feel is important? **RQ2 & RQ3**
10. Are there other people you feel I should talk to whom you could provide me with their contact information?

Section B

(These questions are for the administrators and staff identified as the person of contact in the literature review or the website analysis and can provide additional contacts through the application of snowball sampling.)

1. What is the purpose of WVROCKS? **RQ3**

- a. Is the focus on degree completion rates or trying to help adult learners earn a degree?
 - b. Can you tell me any examples?
2. Can you tell me what interested you in WVROCKS? How did you come to be involved in this program? **RQ2**
3. Could you describe for me your level of experience with WVROCKS? **Demographics**
 - a. Can you tell me about any training you have participated in regarding WVROCKS? **RQ2**
4. What can you tell me about the steps involved in implementing WVROCKS, how courses are developed and delivered, and how credits are awarded for a course? **RQ2**
5. During your participation with WVROCKS, what kind of changes have you witnessed? **RQ2**
6. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), how would you relate it in terms of benefits and value? **RQ3**
 - a. What are the benefits or value of completing the RBA or BOG AAS degree?
7. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), what do you perceive as barriers or drawbacks of the program, and would you share any examples? **RQ3**
8. What do you think about the future direction of this program? Would you explain why? **RQ3**
9. What additional information regarding WVROCKS do you feel is important? **RQ2 & RQ3**
10. Are there other people you feel I should talk to whom you could provide me with their contact information?

Section C:

Questions for Advisors (or Faculty teaching WVROCKS – Snowball sampling)

(These questions are for advisors or faculty teaching WVROCKS as identified through the application of snowball sampling.)

1. What is the purpose of WVROCKS? **RQ3**
 - a. Is the focus on degree completion rates or trying to help adult learners earn a degree?
 - b. Can you tell me any examples?
2. Can you tell me what interested you in WVROCKS? How did you come to be involved in this program? **RQ2**
3. Could you describe for me your level of experience with WVROCKS? **Demographics**
 - a. Can you tell me about any training you have participated in regarding WVROCKS? **RQ2**
4. What can you tell me about the steps involved in implementing WVROCKS, how courses are developed and delivered, and how credits are awarded for a course? **RQ2**

5. During your participation with WVROCKS, what kind of changes have you witnessed? **RQ2**
6. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), how would you relate it in terms of benefits and value? **RQ3**
 - a. What are the benefits or value of completing the RBA or BOG AAS degree?
7. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), what do you perceive as barriers or drawbacks of the program, and would you share any examples? **RQ3**
8. What do you think about the future direction of this program? Would you explain why? **RQ3**
9. What additional information regarding WVROCKS do you feel is important? **RQ2 & RQ3**
10. Are there other people you feel I should talk to whom you could provide me with their contact information?

Section D:

(These questions are for students of WVROCKS as identified through the application of snowball sampling.)

1. What is the purpose of WVROCKS? **RQ3**
 - a. Is the focus on degree completion rates or trying to help adult learners earn a degree?
 - b. Can you tell me any examples?
2. Could you tell me a story about your experience with WVROCKS? **RQ2**
3. Could you describe for me your level of experience with WVROCKS? **Demographics**
4. What can you tell me about the steps involved in completing a course through WVROCKS?
 - a. How courses are delivered, and how credits are awarded for a course? **RQ2**
5. During your participation with WVROCKS, what kind of changes have you witnessed? **RQ2**
6. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), how would you relate it in terms of benefits and value? **RQ3**
 - a. What are the benefits or value of completing your degree?
7. If you were to describe the WVROCKS program to another (friend or family), what do you perceive as barriers or drawbacks of the program, and would you share any examples? **RQ3**
8. What do you think about the future direction of this program? Would you explain why? **RQ3**
9. What would you say to someone wanting to take a course through WVROCKS? **RQ2 & RQ3**
10. What additional information regarding WVROCKS do you feel is important?

