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How Orientation Programs at West Virginia Community Colleges Affect Mid-level Administrators' Perceptions of Adjunct Faculty Quality

Gina M. Taylor
Gina.Taylor@mail.wvu.edu

HOW ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AT WEST VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES AFFECT MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADJUNCT FACULTY QUALITY

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Gina M. Taylor
Approved by
Barbara L. Nicholson, PhD, Committee Chairperson
Ronald B. Childress, EdD
William E. Chapman, EdD

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APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Gina Taylor**, affirm that the dissertation, *How Orientation Programs at West Virginia Community Colleges Affect Mid-Level Administrators' Perceptions of Adjunct Quality*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Leadership Studies** and the 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.

Bobbi Nicholson	Dr. Bobbi Nicholson	7/17/2020
Dr. Bobbi Nicholson Leadership Studies	Committee Chairperson Major	Date
Ron Childress	Dr. Ron Childress	07/17/2020
Dr. Ron Childress Leadership Studies	Committee Member Major	Date
William E. Chapman EdD	Dr. William Chapman	07/17/2020
Dr. Bill Chapman	Committee Member External	Date

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to explore the relationship between the presence of orientation programs for adjunct faculty at West Virginia community and technical colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality. Using data obtained through an Internet-based questionnaire administered to 91 mid-level administrators at West Virginia community and technical colleges, the study resulted in several notable findings, many of which reinforced similar findings uncovered in the review of the literature. Most researchers agree that the results of high-quality orientation programs can be a tremendous asset to adjunct faculty, leading to an adjunct group that knows what to expect, knows how to access information, and feels affiliated with their institution.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout all higher education institutions in the United States, the number of part-time faculty appointments is growing. According to Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow (2015), in 1970, 77.8 % of faculty were full-time (i.e., tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track), while only 22.2% were part-time (adjunct) faculty. By 2013, however, the proportion had changed to 51.2% of faculty being full-time and 48.8% being part-time, making adjunct faculty the fastest-growing population of faculty members from 1970 to 2013. The figures represent an increase of 625%, more than five times faster than the growth of full-time faculty (114%) for that same time period. In 2018, adjunct faculty represented 73% of instructional staff at community colleges (Flaherty, 2018). In 2012, one of the fastest growing job titles on the social media website for professionals, known as LinkedIn, was "adjunct professor" (*The Economist*, 2012).

There are presently 1,050 community colleges in the United States which awarded 852,504 associate degrees and 579,822 certificates in 2019 (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2020). Among these two-year colleges, tuition represents the highest funding source (27.1%). Second is state funding (33.3%), followed by local funding (20.3%). The remainder of funding comes from federal sources (11.4%) and other (7.9%). Community colleges represent a low-cost alternative to four-year colleges, costing on average $3,730 per year as compared with $10,440 at four-year public institutions (AACC, 2020).

From 1997-2007, the number of faculty employed in higher education increased by 63%, and about two-thirds of the increase is attributable to the hiring of contingent faculty members. (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2009). In 2015, full-time, tenure-track faculty comprised only 8.2% of the academic workforce, with an additional 21.4% being full-time

tenured faculty, and in 2016-2017, part-time faculty continued to comprise the majority of the academic workforce (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2017b).

Community colleges began in the early 1900s as extensions of the high school curriculum. In the 1930s, however, these colleges began offering occupational training programs for displaced workers during the Great Depression, a trend that continued through the 1960s, and in the 1970s community college enrollments doubled, due in part to people seeking draft deferment during the Vietnam War (Kasper, 2003). Throughout their history, community colleges have served as access or entry points to higher education for people who, for whatever reason, were unable to enroll in four-year institutions. Community colleges essentially have three missions: providing a gateway to a four-year institution, contributing to workforce development, and boosting economic development (Dougherty & James, 2006). Workforce development, as defined by Dougherty and James (2006) is "all the institutional programs, courses, and activities that prepare students for work. This major institutional function cuts across specific organizational units, and is present in credit and noncredit programs, career and technical areas, and contract training units" (p.53). In other words, it is the training or re-training of the current workforce to meet the needs of the individual. Economic development, on the other hand, is the ongoing preparation of people of all ages and academic backgrounds to provide a "pipeline of current workers" to prepare for both current and future needs of the community (Nickoli, 2013).

An increase of interest in workforce education at community colleges dates back to the 1980s when America experienced a considerable shift, devolving from a manufacturing economy to a service economy for many workers, and transitioning to an information technology economy for others. During this time, state leaders began to see a need for a trained workforce that would be ready to meet the needs of the changing economy (Friedel, 2008). Community colleges were

able to accomplish the addition of these timely new programs largely through contracts with government agencies and businesses (Dougherty & Bakia, 2000).

Adjunct faculty are typically paid by the course hour to teach specific classes, but are not usually included in other faculty responsibilities, such as faculty governance (serving on committees, etc.). They represent a large proportion of faculty members at community colleges and nearly none of them (1.5%) are on the tenure track (Cataldi et al., 2005). Most adjunct faculty find it necessary to hold other positions outside of higher education, and despite the fact that they seem committed to their institutions (teaching an average 6.3 years in the same position), they "express anger, and frustration about their second-class status and the lack of appreciation for their efforts. Instead of feeling connected to or integrated into campus life, they often feel alienated, powerless, and invisible" (Gappa, 2002).

By 2009, according to the American Association of University Professors (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006), 75.6% of faculty appointments in the United States were off the tenure track and 60.5% were adjunct appointments off the tenure track. This distribution was quite a change from 1975, when tenure-track faculty accounted for 45.1% of all faculty. This figure had dramatically decreased by 2009 to only 24.4%. While the precise figures offered by the various agencies differ, the trend is the same.

Background

For the most part, colleges and universities cite external economic circumstances as the rationale for the increase in adjunct faculty, and economics continue to play a major role. In the cycle of a national economic downturn, certain factors conspire to make providing higher education more difficult than in years when the economy is performing well. In the recent "Great Recession," state tax revenues declined and state governments made spending cuts in

programs that benefited families in 46 states and the District of Columbia "including health care (31 states), services to the elderly and disabled (29 states and the District of Columbia), K-12 education (34 states and the District of Columbia), higher education (43 states), and other areas" (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [CBPP], 2011). As a result, families had less money to spend, including money to pay for higher education. In addition, state funding of higher education also declined. At least 47 states reduced their investment in higher education from fiscal year (FY) 2009 to FY 2015. State spending on higher education was lower by an average of 20% nationwide in FY 2015, as compared with 2008. Overall, 48 states are spending less on higher education than they did in 2008 (CBPP, 2016).

In FY 2013, state tax revenues had increased an average of only 0.4% over pre-recession revenues. In FY 2014, only eight states continued to cut spending on higher education, and both West Virginia and North Carolina were among five states that experienced the deepest spending cuts (CBPP, 2014). As with any type of institution or business, when funding cuts occur, there are generally two choices – increase revenue or decrease spending – and most higher education institutions chose the latter, increasing their dependence on adjunct faculty because they are less expensive to employ than full-time faculty. Having large numbers of adjunct faculty also allows administrators a great deal of flexibility in hiring. According to McLaughlin (2005), "Adjunct faculty provide administrators flexibility in staffing, a way to 'staff up' for heavy fall enrollments and to 'slack off' for lighter spring loads" (p. 186).

Other factors, however, such as the demand by state legislators and business leaders to align the college curriculum with current economic development goals, have also contributed to the increasing numbers of adjunct faculty hired (Burnstad & Lyons, 2007). This demand has had a substantial impact on community and technical colleges.

The Nature of Contingent Work

Given the substantial increase in the number of adjunct faculty, their importance to the academic mission of the institution is obvious, and a common thread running through examinations of the best programs and practices at community and technical colleges is institutional support for this cadre of individuals (O'Meara, Neumann & Terosky, 2008, p.155). The consensus appears to be that if there is a problem with teaching quality in this group, it likely does not lie with the adjuncts themselves, who are most often capable teachers. It instead "lies in the nature of contingent work, its lack of support structures and the constraints on academic freedom for faculty in these positions" (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). Adjunct faculty often are not provided with the basic support structures necessary to be successful. Curtis and Jacobe (2006) found that important segments of institutional support – including a workspace, a university telephone, access to a copier, access to the campus computer network and even library privileges – were denied to the faculty who frequently taught the classes that full-time faculty preferred not to teach, such as early morning and evening classes. The supports most often cited in the literature as lacking, however, were orientation, professional development, and evaluation.