Part II: Interview Guide – Grouping of Collected Data

Research Qts.- Sections / #	Projected Data Groupings:	Data Evidence:
RQ3 – ABC(D)/ 1	Purpose of WVROCKS: Feelings on the focus of WVROCKS as an initiative as a degree completion tool, or to assist adult learners in earning a degree.	
RQ2 - ABC / 2	Involvement: Describe how involved or interested in WVROCKS. Examples: Developer of WVROCKS, assigned to project, part of regular work, or worked to be part of program. Training or trainer for WVROCKS	
RQ2 - A / 3	Level of experience: Researched/reviewed models as part of the team that created WVROCKS. Length of time involved in the program.	
RQ2 - BC(D) / 3	Level of experience: Training received regarding the WVROCKS program. (Trainer for program) Length or time involved in program.	
RQ2 – ABC(D) / 4	Steps involved: Knowledge of how WVROCKS operates, history of program (within institution).	
RQ2 & RQ3 - ABC(D) / 5	Changes: How has WVROCKS evolved? What has changed since/because of WVROCKS?	
RQ3 – ABC(D) / 6 & 7	Benefits / Values and Barriers / Drawbacks. How might it be improved?	
RQ3 – ABC(D) / 8	Possible future for the program?	
RQ2&3 – ABC(D) / 9 (9 & 10)	Additional information that might be important regarding WVROCKS?	

APPENDIX D: DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following descriptions will help provide additional definitions to terms as they are applicable to this study:

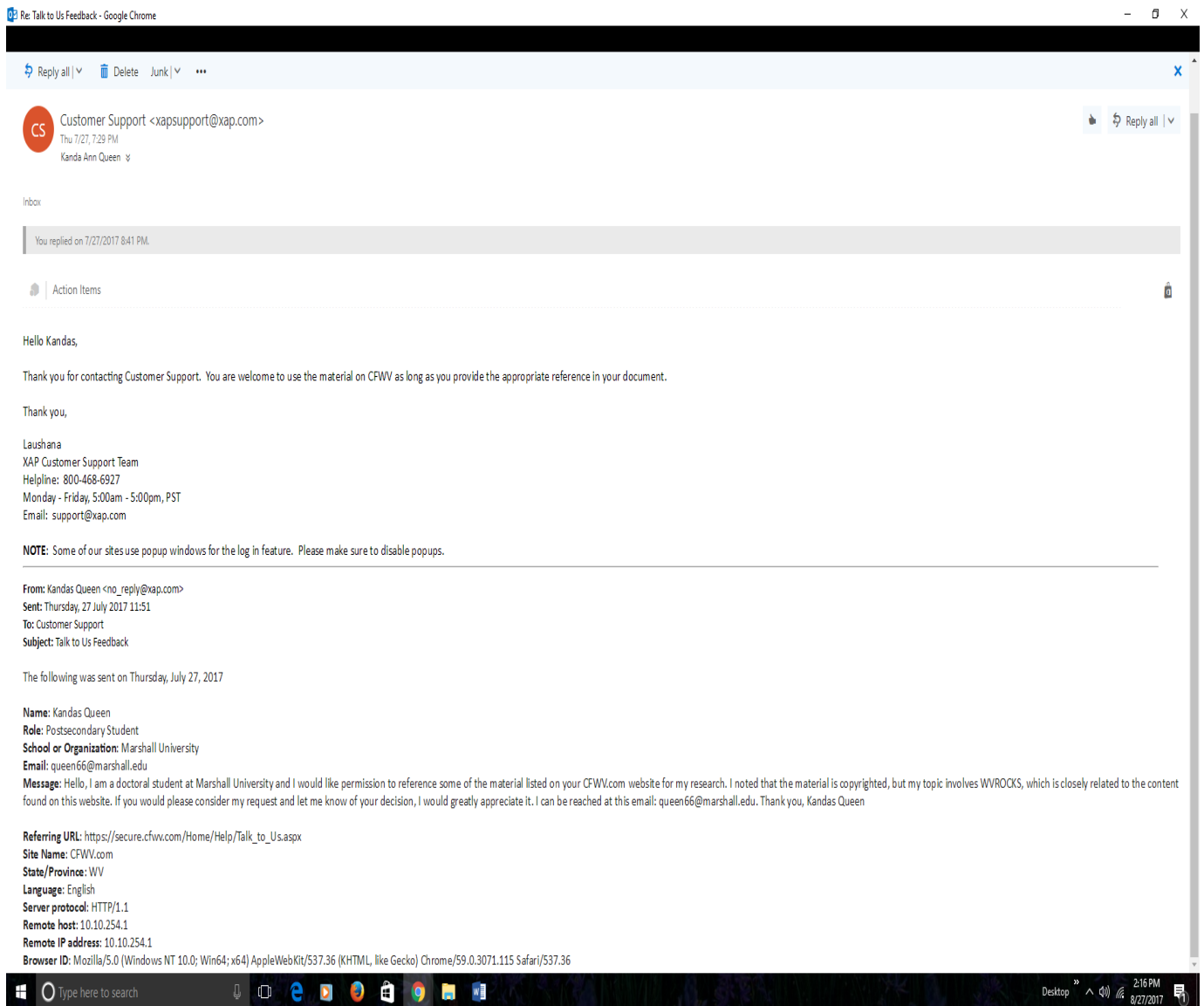
5. Adult learners mostly focuses on adults between the ages of 25 to 65 years of age with some college education, but no degree (Beasley, Gardner, & Johnson, 2014).
6. Degree completion relates mostly to degrees earned either at the associate or bachelor level.
7. Initiatives focus primarily on programs initiated to help learners achieve a degree or certificate representing achievement of skills or improvement techniques at the higher education level.
8. Programs is a term that is used in conjunction with initiatives and may be used interchangeably throughout this document; in some cases it will be depending how it is referenced by a source.
9. Educational challenge refers to the challenge aimed toward higher educational institutions to improve the rate on completion of degrees.
10. Workforce is a term used to represent working age adults in the United States.
11. Degree completion rates refer to the number (or percent) of students graduating with a degree from an institution.
12. Assistance for adult learners refers to the need to offer programs and initiatives to assist adult learners in overcoming possible obstacles in completing their degree.
13. Level of experience refers to the amount of time a participant has invested in WVROCKS.
 - a. In Section A of Appendix C, level of experience relates to the role of participants in WVROCKS, along with demographic information related to their knowledge

of the WVROCKS program. It may also provide insight into their perceptions of the program as it relates to its usefulness, benefits, opportunities, and possible future.

- b. In Sections B, C, and D of Appendix C, level of experience relates to demographical information that pertains to participants' knowledge of WVROCKS and how it works. This experience could be applied to their ability to rate the benefits or value, possible barriers, opportunities, and possible future uses for WVROCKS.
14. Models refer to other programs or initiatives reviewed or studied that might have assisted in the creation of WVROCKS and provide some historical concepts of how WVROCKS might have been implemented around the state of West Virginia.
15. Blackboard platforms and compressed eight week courses refer to key components of how the program is delivered and provide demographic information that could apply towards gaining a better understanding of a participant's perception of these aspects of WVROCKS.
16. Quality Matter concepts refer to some of the rigorous peer review process courses participating in WVROCKS undergo to provide assurances as to the quality of the course offered through WVROCKS.
17. Website links refer to adult completion strategies that can be found within the institution's website or connect to another website where information related to WVROCKS could be found.
- a. Additional information found on websites could refer to the process of implementation and the development of WVROCKS as it was implemented.

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION REQUEST

Information listed on the College Foundation West Virginia (CFWV) website and was copyrighted by XAP who powered the website on their behalf. Thursday, July 27, 2017 a request was sent to request permission to use content from the website within my dissertation. A representative granted permission from XAP to reference material located on the website. Below is a screenshot of that communication.



APPENDIX F: LISTING OF POPULATION

Part I

Participants Considered for Website Analysis

The following is a list of West Virginia Higher Education Institutions that participated in WVROCKS as listed on the CFWV website grouped by the degree they offer: RBA or BOG AAS (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2017).

RBA Colleges and Universities:

1. Bluefield State College
2. Concord University
3. Fairmont State University
4. Glenville State University [sic] (College)
5. Marshall University
6. Shepherd University (Martinsburg Campus)

BOG AAS Community and Technical Colleges:

1. BridgeValley Community and Technical College
2. Mountwest Community and Technical College
3. Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College

This is a list of additional West Virginia Higher Education Institutions and related agencies that might be reviewed as part of the website analysis include:

1. West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC)
2. West Virginia Network (WVNET)
3. College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) – RBA Today
4. West Virginia Department of Education
5. West Virginia Community & Technical College System
6. West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS)

This is an additional BOG AAS Community and Technical College that was discovered and added to the research as a WVROCKS participant:

1. Pierpont Community and Technical College

Part II

Participants Considered for Interviews

The following is a list of key personnel involved from West Virginia Higher Education Institutions involved in WVROCKS as discovered through the literature review and as listed on the CFWV website (College Foundation of West Virginia, 2017; Leasure, 2016). Initial interviews will be targeted to this population with snowball sampling applied to further grow the sample population to include advisors and faculty with knowledge of WVROCKS, and students that have participated in WVROCKS.