Orientation

Orientation for faculty in general can be viewed as a three-part process: the first is orienting oneself to the surroundings (e.g., campus, parking, classroom or lab locations, office or cubicle, etc.); the second involves orienting oneself to the job (e.g., the kinds of syllabi that are used, which texts are prescribed, assignment and evaluation expectations, etc.); and the third is institutional (e.g., the policies and practices to which faculty must adhere). Elements of the hiring process often contribute to problems in accomplishing the first two steps. Adjunct faculty are often hired to "fill in the gaps" in teaching and tend to be hired very close to or even after the

beginning of the semester. Because of this eleventh-hour hiring process, these faculty often end up having little or no familiarity with the campus and find themselves using syllabi to which they did not contribute, texts with which they are unacquainted, and assignments and evaluations they did not develop (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

Baldwin and Chronister (2001) described a short-term hiring process for adjunct faculty that excluded important faculty support practices such as orientation. Even in cases where faculty were hired to teach the same classes year after year, returning adjunct faculty were frequently kept in a pool of potential instructors and were sometimes notified only days before the beginning of classes. New adjunct faculty had an even more difficult time, however, because they lacked any prior knowledge of the institution, its policies, or where to find basic faculty needs such as a copier, the library, or classrooms.

Last-minute hiring and a subsequent absence of orientation can make it difficult for adjunct faculty members to establish a sense of affiliation with the institution as well, which often leads them to decline to participate in campus life in the manner that full-time faculty do. Because adjunct faculty are paid only to teach, they often perform other duties (such as advising students) on their own time or not at all. They also frequently teach in isolation without interaction with full-time faculty, unaware of "how the courses they teach fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole" (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006, p. 9). According to Green (2007), in order to better incorporate adjunct faculty into the campus community, administrators should meet with them regularly to reinforce the institutional mission and reinforce the importance of serving the students. In addition to understanding their role within the institution, orientation programs can help adjunct faculty feel a sense of camaraderie

or belonging. Hutti, Rhodes, Allison & Lauterbach (2007) found that orientation programs can make adjunct faculty feel "more a part of the academic community" (p. 176).

Another aspect of orientation lacking in many colleges and universities for adjunct faculty nationwide is a handbook designed specifically for adjunct faculty. An absence of written materials that demonstrate policies, procedures, and available support structures can lead to ambiguity and discomfort for any new faculty member, and that confusion is multiplied for adjuncts.

Professional Development

In addition to more timely hiring, orientation sessions and the existence of a handbook specifically for adjuncts, another way to support this group of faculty is to provide a strong professional development program – a program that includes not only information about services available at the institution, but information about teaching methods and new teaching technologies as well. Given that adjunct professors often are on the lower end of the experience spectrum, attention should also be given to discipline preparation and preparation to teach (Boord, 2010).

Professional development has been problematic for adjunct supervisors, however, because of the cost involved for sending part-time faculty away for professional meetings and conferences and the time and expense necessary to provide professional development on campus. Because of these cost and time factors, adjunct faculty are usually not included in professional development opportunities at their respective colleges and universities. According to Rogers, McIntyre & Jazzar (2010), ongoing professional development aligned with the mission and vision of the institution is crucial for creating a well-prepared workforce.

It appears that adjunct faculty are as interested in professional development as their full-time peers but are often unable to participate due to irregular work hours, other employment, and family commitments (Burnstad & Lyons, 2007). According to Boord (2010), professional development topics that adjunct faculty indicated they would be interested in participating in were classroom technology (62%), teaching strategies (61%), and distance learning (60%). Eney and Davidson (2012) asserted because adjunct faculty play such a crucial role in instruction in remedial and introductory courses, "[i]t is critical to provide a supportive environment and professional development opportunities that allow part-time faculty to focus on quality teaching and learning while also giving them a stake in the institution's mission" (p. 2).

Evaluation

Typically, the only tool many hiring administrators have utilized to evaluate adjunct faculty are student evaluations (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). "It has now become common practice in universities and colleges for students to 'grade' the professors that grade them" (Germain & Scandura, 2005). Using student evaluation tools as the exclusive means for evaluating an adjunct faculty member, however, can affect teaching outcomes – specifically grade inflation. According to McArthur (1999), part-time faculty members graded students higher than full-time faculty, and Jacoby (2006) asserted part-time faculty concerned about job security would be more likely to provide less demanding course materials and higher grades. Another concern with using only student evaluations is they represent only one perspective (Drew & Klopper, 2014). They may also represent more than just students' satisfaction with the teaching competence of the faculty member. Germain and Scandura (2005) questioned the validity of student evaluations because there is no standard measurement for defining teaching effectiveness. To further complicate matters, the content and format of evaluation instruments varies greatly from

institution to institution (Langen, 2011). Whether student evaluations are considered effective or ineffective, the number of institutions using them to evaluate all faculty has risen from 29% in 1973 to 98% in 2000 (Langen, 2011).

Langen (2011) asserted while 63% of higher education institutions were evaluating adjunct faculty routinely, 20% are not evaluating them at all. When asked which evaluation methods administrators relied on more often, student evaluations rose to the top, followed by classroom observations and then reviews of syllabi and teaching materials. Respondents rated their reliance on student evaluations at 87% versus only 58% for the next listed item, classroom observations (2011). When asked, however, which method of evaluation was a more accurate measure, classroom observation outpaced student evaluations.

Increasing reliance on adjunct faculty in community colleges has created a quandary for community college administrators – how to ensure quality teaching from part-time and, sometimes, short-term faculty. The literature shows the presence of support structures may be the means to achieve this goal.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The numbers of adjunct faculty continue to rise as institutions attempt to trim costs by relying more heavily on them (Eney & Davidson, 2012). This phenomenon is especially true at community and technical colleges where nearly three out of four instructional faculty are adjuncts. These part-time teaching appointments can be tenuous at best, however, as adjunct faculty are frequently hired on a term-by-term basis with no guarantee of employment beyond the end of the term in which they are teaching. Some adjuncts, while hired repeatedly from year to year, still have no guarantee that full-time faculty members on contract will not be given courses originally assigned to them in order to fulfill contract requirements (Curtis & Jacobe,

2006). Hollenshead, et al. (2007) noted 40% of adjunct faculty wishing to renew a contract received a month's notice or less they would not have a teaching assignment for the next semester. Because adjunct faculty normally do not have term contracts, they are also excluded from due process considerations. In these at-will situations, adjunct faculty have no recourse when terminated or not reappointed, and the hiring administrator is not required to provide a reason for the termination or non-reappointment.

These circumstances are exacerbated by the absence of attention paid by institutions to adjuncts' support – specifically to orientation practices (e.g., the conveyance of information about mission, value, and goals; instructional expectations; handbooks, etc.), to the provision of professional development, and to a meaningful evaluation system. There is a fairly extensive body of research demonstrating the presence of these support mechanisms leads to an adjunct cadre that knows what to expect, knows how to access information on unexpected developments, and feels valued by and affiliated with their respective institutions. The question is whether the administrators who hire them are familiar with and engage in these support practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Because adjunct faculty comprise the majority of faculty members in all disciplines at the nine community and technical colleges (CTCs) in West Virginia, this study will focus on West Virginia CTC mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty, examining the availability of orientation as identified in the research literature at those institutions. A decision was made to delimit this study to the orientation support category for two reasons: 1) the extant research indicates orientation is the most commonly offered among the three types of adjunct support (i.e., orientation, professional development and evaluation),

and 2) with its multiple sub-categories (i.e., surroundings, job and institution), it is the support category most likely to return a substantial amount of information.

Mid-level administrators (i.e., deans, associate or assistant deans, program directors, and/or department chairpersons) constituted the population for the study because they are more closely affiliated with the teaching faculty and are the administrators primarily responsible for hiring and evaluating adjunct faculty members (Wild, Ebbers, Shelley, & Gmelch, 2003). These administrators will be invited to answer questions about their roles in providing orientation for adjunct faculty members; about what type of orientation is in place for adjunct faculty at their institutions, if any; and about various dimensions of their adjunct faculty members' teaching quality. The following research questions will guide the study.