Creators and Collaborators:

(Note: Snowball sampling will be applied for others that help create, collaborate, or serve as key participants in the WVROCKS program.)

1. Honorable Dan O’Hanlon
2. Dr. Roxann Humbert
3. Dr. Mary Stewart

Administrators and Staff Identified as the Person of Contact:

(Note: These will be participants from purposefully selected higher education institutions following the website analysis and/or interviews with creators and collaborators of WVROCKS and applying the nonprobability sampling of the snowball technique.)

1. Administrators, RBA coordinators, or staff identified from institutions’ website, CFWV RBA participating institutions, or snowball sampling of creators and collaborators.
2. Administrators, BOG Coordinators, or staff identified on CFWV website, or from institutions’ website, or snowball sampling of creators and collaborators.

Advisors and faculty, along with available students, identified through the snowball sampling:

(Note: These will be participants from purposefully selected higher education institutions following the website analysis and/or interviews with creators and collaborators of WVROCKS, and administrators and staff, by applying the nonprobability sampling of the snowball technique.)

APPENDIX G: INSTRUMENT REVIEW PANEL

Dr. Shelly Ratliff: *Associate Professor of Education* (Glenville State College)

- Experience teaching in the online environment and education.

Dr. Marisha Lecea: *Assistant Professor of Political Science* (Glenville State College)

- Experience in teaching in the online environment and conducting interviews by phone. Trained in Quality Matters.

Ms. Leslie Ward: *Lecturer of Computer Science* (Glenville State College)

- Experience in teaching in the online environment and web design. Trained in Quality Matters.

Ms. Mollie Craven: *Educator/Teacher* Formerly coordinated Regents Bachelor of Arts (Glenville State College)

- Experience with online education and participated in training for WVROCKS.

APPENDIX H: EMAIL REQUEST SAMPLE

Subject line: Interview Request RE: WVROCKS

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms.,

Hello, my name is Kandas Queen. You are invited to take part in a research study to gain information about the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS). This is a program that works with various participating higher education institutions across the state of West Virginia to provide a flexible pathway for students in the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) complete their degrees. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the WVROCKS program by understanding how the program was implemented, and to gain insight into the perceptions of how the program is perceived among those in the realm of higher education. Insights from this study could help add to the body of knowledge on WVROCKS, help inform policy makers of the program, and could assist in helping more students graduate with a degree.

Participating in this research will take about an hour of your time for an interview, and could involve your participation in follow up activities such as reviewing your interview transcript and providing feedback for member check purposes within a time frame of approximately six months. If you choose to participate in this research, you will engage in a recorded interview, the recording is to assist with accuracy of transcription. You will be provided a copy of the transcript to edit and remove any information you feel might be sensitive and do not want to be part of the research. Any recorded material will be deleted after it is transcribed.

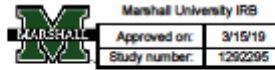
During the interview you may be asked to provide names and contact information for other possible interviewees who might have information regarding WVROCKS. You will also be asked to participate in a member check that will allow you to provide feedback on the accuracy of a summation report based on information gathered during your interview.

If you have any additional question, you can contact me (Kandas Queen) at (304) 269-3657, or email me at (queen66@marshall.edu). You may also contact Dr. Lisa Heaton at (304) 746-2026 in the event of a research related injury. If you feel that you were not treated well during this study, or have questions concerning your rights as a research participant call the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity (ORI) at (304) 696-4303. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Kandas Queen

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

Page 1 of 4



Marshall University Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

A Case Study of the Perceptions of the WVROCKS Program in Participating West Virginia Education Institutions

Lisa Heaton, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
Kandas Queen, Ed.S., Co-Investigator

You are being invited to take part in a research study to gain information about the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS). This is a program that works with various participating higher education institutions across the state of West Virginia to provide a flexible pathway for students in the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) to complete their degrees.

Your participation is voluntary and you are encouraged to ask the interviewer any questions you have regarding your involvement in this research study. Your involvement will include you participating in a recorded interview, review of the interview transcript to edit information you do not wish to be part of the research, and a request to participate in a member check to review and provide feedback on a summation of the information gathered regarding the knowledge and perceptions of WVROCKS from interview participants.

By doing this study, we hope to learn more about the WVROCKS program and its role in the realm of higher education. Your participation in this research will last about an hour for the interview, and may last up to six months with the follow up activities such as review and editing of the transcript and member check request.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how the program was implemented, and to gain insight into the perceptions of how the program is perceived among those in the realm of higher education. Insights from this study could help add to the body of knowledge on WVROCKS, help inform policy makers of the program, and assist in helping more students graduate with a degree.

Risks of participating could involve you being identified based on the information you provide. For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigator, Dr. Lisa Heaton at (304) 746-2026, or the co-investigator, Kandas Queen at (304) 269-3657. You should also call the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at (304) 696-4303.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

Rev 1/30/19

Subject's Initials _____

SIGNATURES

You agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older. You have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have had those questions answered. By signing this consent form you are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled.

Subject Name (Printed)

Subject Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)

Person Obtaining Consent Signature

Date

DETAILED CONSENT:

Are There Reasons Why You Would Not Qualify for This Study?

This study is to gain knowledge of the WVROCKS program. Participants with knowledge, training, or experience with WVROCKS could be included as interview participants. However, a participant that has no knowledge or experience with WVROCKS, or is part of an institution that does not participate in the WVROCKS program could be excluded from participating in the study.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

A total of 16 subjects are the most that would be able to enter the study.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

As a participant in this qualitative study, you will engage in a face-to-face interview lasting no longer than an hour. Interviews will be recorded to assist in transcription, and you will be provided a copy of the transcript to edit and remove any information that you might feel is sensitive and do not want to be part of the research. Any recorded material will be erased or destroyed after it is transcribed.

Part of the snowball sampling process may involve you being asked during the interview to provide names and contact information for other possible interviewees that might have information about WVROCKS. You will also be asked to participate in a member check. This involves you providing feedback on the accuracy of a summation report based on information gathered on the knowledge and perceptions of WVROCKS during the interviews.

Rev 1/30/19

Subject's Initials _____

How Long Will You Be In The Study?

You will be in the study for about 60 minutes for the interview, with follow up activities (examples: review and edit transcript, and member check request) lasting up to six months. You can decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the study investigator or study staff as soon as possible.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

What Are The Risks Of The Study?

There may be these risks:

- If you do not wish to be identified, there is a chance you could be identified based on the information you provide.

There may also be other side effects that we cannot predict. You should tell the researchers if any of these risks bother or worry you.

Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, there may or may not be direct benefit to you. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be:

- Adding to the body of knowledge of West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS).
- Assisting policy makers, administrators, and faculty in higher education to help students graduate with their degree.
- Being recognized for your contributions.

What About Confidentiality?

If you prefer to remain anonymous, we will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name, unless you select to have your name used in the study. You have the right to be acknowledged for your contributions, or you can choose to remain anonymous. You do not have to give consent to be a participant in the study.

I give my consent to use my name and be identified in the final report.

Participant's initials

I do not give my consent to use my name and be identified in the final report.

Participant's initials

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. All the study costs, including any study tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the study, will be paid for by the study.

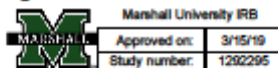
Will You Be Paid For Participating?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

A Case Study of the Perceptions of the WVROCKS Program in Participating West Virginia Education Institutions



Consent to Participate in Research – Verbal Presentation

Hello, my name is Kandas Queen. You are invited to take part in a research study to gain information about the West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS). This is a program that works with various participating higher education institutions across the state of West Virginia to provide a flexible pathway for students in the Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) or the Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science (BOG AAS) complete their degree. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the WVROCKS program by understanding how the program was implemented, and to gain insight into the perceptions of how the program is perceived among those in the realm of higher education. Insights from this study could help add to the body of knowledge on WVROCKS, help inform policy makers of the program, and could assist in helping more students graduate with a degree.

Participating in this research will take about an hour of your time for an interview, and could involve your participation in follow up activities such as reviewing your interview transcript and providing feedback for member check purposes within a time frame of approximately six months. If you choose to participate in this research, you will engage in a recorded interview, the recording is to assist with accuracy of transcription. You will be provided a copy of the transcript to edit and remove any information you feel might be sensitive and do not want to be part of the research. Any recorded material will be deleted after it is transcribed.