(1) What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?

(2) Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

METHODS

The purpose of this non-experimental, descriptive study was to add to the growing research on the use of adjunct faculty by determining whether the findings in the seminal study (Oprean, 2012) could be generalized to other community college systems. A major difference in this study, however, was the focus on one area of adjunct faculty support: orientation.

North Carolina had a population of approximately 10.5 million people (US Census Bureau, 2019a) and an unemployment rate of 4.4% (North Carolina Department of Commerce,

2018). Their high school graduation rate was 86% (US Census Bureau, 2019a). In the fall of 2018, North Carolina had 58 community colleges with a fall enrollment of 408,822 students (North Carolina Community Colleges [NCCC], 2020). Median household income in North Carolina in 2018 was $52,413 and the per capita income was $29,456 (US Census Bureau, 2019a). Approximately 17.8% of North Carolinians lived in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2019a).

The geographic focus for this study, West Virginia, featured similar demographics. In 2018, West Virginia had a population of only approximately 1.8 million people (US Census Bureau, 2019b), but had a slightly higher unemployment rate (5.2%) than North Carolina. The state's high school graduation rate (90%) was slightly above North Carolina's, and its college enrollment rates were also higher (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). West Virginia also showed 40.8% of its residents ages 18-24 and 8.8% of adults 25-40 were enrolled in college, both of which led North Carolina's enrollments. Among West Virginia families, approximately 17.8% lived in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2019b). The similarities end here, however.

Both West Virginia's median household income of $44,921 and per capita income of $25,479 (US Census Bureau, 2019a) lagged behind North Carolina's, and it took about 14.1% of a West Virginia family's income to pay for college versus a North Carolina family's 11%. West Virginia had nine community colleges to North Carolina's 58. Only 20.3% of adults over age 25 in West Virginia had earned bachelor's degrees (US Census Bureau, 2019b).

Population

According to Wild, et al. (2003), mid-level administrators (e.g., deans, directors, department chairs, program coordinators) were likely those who are most knowledgeable about

hiring and support practices for adjunct faculty. Consistent with that observation, the target population for this study included mid-level administrators at the nine community colleges included in the Community and Technical College System (CTCS) of West Virginia.

A quantitative approach using a web-based survey instrument captured data related to orientation of adjunct faculty and administrative perceptions about the quality of adjunct faculty performance. The survey instrument was taken from the original study. Permission to use the original instrument with minor editing was sought and permission was granted by the author. The original instrument contained six sections: (1) institutional and administrative demographics; (2) institutional adjunct faculty hiring practices; (3) institutional adjunct faculty orientation practices; (4) institutional adjunct faculty professional development practices; (5) institutional adjunct faculty evaluation practices; and (6) perceptions of the quality of adjunct faculty performance. The current survey excluded section 2 (institutional adjunct faculty hiring practices; section 4 (institutional adjunct faculty professional development practices; and section 5 (institutional adjunct faculty evaluation practices) in order to focus on the aspect of orientation for adjunct faculty.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were used throughout the study.

1. **Adjunct faculty members:** any faculty members who are hired through a contract for one academic term. They may be employed for one course or multiple courses, or may teach intermittently or routinely for an institution. Their titles may vary (e.g., instructor, lecturer, etc.), but they are typically paid per course and are contracted for a single term.

2. **Orientation:** the process used when new adjunct faculty are introduced to their role(s) at the institution. Orientation will be identified as occurring from a period of time prior to employment through the first month of employment (Oprean, 2012).
3. **Mid-level administrator:** individuals who may be identified by four specific job duties: faculty development, manager, leader, and scholar. These mid-level administrators handle recruitment, selection, evaluation and professional development (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).
4. **Quality:** Perceived quality by mid-level administrators using six criteria as measured on items in the study's survey.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study were primarily those common to survey research. The findings were limited to the perceptions of specific mid-level administrators who responded to the survey rather than being generalizable to their larger populations. Administrators who responded may have done so out of a particular bias, either positive or negative about/receptive or non-receptive toward the use of adjunct faculty. While the researcher's academic experience and employment in the education field could have constituted a source of empathy and provide an experiential background to be effective in eliciting and understanding respondents' perceptions, it might also have been viewed as a limitation in that it is a potential source of bias.

DELIMITATIONS

A decision was made to delimit this study to the orientation support category for two reasons: 1) the extant research indicated orientation was the most commonly offered among the three types of adjunct support (i.e., orientation, professional development and evaluation), and 2)

with its multiple sub-categories (i.e., surroundings, job and institution), it was the support category most likely to return a substantial amount of information.

A second delimitation was the narrowing of the study to only community and technical colleges (CTCs) in West Virginia in order to parallel the seminal study (Oprean, 2012), which only included CTCs in North Carolina. The study population was also delimited to only mid-level administrators in West Virginia's CTCs.

SIGNIFICANCE

Assuring teaching quality using large numbers of adjunct faculty is a key issue for community college administrators, as relying on a pool of employees who work part-time and often for short periods of time can be problematic. This study had the potential to produce valuable information related to improving teaching quality through the inclusion of a valuable support structure. As adjunct faculty comprise the majority of faculty members in all disciplines at the nine community and technical colleges (CTCs) in West Virginia, it would benefit these institutions to have structures in place that support adjuncts in improving their teaching practices.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of fundamental research addressed four subject areas, the first being the factors that led to a major shift in hiring patterns in American community colleges from a majority of full-time faculty to a majority of adjunct faculty. The second area was the role orientation plays in retaining high-quality adjunct faculty. The third was the effect of access to professional development for adjunct faculty, and the fourth was the effect regularly administered evaluation has on adjunct faculty.

THE MOVE TOWARD A COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADJUNCT MAJORITY

Community colleges have made the transition from an extension of the high school curriculum to a place where displaced workers during the Great Depression could receive some much-needed occupational training so they could re-enter the workforce with new skills. This trend continued through the 1960s. Community colleges saw tremendous increases in enrollments during the 1970s, when people began seeking draft deferment during the Vietnam War (Kasper, 2003).

Community colleges have served different audiences throughout different points in history. For some, community colleges have provided an access point to higher education, especially those who experienced difficulties entering higher education through a traditional four-year college or university. For others, community colleges have provided workforce development as local economies changed. Community colleges have essentially had three missions: providing a gateway to a four-year institution, contributing to workforce development, and boosting economic development (Dougherty & James, 2006).

Economic shifts have often served as the impetus for change in community college missions, including a considerable shift in the 1980s when America changed from a

manufacturing economy to a service economy. For some workers, the shift meant changing from manufacturing jobs to service jobs. For others, the shift meant a change to jobs in information technology. During this time, state leaders began to see a need for a trained workforce that would be ready to meet the needs of the changing economy (Friedel, 2008). Contracts with government agencies and local businesses allowed community colleges to make the needed changes to provide the educational programs to meet the needs of employers (Dougherty & Bakia, 2000).

From 1997-2007, the number of all faculty employed in higher education increased by 63% and about two-thirds of the increase is attributable to the hiring of adjunct faculty members. During that same period, full-time faculty were on the decline, decreasing from about one-third to about one-fourth of all faculty (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2009). This increase in adjunct faculty makes sense in the context of tightening budgets in higher education. Hiring adjunct faculty not only allows institutions to save money on salaries, but it also gives them greater flexibility in hiring for specific curricular needs and allows them to eliminate positions without the hassles of tenure-related issues (Birmingham, 2017).

In 2018, of the 1.5 million higher education faculty members, only about one-third had tenure or were on the tenure track. The remaining faculty (73%) were hired as adjunct faculty (Flaherty, 2018). This dynamic is quite a change from 1976, when tenured and tenure-track faculty accounted for 45% of all faculty (AAUP, 2017a).

There are presently 1,050 community colleges in the United States which awarded 852,504 associate degrees and 579,822 certificates in 2019 (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2020). Among these two-year colleges, tuition represented the highest funding source (27.1%). Second was state funding (33.3%), followed by local funding

(20.3%). The remainder of funding came from federal sources (11.4%) and other (7.9%). Community colleges represented a low-cost alternative to four-year colleges, costing on average $3,730 per year as compared with $10,440 at four-year public institutions (AACC, 2020).