During the interview you may be asked to provide names and contact information for other possible interviewees who might have information regarding WVROCKS. You will also be asked to participate in a member check that will allow you to provide feedback on the accuracy of a summation report based on information gathered during your interview.

Risks of participating in this study could involve you being identified based on the information you provide. There is no cost or payment to you. You may remain anonymous, or you can choose to be acknowledged for your contributions. Participation in this study is voluntary; you do not have to consent to be a participant.

If you have questions while taking part in this study, please stop me and ask, or you can contact me (Kandas Queen) at (304) 269-3657. You may also contact Dr. Lisa Heaton at (304) 746-2026 in the event of a research related injury. If you feel that you were not treated well during this study, or have questions concerning your rights as a research participant call the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity (ORI) at (304) 696-4303.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop. May I continue?

Consent to participate in this research: Yes / No

Date: _____

Do you wish to be identified in the final report?

Consent to be named: Yes / No

APPENDIX J: TABLE OF INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

Detailed table of interviewees by stakeholder groups with demographical information related to WVROCKS. Positions and job titles were relative to their positions at the time of the interview and may have changed during the writing of this paper. A notable change was the retirement of Dr. Humbert as Director of WVROCKS over the summer of 2019.

Section A (Creators and Collaborators)			
Name	Title/Position	Role with WVROCKS	Summary of WVROCKS Contributions
1. Dr. Roxann Humbert	Founding and Executive Director, WVROCKS (Retired 2019)	One of the creators of WVROCKS	Applied areas of expertise in online learning to help develop the WVROCKS initiative. Recruited Dr. Stewart.
2. Dr. Mary Stewart	Deputy Director, WVNET & WVROCKS Associate Director	One of the creators of WVROCKS	Applied areas of expertise in online learning to help develop the WVROCKS initiative.
3. Honorable Dan O'Hanlon	Retired Vice Chancellor for Technology, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, and Director of WVNet	One of the creators of WVROCKS	Worked with Dr. Brooks and Dr. Fox on the beginning ideas for the initiative. Recruited Dr. Humbert.
4. Dr. Jan Fox	Retired Vice President for Information Technology/Chief Information Officer, Marshall University	Creator and collaborator of early initiatives	Helped to coordinate and develop earlier initiatives that later contributed to WVROCKS course development.
Section B (Administrators and Staff)			
5. Mr. Andrew Gooding	RBA Program Director, Marshall University	Institutional contact for WVROCKS	Facilitates WVROCKS courses and advises students in the RBA program at Marshall.

6.	Ms. Nancy Parks	BOG Coordinator, Pierpont Community and Technical College	Institutional contact for WVROCKS	Facilitates WVROCKS courses during the pilot program and advises students in the BOG program at PC&TC.
7.	Ms. Pamela Stephens	Director, Center for Educational Support Programs & Coordinator, RBA Degree Program, Fairmont State University	Institutional contact for WVROCKS	Facilitates WVROCKS courses and advises students in the RBA program at Marshall.
8.	Dr. Mark Stotler	Director of Academic Programming, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission	Coordinates the RBA Program and initiatives	Collaborates with the WVROCKS initiative to support the RBA program.
9.	Dr. Corley Dennison	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission	Oversees initiatives such as WVROCKS as part of organizational area	Oversees and works with budgets for initiatives such as WVROCKS and WVClimb.
10.	Dr. Sonja Cantrell- Johnson	Registrar, Marshall University	Lists courses and registers MU students	List WVROCKS courses for MU institution and registers students, posts grades.

Section C (Faculty and Advisors)

11.	Dr. Monica Brooks	Associate Vice President for Libraries and Online Learning, Marshall University	WVROCKS Faculty	Early supporter. Created courses for WVROCKS and taught WVROCKS courses at Marshall University.
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- | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12. | Dr. Timothy Oxley | Interim Dean
School of
Business,
Fairmont State
College | WVROCKS
Faculty | Created courses for
WVROCKS and taught
WVROCKS courses at
Fairmont State
University. |
| 13. | Dr. Nancy McClure | | WVROCKS
Faculty | Created courses for
WVROCKS and taught
WVROCKS courses at
Fairmont State
University. |
| 14. | Dr. M. Angela
Schwer | | WVROCKS
Faculty | Created courses for
WVROCKS and taught
WVROCKS courses at
Fairmont State
University. |

Section D (Students) = No students responded to interview requests.