The Role of the Economy

A primary factor for the increase in the number of adjuncts hired at colleges and universities has been cited as economic circumstances. In addition, a serious national economic downturn made providing higher education more difficult than in years of economic prosperity. From 2007 to 2009, years now referred to as the "Great Recession," state tax revenues declined and the state governments made spending cuts in higher education. As a result, families had less money to spend, including money to pay for higher education. In addition, as state funding of higher education declined, the cost of college increased for students. Overall, state funding for public colleges and universities had decreased nearly $9 billion from 2008 to 2017 (CBPP, 2017).

In fiscal years 2016 and 2017, 13 states cut per-student funding, but only Alaska, Kansas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Wisconsin had experienced cuts the previous year as well (CBPP, 2017). One key result of these decreases in state funding was colleges and universities were forced to reduce their numbers of full-time faculty. Typically, when any institution or business experiences funding cuts, they have two options. They can increase revenue or decrease spending. In an attempt to keep higher education affordable, most higher education institutions chose to decrease spending, increasing their dependence on adjunct faculty because they are less expensive to employ than full-time faculty.

As state governments and businesses began to demand a better alignment of the college curriculum with economic development goals, community colleges began to hire more adjunct

faculty to fill the positions that were created by these new departments (Burnstad & Lyons, 2007). This demand has had a substantial impact on community and technical colleges. The numbers of adjunct faculty continue to rise as institutions attempt to trim costs by relying more heavily on them (Eney & Davidson, 2012). This phenomenon is especially true at community and technical colleges where nearly three out of four instructional faculty are adjuncts. In 2013, 50% of community college faculty were operating under less-than-one-year contracts (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). These part-time teaching appointments can be tenuous at best, however, as adjunct faculty are frequently hired on a term-by-term basis with no guarantee of employment beyond the end of the term in which they are teaching. Because adjunct faculty normally do not have term contracts, they are also excluded from due process considerations. In these at-will situations, adjunct faculty have no recourse when terminated or not reappointed, and the hiring administrator is not required to provide a reason for the termination or non-reappointment (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

These circumstances are exacerbated by the absence of attention paid by institutions to adjuncts' support – specifically to orientation practices (e.g., the conveyance of information about mission, value, and goals; instructional expectations; handbooks, etc.), to the provision of professional development, and to a meaningful evaluation system. Often, adjunct faculty are hired without the benefit of institutional resources like professional development and administrative support (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). They typically are not evaluated on a regular basis and are often assigned the least desirable teaching assignments (2016). Kezar and Maxey (2015) stated "research suggests that the poor working conditions (e.g., low compensation, no job security) and lack of support (e.g., professional development and adequate

office space) experienced by most non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF) have an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes at higher education institutions."

A fairly extensive body of research exists (e.g., Fagen-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, & White, 2006; Burnstad & Lyons, 2007; Clark, 2013; Dougherty & James, 2006; Kezar & Gehrke, 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2010; Roney & Ulerick, 2013; and Santisteban & Egues, 2014) demonstrating the presence of these support mechanisms leads to an adjunct cadre that knows what to expect, knows how to access information on unexpected developments, and feels valued by and affiliated with their respective institutions.

With such a shift from a majority of full-time faculty to a majority of adjunct faculty, community colleges must ensure a continuum of teaching quality that properly serves their clientele. The literature points to several key factors to ensuring this teaching quality including orientation practices, opportunities for faculty to take part in professional development, and regularly performed evaluations.

THE ROLE OF ORIENTATION

Orientation for faculty is a crucial part of faculty development. Orientation can be broken down into three focus areas. First, faculty must become oriented to their surroundings. This part of the process is when faculty can learn about the layout of the campus, where to park, how to locate classrooms and labs, and where they can spend time preparing for classes (e.g., office or cubicle, etc.). Second, they must become oriented to the job. This phase of orientation is when the faculty can learn about what types of syllabi are used by other faculty members, which textbooks are recommended for their courses, and what is expected in terms of evaluations. Finally, they must be oriented to the institution. This phase is when faculty learn about the policies and practices for all faculty at the institution.

Often, faculty experience problems with the first two steps (becoming oriented to their surroundings and becoming oriented to the job) because of last-minute hiring practices. Adjunct faculty are frequently hired very close to the beginning of the semester to "fill in the gaps" in teaching. These hiring practices leave faculty unfamiliar with the campus, the syllabi they will use in their classes, and textbooks they will assign to students (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

Baldwin and Chronister (2001) identified several issues that face adjunct faculty members:

> Part-time faculty sometimes operate with almost total independence from any responsible oversight on the part of the institution. They can be hired at the last minute, given nothing more to work with than an old course syllabus, left to teach without hearing from or seeing another faculty member or administrator during an entire semester, and receive no evaluation or constructive feedback on their performance. They may be reviewed for another term or they may not, but they may never find out why. (p. 259)

In many, if not most, cases, adjunct faculty are hired because of their subject matter expertise as opposed to their teaching experience. In the case of nursing faculty, for example, adjuncts are often hired to teach community college students because they have practical, hands-on experience. Because of this lack of experience in the classroom, however, "[a]djunct faculty may face hardships in role transitioning because of either an absence of teaching experience and teaching instruction as part of their specialized nursing programs" (Santisteban & Egues, 2014, p. 153-154).

Adjunct faculty members may feel a sense of disconnection with the institution after a last-minute hiring experience and a lack of orientation. This lack of affiliation can lead adjunct

faculty members to avoid participation in campus life. Adjunct faculty are primarily paid only to teach, which leads them to perform other important tasks such as advising students off the clock or not at all. They often teach in isolation without any interaction with full-time faculty. This isolation leads them to be unaware of "how the courses they teach fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole" (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006, p. 9).

Green (2007), suggested in order to better incorporate adjunct faculty into the campus community, administrators stay in frequent contact with them, explain the institutional mission, and reinforce the importance of serving the students. Gappa and Leslie (1993) asserted the administrators should also help adjunct faculty understand the relationship between the institution's goals for student learning and the courses they (adjuncts) will teach.

Clark (2013) conducted a non-experimental, mixed-methods study on early career, clinical nursing faculty that identified five stages of the orientation process for nurses who become clinical nursing faculty members. They include beginning the role, employing strategies to survive in the role, coming to a turning point in the role, sustaining success in the role, and finding fulfillment in the role. The "beginning the role" phase of being a new faculty member is characterized by confusion and anxiety, as described by one participant in the study who explained, "It's not only getting familiar with the groups coming in, but the facility itself and what the policies and procedures are … that can be very overwhelming" (Clark, 2013, p.108). Clark recommended several solutions to assist with the orientation process, which she referred to as "socialization," including planning an introduction to the unit and staff, offering the opportunity to shadow an experienced clinical instructor, providing a mentor, and allowing times for debriefing (Clark, 2013, pp. 109-110).

Another aspect of orientation lacking in many colleges and universities for adjunct faculty nationwide is a handbook designed specifically for adjunct faculty. An absence of written materials that demonstrate policies, procedures, and available support structures can lead adjuncts to feel disenfranchised. Wickun and Stanley (2000) described the plight of the adjunct professor:

> The lack of departmental support is another weakness of the adjunct system, particularly at larger universities. The adjunct faculty member typically has no office or telephone and often is not provided with a job description, course description, or even a syllabus. In our experiences as adjuncts early in our careers, our orientations consisted of picking up a book, a room number, and a class roster from the departmental secretary. There was no orientation or handbook to guide us, just some 'friendly advice' from the secretary or a TA. (p. 3)

The use of faculty handbooks has been a contentious issue throughout higher education in recent history. The crux of the debate has been whether faculty handbooks serve as a contract between the faculty member and the institution; however, it appears institutions of higher education have been reticent to create new handbooks for faculty for fear of having a new set of legal problems to handle – and recently, the faculty handbook has been the subject of numerous legal cases (Carosella v. University of Washington, 2010; Lovell v. Ohio Wesleyan University; 2012, Saxe v. Board of Trustees of Metropolitan State College of Denver, 2007; Taylor v. Converse College, 2012). Several articles addressed the potential issues associated with having no handbooks (Bradley, 2006a; Bradley, 2006b; Euben, 1998; Levinson, 2007; Manicone, 2008), all of which described cases in which faculty handbooks had become the focal point for legal battles between faculty members and their respective institutions.

The Colorado Court of Appeals case of Saxe v. Board of Trustees of Metropolitan State College of Denver (2007) began with the Board of Trustees adopting a faculty handbook without the input of the college's faculty. Several faculty members, along with the Colorado Teachers Federation, sought a declaratory judgement requesting the court state the handbook "establish[ed] conditions under which employment of tenured faculty members can be terminated or their compensation reduced," which would substantially weaken the college's tenure system, especially during Reduction In Force (RIF) actions (AAUP, 2009).

In some cases, it has been argued the faculty handbook should be considered a binding contract. In one such situation, Howard University v. Lacy (2003), the court ruled the university's regulations and handbook were, in fact, legally binding contracts (AAUP, 2009). In University of Dubuque v. Faculty Assembly, et al. (2009), however, the Iowa district court ruled handbooks did not constitute contracts at the University of Dubuque where university trustees sued faculty members, asking the court to find the faculty handbook was not a contract, but rather a "formal institutional policy statement" (Euben, 1998). Although the faculty handbook's preamble contained wording stating the handbook was a "legally binding" document, the court also found verbiage that allowed for modifications of the handbook by trustees only, as well as a provision allowing for faculty approval of revisions.

Anderson-Free v. Steptoe (1997) found in order for a faculty handbook to be included as part of a contract, it must fulfill three requirements: "(1) 'the language…must be specific enough to constitute an offer'; (2) 'the handbook must have been issued to the employee'; and (3) 'the employee must have accepted the offer by retaining employment after having been issued the handbook' (AAUP, 2009).

In summary, orientation can be vital to the success of adjunct faculty members. Too often, these faculty members are hired on a time schedule that does not allow them time to become oriented to the facilities, the job responsibilities, or the institution's culture. Even adjunct faculty members who are hired to teach the classes year after year are sometimes notified only days before classes begin (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). This last-minute hiring schedule can make it difficult for adjunct faculty to feel a part of the campus culture, which leads them to decline to participate in campus life in the way full-time faculty do. Further, since adjunct faculty are paid only to teach, they often fail to perform faculty functions such as advising students, and those who do often do so without being paid.

The literature contained several suggestions for improving the experience for adjunct faculty through orientation. Green (2007) suggested administrators meet regularly with adjunct faculty to reinforce the institutional mission. Clark (2013) recommended a system of "socialization," where adjuncts are introduced to other faculty and staff; given opportunities to shadow experienced faculty; and provided with a mentor.

Access to Professional Development

One area identified in the literature as important for adjunct faculty was professional development needed to improve teaching. According to Rutz, Condon, Iverson, Manduca, and Willett (2012), the underlying assumption about professional development is "when faculty learn more about teaching, they teach better, which in turn improves student learning — a plus for everyone."

Faculty development, or professional development, was defined throughout the literature, with one such definition coming from Boord (2010), who defines professional development as "skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement." Much

of the literature also included possible topics for professional development such as "institutional mission, service to students, academic values, and the use of technology" (Green, 2007) or "developing instructional skills, integrating into the culture of higher education, locating information, and managing academic workload" (Santisteban & Egues, 2014). Several methods and venues for professional development were also discussed, including faculty learning communities (Cox, 2004); peer review and observation of teaching (Drew & Klopper, 2014); adjunct faculty institutes (Wallin, 2007); and "orientation for new employees, interdisciplinary learning communities, specific workshops on institutional expectations or pedagogy, or summer support for curriculum development" (Rutz, et al., 2014). Most authors insisted professional development was a key to faculty and, in turn, student success, but, while some studies defined professional development, many did not suggest topics or methods for providing it.

The literature defined several topics that should be included in professional development for adjunct faculty including history and environment of the institution, teaching techniques, classroom management, teaching adult learners, teaching with technology, and effective assessment models (Wallin, 2007). The problem, however, is that professional development for adjunct faculty is lacking throughout higher education (Burnstad and Lyons, 2007; Kezar and Gehrke, 2013; Rutz, et al., 2012; Wallin, 2007). Two primary reasons cited for the absence of professional development for adjunct faculty are reductions in funding (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006; Santisteban & Egues, 2014; Sicat, et al., 2014), and a lack of institutional commitment to creating a professional development climate (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006; Kezar & Gehrke, 2013; Kezar & Maxey, 2015; and Roney & Ulerick, 2013).

In many cases, professional development opportunities are reserved for full-time and tenure-track faculty members, and cost is often a factor for institutions' limiting access to these

opportunities. Cooper and Booth (2011), however, argued professional development can be offered to all faculty easily and at little cost through options such as (1) sharing the department's learning outcomes and assessment results; (2) sharing the learning goals for the major; (3) asking adjuncts to link their courses to the appropriate outcomes; (4) creating a "course" website with sample syllabi, assignments, and rubrics; (5) conducting an adjunct faculty orientation; (6) providing a "commons" space where new faculty can ask questions and share ideas; (7) coordinating mentoring programs that connect adjuncts with experienced faculty; (8) holding lunch-and-learn meetings where faculty can have discussions about teaching; and (9) providing recognition for adjunct faculty to encourage the development of innovative techniques.

Even when professional development is available, adjunct faculty may choose not to attend sessions. Often, these part-time faculty members teach at multiple institutions, spend a great deal of time driving from place to place, and do not have time to attend professional development sessions they believe will not be of benefit to them. Oprean (2012) noted often institutions scheduled professional development for times that were not convenient for adjunct faculty, who frequently work at several institutions to maintain a full course load. Recommendations for institutions to be more inclusive of adjunct faculty in professional development include using different types of sessions such as face-to-face, online, lunch and learns, and internal professional development conferences.

It was difficult to find studies linking faculty professional development with improved student learning. The underlying assumption is if faculty members learn more about teaching, they become better teachers, but the obvious shortfall in the literature related to the effect of faculty development on student learning is nearly all studies rely on self-reported measures rather than more objective measures such as a review of student work. One recent study (Rutz,

et al., 2014) used data from two institutions, Carleton College and Washington State University, to try to link the effects of faculty professional development to student learning.

The study used various workshops and professional development sessions, in addition to summer grants for faculty to create or revise courses as interventions with faculty at both institutions. Using writing-across-the-curriculum, which both institutions had been using for several years, as the framework provided an archive of student work to use as a baseline for their data. The researchers used a variety of both quantitative and qualitative methods including "participant observation, structured interviews, textual analysis, and analysis of evaluation instruments" (Rutz, et al., 2014, p.20). While the study showed moderate improvements in student writing performance that could be linked to faculty development, the researchers discussed that the process of rating students' papers was difficult and time-consuming. In addition, some of the improvement could doubtless be attributed to factors other than faculty development (2014).

Gappa and Leslie (1993) declared that, in an environment where department chairs are often overloaded with numbers of adjunct faculty whom they do not have time to mentor, adjuncts should be paired with full-time faculty members who can serve as role models and provide feedback on teaching because "the entire faculty – both full-time and part-time – holds the responsibility for teaching and for ensuring that standards of excellence are met" (p. 266). They suggested five recommended practices for bringing full-time and part-time faculty together including using teams of full-time faculty to help develop adjuncts' teaching, providing full-time faculty mentors to adjuncts, involving both groups in course coordination, involving adjunct faculty in assessing students' learning, and appointing part-time faculty to committees.

Overall, there was a distinct deficit in the literature regarding meaningful effects of professional development on student learning. Many articles reviewed discussed a need for professional development, but few demonstrated any type of link between professional development for faculty and increased learning for students.

The Effect of Regularly Administered Evaluation

Evaluation of faculty members is important to demonstrating potential areas of improvement. Without any type of feedback, colleges and universities run the risk of hiring and retaining less qualified adjunct faculty members to teach students. According to Gappa and Leslie (1993), "when teaching is not evaluated or monitored systematically, the institution does not develop an adequate base of information about its part-time faculty" (p. 168).