Unnamed Interview Participant

15. Unnamed

APPENDIX K: HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION AND AFFILIATED AGENCIES

Table detailing the relationship between selected higher education institutions and affiliated agencies used for website analysis and the WVROCKS program.

West Virginia Higher Education Institutions	Relationship to WVROCKS
Four Year	
1. Bluefield State College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for the RBA.
2. Concord University	Participated in the WVROCKS Program.
3. Fairmont State University	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for the RBA.
4. Glenville State College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program.
5. Marshall University	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for the RBA.
6. Shepherd University	Participated in the WVROCKS Program.
Two Year	
7. BridgeValley Community & Technical College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for the BOG AAS.
8. Mountwest Community & Technical College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for BOG AAS.
9. Pierpont Community & Technical College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program.
10. Southern West Virginia Community & Technical College	Participated in the WVROCKS Program and helped pilot the program for the BOG AAS.
Affiliated Agencies	
11. College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV)	References the WVROCKS program and provides a list of participating higher education institutions with contact information for adults seeking to complete either the RBA or BOG AAS degree.
12. West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC)	West Virginia governing body for higher education that promoted the development of the WVROCKS program.
13. West Virginia Network (WVNET)	Assisted with development and delivers the WVROCKS program across West Virginia higher education institutions.
14. West Virginia Remote Online Collaborative Knowledge System (WVROCKS)	WVROCKS website.

APPENDIX L: VITA



KANDAS QUEEN

◆ *399 Buckhannon Run Rd* ◆ *Buckhannon, WV 26201* ◆
◆ *Home: (304) 269-3657* ◆ *Cell: (304) 904-7192* ◆
◆ *kandas.queen@glenville.edu* ◆

ACADEMIC DEGREES

Ed.D. - Doctorate in Education, Curriculum and Instruction, August 2020
Emphasis areas in Adult Education and Technology
Marshall University Huntington, WV

Ed.S. - Education Specialist Degree, May 2015
Marshall University Huntington, WV

M.B.A. - Master of Business Administration, May 2001
West Virginia Wesleyan College Buckhannon, WV

B.S.B.A. – Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, May 1996
Major in Management; Minor in Economics
Glenville State College Glenville, WV

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2020 – Present Glenville State College
 Director of the Regents Bachelor of Arts Degree
 Glenville, WV

2016 – Present Glenville State College
 Assistant Professor of Business
 Glenville, WV

- 2010 – 2016 Pierpont Community and Technical College
Adjunct Professor
Fairmont / Weston, WV
- 2007 – 2010 Fairmont State University
Adjunct Professor
Fairmont / Weston, WV

PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS EXPERIENCE

- 2016 – 2016 The Kroger Company
Associate Manager
(Human Resource Manager)
Elkins, WV
- 2014 – 2016 The Kroger Company
Associate Manager
(Operations Manager)
Clarksburg, WV
- 2007 – 2014 The Kroger Company
Store Manager
Weston, WV
- 2003 – 2007 The Kroger Company
Store Manager
Buckhannon, WV
- 1999 – 2003 The Kroger Company
Co-Manager
Elkins, WV
- 1997 – 1999 The Kroger Company
Co-Manager
Buckhannon, WV
- 1996 – 1997 Go-Mart
Assistant Manager
Glennville / Buckhannon, WV
- 1992 – 1996 Glennville State College
Office Assistant
Glennville, WV

COMMITTEES AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

(Education)

Glennville State College Online Course Support Committee (2019 – Present)
Glennville State College Chi Zeta Pi Advisor (2018 – Present)
Glennville State College HLC Criteria IV Committee (2018 – Present)
GSC Department of Business Representative for Study Abroad (2017 – Present)
Glennville State College Online Taskforce (2017 – 2019)
Fellows Faculty for Study Abroad Program (2017 – 2018)
WV FBLA Judge at State Leadership Conference/Competition (Charleston, WV – 2018)
Glennville State College PBL Advisor (2016 – Present)
Served as WV PBL Executive Member (2016 – 2018)
Glennville State College Assessment Committee (2016 – 2020)
Chaired the Marshall University Graduate College Seminar 2011
Co-Chaired the Marshall University Graduate College Seminar 2010
Committee Member on the Marshall University Graduate College Seminar 2009