The method, frequency, and extension of evaluation of adjunct faculty vary greatly from institution to institution. Baldwin and Chronister (2001) found at institutions that do require some type of formalized evaluation system, some policies are unspecific and leave room for interpretation by department chairs as to how to administer them, treating adjunct faculty members as short-term investments, while others define specific evaluation policies for adjuncts that show a longer-term commitment to them. Gappa and Leslie (1993) affirmed "part-time faculty benefit when evaluation procedures are clearly defined and consistently administered" (p. 171). Typically, there are two institutional motivations for evaluating adjunct faculty members: for full-time adjuncts the purpose of evaluation is to determine salary increases, and for part-time adjuncts the purpose is to determine whether to reappoint them (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). Many studies recommended the use of routine evaluation as a means of creating an equitable climate for adjunct faculty (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Hollenshead et al., 2007).

Predominant in the literature about evaluation methods for adjunct faculty were student evaluation tools (SETs). According to Langen (2011), the reason for the popularity of this method is student evaluations are easy to administer and easy to score. Setari, et al. (2016) observed SETs originally had two purposes: provide administrators with information about instructors and help improve instruction by providing feedback from students. The literature, however, is mixed as to the effectiveness of SETs. Wright and Jenkins-Guarnieri's (2012) "findings suggest that SETs appear to be valid, have practical use that is largely free from gender bias and are most effective when implemented with consultation strategies" (p. 683). These tools also seem to allow institutions to be consistent across disciplines when evaluating faculty members, but Gappa and Leslie (1993) stressed "when evaluation procedures are informal and left to individual chairs, inconsistency of practice can result" (p. 172). Langen (2011) suggested one reason there is such disagreement over the validity of student evaluation tools is the tools themselves vary greatly. In addition, they often contain items that influence the responses of the students, ask students to compare faculty members with other faculty members, or structure questions so they lead students to certain responses.

Some studies have suggested SETs are unreliable measures of faculty performance, asserting factors other than teaching quality can, at times, drive the perceived performance by faculty members. Using a simple linear regression and extant data from ratings of 3,190 professors at 25 universities on RateMyProfessors.com, Felton, Mitchell, & Stinson (2004) found about half the variation in quality ratings was a function of easiness and sexiness. When grouped into sexy and non-sexy categories, professors categorized as sexy were rated higher in quality and easiness than those rated as non-sexy.

Gappa and Leslie (1993) suggested student evaluation tools should be used only as a segment of a comprehensive evaluation approach for adjuncts that includes not only student evaluations, but interaction with a department chair or other impartial persons who can analyze their teaching quality, analyze student performance on objective measures such as tests, and read over class assignments to see if there are gaps in difficulty that can be alleviated. They asserted that at the very least, the adjunct professor should have routine feedback from a department chair on their teaching performance to avoid dismissing them too quickly based on early classroom performance. They further emphasize evaluation methods should be shared with adjuncts before teaching begins so they begin their term knowing what will be expected of them.

Wright and Jenkins-Guarnieri (2012) advised if institutions are using student evaluation tools, they should continue to do so, but they should use them in conjunction with "consultative feedback" (p. 694) from the department administrator. In addition, they recommended if the evaluation tool was developed from within the department, they should consider finding ways to validate it. Langen (2011), too recommended a multi-faceted approach to faculty evaluation including "peer evaluation, self-appraisals, student appraisals, department chairpersons or supervisor appraisals and teaching portfolios" (p. 189).

Another issue that arose from the literature about student evaluation tools was, while their use is quite engrained in higher education, they provide only one perspective. Drew and Klopper (2014) asserted these measures "only represent one possible set of stakeholders' viewpoints" (p. 350), pointing out there are other means for examining quality of teaching including peer evaluation, observation, structured reflection, and student learning outcomes (p. 352). Green (2007) further emphasized the need for evaluation beyond only student evaluation tools, such as

visits by the department chair to the classroom, not only once during the semester, but at varying times in varying conditions.

Much of the literature suggested whatever the evaluation method, it should be equitable for adjuncts (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Langen, 2011) and the approach should be multi-faceted (Drew & Klopper, 2014; Green, 2007; Langen, 2011). While there is little agreement about whether student evaluation tools are reliable measures of instructor quality, much of the literature suggests SETs should not be used as a singular measure.

SUMMARY

This review of fundamental research has addressed four subject areas: factors that led to a major shift in hiring patterns in American community colleges from a majority of full-time faculty to a majority of adjunct faculty; the role orientation plays in retaining high-quality adjunct faculty; the effect of access to professional development for adjunct faculty; and the effect regularly administered evaluation has on adjunct faculty. In relationship to hiring patterns, community colleges have served a need in communities, acting as gateways to higher education and providing skills-based training to prepare workers. From 1997-2007, the proportion of adjunct faculty members grew substantially due to economic factors like cuts to higher education budgets and a focus on aligning the community college curriculum with specialized training needs of the workforce. Those reductions in funding have caused colleges to shift their focus from more expensive tenure-track faculty to adjunct faculty because these positions allow institutions greater flexibility in both pay and hiring.

With the increase in the number of adjunct faculty comes an increased need for orientation, which typically involves a three-part process: becoming oriented to the surroundings, becoming oriented to the job, and becoming oriented to the institution. One way this orientation

can be accomplished is through providing professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty. In many cases, however, professional development opportunities are reserved for full-time and tenure-track faculty members, and cost is often a factor for institutions' limiting access to these opportunities. The literature defines several topics that should be included in professional development for adjunct faculty including history and environment of the institution, teaching techniques, classroom management, teaching adult learners, teaching with technology, and effective assessment models (Wallin, 2007).

Evaluation of faculty members is important to demonstrating potential areas of improvement. Without any type of feedback, colleges and universities run the risk of hiring and retaining less qualified adjunct faculty members to teach students. The method, frequency, and extension of evaluation of adjunct faculty vary greatly from institution to institution. Baldwin and Chronister (2001) found that at institutions that do require some type of formalized evaluation system, some policies are unspecific and leave room for interpretation by department chairs as to how to administer them, treating adjunct faculty members as short-term investments, while others define specific evaluation policies for adjuncts that show a longer-term commitment to them. Predominant in the literature about evaluation methods for adjunct faculty are student evaluation tools (SETs). According to Langen (2011), the reason for the popularity of this method is student evaluations are easy to administer and easy to score. Setari, Lee & Bradley (2016) observed SETs originally had two purposes: provide administrators with information about instructors and help improve instruction by providing feedback from students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this non-experimental, descriptive study was to add to the growing research on the use of adjunct faculty by determining whether the findings in the seminal study (Oprean, 2012) could be generalized to other community college systems. Because adjunct faculty comprised the majority of faculty members in all disciplines at the nine community and technical colleges (CTCs) in West Virginia, this study focused on West Virginia CTC mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty, examining the availability of the support systems identified in the research literature at those institutions.

Mid-level administrators (e.g., deans, associate or assistant deans, program directors, and/or department chairpersons) from West Virginia's nine community and technical colleges constituted the population for the study because they tended to be more closely affiliated with the teaching faculty and were the administrators primarily responsible for hiring and evaluating adjunct faculty members, and were, therefore, more knowledgeable about those practices (Wild, et al., 2003). These administrators were invited to answer questions about their roles in orienting adjunct faculty members; about what kinds of support structures were in place for adjunct faculty at their institutions, if any; and about various dimensions of their adjunct faculty members' teaching quality.

The following research questions were used during this study.

(1) What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?

(2) Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

A quantitative approach using a web-based survey instrument captured data related to hiring, orientation, and evaluation of adjunct faculty, as well as administrative perceptions about the quality of adjunct faculty performance. The survey instrument was adapted from the original study, with permission of the author, and contained six sections: (1) institutional and administrative demographics; (2) institutional adjunct faculty hiring practices; (3) institutional adjunct faculty orientation practices; (4) institutional adjunct faculty professional development practices; (5) institutional adjunct faculty evaluation practices; and (6) perceptions of the quality of adjunct faculty performance.

The survey was administered online using the Qualtrics survey tool. A series of Likert-type, multiple choice, and open-ended questions explored mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct professor performance and any relationships between those perceptions and the availability of adjunct faculty orientation, the availability of professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty, and the presence of an adjunct faculty evaluation system.