(Business)

Member of Cultural Council (Marketing Area – The Kroger Company)
Co-Chaired Zone Cultural Council (Zone Level – The Kroger Company)
Leader of Shrink Committee (Store Level – The Kroger Company)
Leader of Safety Committee (Store Level – The Kroger Company)

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING/CERTIFICATES AND WORKSHOPS

(Education)

Managing Stress During Distance Learning (Webinar) – JED Foundation Spring 2020
Certificate of Completion Panopto Training – Glennville State College Fall 2018
Certificate of Completion Blackboard Training – Glennville State College Fall 2018
Training Certificate Peer Reviewer Course – Quality Matters Fall 2018
Improving Your Online Course (IYOC) Certificate – Quality Matters Spring 2018
Applying the QM Rubric (APPQMR) Certificate – Quality Matters Fall 2017

Glenville State College New Faculty Workshop – Fall 2016

Fairmont State University Adjunct and Faculty Training (WebCT)

(Business)

Role Clarity Training – Human Resources 2016 (The Kroger Company)

Kroger Culture Values Ethics – Michael Josephson (Josephson Institute of Ethics)

BIC – Building an Inclusive Culture Workshop (The Kroger Company)

AMA Seminar – Assertiveness Training for Women in Business (Washington, DC)

Green Leadership Training (The Kroger Company)

Shaffer Workshop – Communication Seminar (Sponsored by The Kroger Company)

Certified Food Safety Manager (National Registry of Food Safety Professionals)

Certified Trainer in PIT (Powered Industrial Truck – The Kroger Company)

Certified PIT Operator (Powered Industrial Truck – The Kroger Company)

Trained and Trainer in Anti-Money Laundering Practices (The Kroger Company)

Trained and Trainer in CMA – Cash Management Assessment (The Kroger Company)

Trained and Trainer on ABC and Tobacco regulations (The Kroger Company)

ELMS – (Electronic Labor Management System) Training (The Kroger Company)

Store Level Trainer on KTV (The Kroger Company)

CONFERENCES

FACDIS Conference (Morgantown, WV – 2019)

PBL Connection Conference (NYC, NY – 2018)*

WV PBL Leadership Conference (Flatwoods, WV – 2018)*

FACDIS Conference (Morgantown, WV – 2018)

WV PBL State Leadership Conference (Charleston, WV – 2018)*

WV FBLA/PBL Leadership Conference (Flatwoods, WV – 2017)*

FACDIS Conference (Morgantown, WV – 2017)

WV FBLA/PBL State Leadership Conference (Charleston, WV 2017)*

FACDIS Conference (Morgantown, WV – 2016)

West Virginia Higher Education Technology Conference (Morgantown, WV - 2015)

West Virginia Higher Education Technology Conference (Morgantown, WV - 2014)

**Conferences attended with students*

PRESENTATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Quality Matters Peer Reviewer (Subject Matter Expert) – Summer 2020
Best Practices for Keeping Student Learning and Administrators Happy – Presenter 2017
Co-Presented at the West Virginia Technology Conference 2013
Co-Presenter at Marshall University Graduate College Seminar 2012
Co-Presented at International Conference on College Teaching & Learning 2010

BUSINESS AWARDS

Awarded Certificate of Achievement as a Top Shrink Performer 2014 (The Kroger Co.)
Awarded the Rock Solid Operator Award Q3 2013 (The Kroger Company)
Awarded Certificate of Achievement as the Top Shrink Performer 2012 (The Kroger Co.)
Awarded Certificate of Achievement as a Top Shrink Performer 2010 (The Kroger Co.)
Awarded Certificate of Achievement as a Top Shrink Performer 2009 (The Kroger Co.)
Awarded Certificate of Achievement as a Top Shrink Performer 2008 (The Kroger Co.)
Awarded “Top Women in Grocery” Award 2008 by Progressive Grocer (Industry)
Awarded Certificate of Achievement as a Top Shrink Performer 2007 (The Kroger Co.)

MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Golden Key International Honor Society (2019 - Present)
Glennville State College Women’s Leadership Circle (2019 – Present)
Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) – Glennville State College Adviser (2016 – Present)
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society - Marshall University Chapter (2015 – Present)