Survey data from multiple choice and Likert questions were entered into and analyzed using SPSS version 23 to generate both descriptive and comparative statistics from survey responses. The limitations of the study were primarily those common to survey research. The findings were limited to the perceptions of specific mid-level administrators who responded to the survey rather than being generalizable to their larger populations. Administrators who responded may have done so out of a particular bias, either positive or negative about/receptive or non-receptive toward the use of adjunct faculty. While the researcher's academic experience and employment in the education field could have constituted a source of empathy and provided an experiential background to be effective in eliciting and understanding respondents' perceptions, it could also have been viewed as a limitation as it was a potential source of bias.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the availability of orientation programs for adjunct faculty at West Virginia Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) affected mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty. Data for this research study were collected using a researcher-created electronic survey instrument administered online using the Qualtrics survey tool. The instrument (see Appendix B) was designed to address the following research questions focusing on the availability of orientation programs for adjunct faculty at West Virginia CTCs and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty:

(1) What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?

(2) Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

This study was primarily quantitative in nature, therefore a majority of the findings discussed in this chapter related to descriptive and comparative analyses of quantitative survey data.

SAMPLE AND POPULATION

The study population included all mid-level administrators at all nine of West Virginia's Community and Technical Colleges. Identification of the nine community and technical colleges was made using the West Virginia Community and Technical College System website (West Virginia Community and Technical College System). All nine community and technical colleges were included in the study.

Potential survey participants were identified through an exhaustive search of institutional websites for employee directories, organizational charts, and contact information. The search yielded direct contact information for a total of 91 individuals, including institutional vice presidents, deans (two interim deans), associate deans, assistant deans, division chairs, department chairs, and program directors. An email invitation with a link to the online survey was sent to each of the individuals identified through the internet-based search. A follow-up email was sent approximately two weeks later to the same individuals. Table 1 provides information about the types of mid-level administrators who received the survey link.

Table 1

Composition of Survey Population (n = 91)

Survey Population	*n*	*Percent*
Vice Presidents	7	7.69%
Deans[a]	16	17.58%
Associate Deans	5	5.49%
Assistant Deans	3	3.30%
Division Chairs	7	7.69%
Department Chairs	29	31.87%
Program Directors	24	26.37%

[a] Value includes two administrators who were listed as Interim Deans.

The survey remained available to potential respondents for approximately 90 days, during which time 44 respondents opened the survey and 42 completed all or portions of the survey, for a return rate of 46.2%. With the inclusion of skip logic in key areas of the survey, the number of respondents differed between and among categories. The final question of the survey was an open-ended question used to solicit additional comments from participants.

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of total faculty who had adjunct faculty status, the percentage of all courses taught by adjunct faculty under respondents' supervision, and the percentage of fully online courses taught by adjunct faculty under respondents' supervision during the 2017-2018 year. Results from this three-part question were skewed toward <50% in each case, with a range from zero to one hundred. Table 2 provides information on the number of adjunct faculty under the supervision of the responding mid-level administrator by quartile.

Table 2

Percentage of Adjunct Faculty Supervised by Respondent (n = 34)

Quartile	*n*	*Mean*
25	14	41.18%
50	8	23.53%
75	10	29.41%
100	2	5.88%

Table 3 provides information on the percentage of onsite courses taught by adjunct faculty by quartile. The majority are clustered in the first quartile, suggesting most courses continue to be taught by full-time faculty at the institutions surveyed.

Table 3

Percentage of Courses Taught by Adjunct Faculty (n = 34)

Quartile	*n*	*Mean*
25	18	52.94%
50	9	26.47%
75	6	17.65%
100	1	2.94%

Table 4 provides information on the percentage of online courses taught by adjunct faculty by quartile and indicates the majority of online courses taught by adjuncts were also clustered in the first quartile.

Table 4

Percentage of Online Courses Taught by Adjunct Faculty (n = 33)

Quartile	*n*	*Mean*
25	22	66.67%
50	5	15.15%
75	5	15.15%
100	1	3.03%

Respondents were asked if they had received training (e.g., instructional, seminar, or conference-related) focused on adjunct faculty support in orientation during the last five years. Fewer respondents had received training (44.44%) than had not (55.56%).

Respondents were then asked to estimate the amount of time they spent working in the areas of hiring, orientation, professional development, and evaluation. Table 5 shows the percentage of time respondents reported working in each area of support.

Table 5

Percentage of Mid-level Administrators' Time Spent on Adjunct Faculty Support (n = 85)*

Duties	Percent
Hiring	28.24%
Orientation	27.06%
Professional Development	17.65%
Evaluation	27.06%

*Duplicated count

FINDINGS

This study was framed within the context of two research questions: (1) What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges? and (2) Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty? The findings that follow are organized by these research questions.

RQ1: What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?

The first research question sought to determine what orientation practices have been implemented for adjunct faculty in West Virginia Community Colleges and was addressed through 12 questions that made up the "Orientation" section of the survey. Twenty-four respondents (68.57%) indicated orientation was available for adjunct faculty, but not mandatory. The remaining 11 respondents (31.43%) indicated orientation was available and attendance was mandatory.

The second survey question in the orientation section examined who at the respondents' institution was responsible for adjunct faculty orientation. Orientation was most frequently the responsibility of the human resources department (n = 19, 18.63%). The lowest number of responses fell under the "other" category, with only three respondents selecting that choice. The "other" category included "committee headed by a dean," "E-learning coordinator – Blackboard/QM training," and "student services." Information about the frequency of responses is reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Position Responsible for Orientation (n = 102)*

Position	*n*	Percent
Human resources department	19	18.63%
Dean	16	15.69%
Department chair	15	14.71%
Division chair	14	13.73%
Vice president of instruction (academic affairs)	12	11.76%
Full-time faculty	12	11.76%
Academic support department for faculty	11	10.78%
Other	3	2.94%
Adjunct faculty department	0	0.00%

*Duplicated count

The structure of the orientation program attended by adjunct faculty was identified in the next question. While there was not a great degree of difference between or among the structures, the one identified most often was "group" orientation with adjunct faculty only (37.14%). Individualized training was the second most frequent method of providing orientation to adjunct faculty. Mixed-group and self-directed orientation were selected by the same number of respondents. A summary of all responses can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Structure of Orientation Program (n = 35)

Structure	*n*	Percent
Group (adjuncts only)	13	37.14%
Individualized (e.g., one-on-one mentoring)	10	28.57%
Self-directed (e.g., printed manual, online training, etc.)	6	17.14%
Mixed group (all new employees, both permanent and part-time)	6	17.14%
Other	0	0.00%

The next survey question related to the types of institutional topics covered during orientation sessions. The two categories respondents indicated most often were "institutional mission, vision, and goals," and "workload policies and procedures," each of which was selected by 19.13% of respondents. Purchasing (0.87%) was the least frequently selected category of institutional topics covered during adjunct faculty orientation. The explanatory responses accompanying the "other" category included:

- "Proof of attendance and grade reporting, use of Banner."
- "I don't know."
- "Due dates for reporting attendance, use of Blackboard shell, learning outcomes, common syllabus, assessment, professional development opportunities."
- "Grading and retention, care and feeding of students, student and instructor relationships, grade grievances."
- "It is done on a one on one basis & there is no manual. Each person probably mentions different things."

- "I did not attend the orientation session when I became an adjunct. I am now full-time. I do not have any adjuncts working for me" and "course materials."

Table 8 provides information about the frequency of responses.

Table 8

Institutional Topics Covered During Orientation Sessions (n = 115)*

Institutional Topics	*n*	Percent
Institutional mission, vision, and goals	22	19.13%
Workload policies and procedures	22	19.13%
Pay schedule	20	17.39%
Emergency procedures	20	17.39%
Pay scale	11	9.57%
Benefits	9	7.83%
Other	7	6.09%
Sick leave	3	2.61%
Purchasing	1	0.87%
None	0	0.00%

*Duplicated count

The next survey question related to the types of instructional topics covered during orientation sessions. The category most often indicated by respondents was "course syllabus" (19.08%). "Pedagogical strategies" was the least frequently selected category with only 1.97% of institutions reportedly offering the topic during orientation sessions. Table 9 provides information about instructional topics covered during orientation sessions.

Table 9

Instructional Topics Covered During Orientation Sessions (n = 152)*

Instructional Topics	*n*	Percent
Course syllabus	29	19.08%
Course management software	27	17.76%
Academic calendar	25	16.45%
Instructional materials	23	15.13%
Classroom management, attendance, behavior, grade posting	22	14.47%
Scheduling	7	4.61%
Learning styles	7	4.61%
Training opportunities	7	4.61%
Pedagogical strategies	3	1.97%
Other	2	1.32%
None	0	0.00%

*Duplicated count

The next question asked respondents to review six possible categories covered during orientation sessions. Student support services (44.64%) such as tutoring, labs, etc., were covered most often according to respondents. "Club information" was the least frequently selected student support topic among respondents. A summary of responses can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10

Student Support Topics Covered During Orientation Sessions (n = 56)*

Student Support Topics	*n*	Percent
Student support services (e.g., tutoring, labs, etc.)	25	44.64%
Advising	9	16.07%
Student diversity	7	12.50%
Campus events	6	10.71%
None	5	8.93%
Other	3	5.36%
Club information	1	1.79%

*Duplicated count

The next question asked respondents to examine fourteen categories of logistical support features that could be included in orientation sessions and indicate which were used at their institutions. "Email access" (16.97%) and "technology use" (15.15%) were indicated more often than the other categories. Table 11 provides information about the frequency of responses.

Table 11

Logistical Support Topics Covered During Orientation Sessions (n = 165)*

Logistical Support Topics	*n*	Percent
Email access	28	16.97%
Technology use	25	15.15%
Printer/copier use	21	12.73%
Office space	19	11.52%
Library support	14	8.48%
Campus tour	13	7.88%
Telephone access	11	6.67%
Office supplies	11	6.67%
Campus map	7	4.24%
Mailroom access	5	3.03%
Telephone directory	5	3.03%
Voicemail	4	2.42%
Other	2	1.21%
None	0	0.00%

*Duplicated count

The next question asked whether handbooks were provided to adjunct faculty. Two-thirds of the respondents (66.67%) reported handbooks were provided to adjuncts. Of those respondents, 38.89% indicated adjunct faculty were provided with adjunct-specific handbooks, while the remaining 27.78% indicated adjunct faculty were given the same handbooks that are provided to all faculty. One-third of respondents indicated handbooks are not provided to

adjunct faculty at their institutions. Table 12 provides a summary of responses about handbook distribution to adjunct faculty.

Table 12

Handbook Distribution to Adjunct Faculty (n = 36)

Are handbooks provided to adjunct faculty?	*n*	Percent
Yes, an adjunct faculty-specific handbook	14	38.89%
Yes, the same handbook that is provided to full-time faculty	10	27.78%
No, a handbook is not provided	12	33.33%

The next question asked respondents to indicate which methods were used to deliver orientation programs at their institutions. Respondents were given five choices of methods from which to choose and "face to face" was the most frequent method reported for delivering orientation programs. "Other" related responses included "course content, outcomes, syllabus and all relavent [sic] course delivery information (lab equipment, av [*sic*] equipment etc [*sic*]," and "I work with the adjuncts in my division." Table 13 provides information about the frequency of responses.

Table 13

Methods Used to Deliver Orientation Sessions (n = 54)*

Methods Used	*n*	Percent
Face-to-face	31	57.41%
Printed manual	8	14.81%
Institutional website	6	11.11%
Online, using content/learning management program	5	9.26%
Video/CD/DVD	2	3.70%
Other	2	3.70%

*Duplicated count

Responses indicated most (65.22%) respondents' institutions provide orientation for adjunct faculty "after the hiring process, but before classes begin." Respondents were next asked to select from four timeframes to indicate when their orientation sessions took place. Table 14 provides information on the frequency of the responses.

Table 14

Timeframe for Delivery of Adjunct Faculty Orientation (n = 46)

Orientation Timeframe	*n*	Percent
After the hiring process, but before classes begin	30	65.22%
Flexible delivery (available when desired – for example, online)	7	15.22%
After classes begin	6	13.04%
During the hiring process	3	6.52%

When asked "How much time is required to complete the orientation program?" a majority of respondents indicated one full day or less was required to complete their institutions'

orientation programs for adjunct faculty. No respondent indicated the sessions required multiple days. Several selected the "other" category and listed three related responses including "Added time with chair;" and "It is basically learn as you go. When you have a question, reach out to your supervisor to ask." Table 15 provides a summary of responses for this question.

Table 15

Time Required to Complete Orientation Program (n = 36)

Time Required	*n*	Percent
One-half day or less	25	69.44%
One full day	5	13.89%
Other	4	11.11%
Various timeframe (e.g., self-paced, online orientation)	2	5.56%
Multiple days	0	0.00%

Often, institutions find it necessary to provide motivation for faculty members to attend meetings such as orientation sessions; however, nearly half of the respondents (41.86%) in this study indicated no incentives were provided to entice adjunct faculty's attendance. A meal (32.56%) was the incentive offered most often by institutions, according to respondents. A summary of responses can be seen in Table 16.

Table 16

Incentives Provided to Adjunct Faculty for Attending Orientation Programs (n = 43)

Incentives Provided	*n*	Percent
No incentives	18	41.86%
Meal	14	32.56%
Required as a condition for hiring	5	11.63%
Gifts (e.g., pen sets, briefcase, branded college items)	4	9.30%
Additional pay/stipend	1	2.33%
Recognition (e.g., certificate or other)	1	2.33%
Release time	0	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%

RQ2: Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

The second research question examined the relationship between the presence of orientation for adjunct faculty members at their respective institutions and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty's performance. Six Likert items were included in the survey to gauge mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality in the following areas: course design and delivery; fostering student success; handling student challenges in the classroom; administrative aspects of teaching, such as attendance, paperwork, etc.; support of the institutional mission, including vision and goals; and knowledge of operations, including how to get doors unlocked, how to use technology in the

classroom, etc. These six questions helped establish measures of quality which could be affected by support practices.

Respondents were asked to rate their adjunct faculty as excellent, fair, or poor across the six dimensions cited above. They were also given the opportunity to respond with "cannot evaluate," if necessary. For purposes of data interpretation, the nominal ratings were quantified as follows: Excellent = 3; Fair = 2; Poor = 1; and Cannot Evaluate = 0. The lowest mean scores were in fostering student success (*M = 1.74*) and administrative aspects of teaching (*M = 1.88*). Ratings related to handling student challenges in the classroom were the most uniform, with responses clustering closest to the mean (*M = 2.0*). The course design and delivery responses yielded the largest deviation (*SD = 1.07*) among the responses.

Table 17 provides a summary of responses about the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of course design and delivery. For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." Only one respondent rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 17

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Course Design and Delivery (n = 37)

Dimensions of Quality – Course Design and Delivery	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	14	41.18%
Fair	16	47.06%
Poor	1	2.94%
Cannot evaluate	6	17.65%

Table 18 provides a summary of responses about the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of fostering student success. For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." No one rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 18

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Fostering Student Success (n = 34)

Dimensions of Quality – Fostering Student Success	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	15	44.12%
Fair	16	47.06%
Poor	–	–
Cannot evaluate	3	8.82%

Table 19 provides information about responses on the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of handling student challenges in the classroom. For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." No one rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 19

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Handling Student Challenges in the Classroom (n = 34)

Dimensions of Quality – Handling Student Challenges in the Classroom	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	8	23.53%
Fair	22	64.71%
Poor	–	–
Cannot evaluate	4	11.76%

A summary of responses about the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of administrative aspects of teaching can be found in Table 20. The question included suggestions for this category that included "attendance" and "paperwork." For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." Only one respondent rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 20

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Administrative Aspects of Teaching (n = 34)

Dimensions of Quality – Administrative Aspects of Teaching	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	14	41.18%
Fair	14	41.18%
Poor	2	5.88%
Cannot evaluate	4	11.76%

Table 21 provides a summary of responses about the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of support of institutional mission. For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." Three respondents rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 21

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Support of Institutional Mission (n = 34)

Dimensions of Quality – Support of Institutional Mission	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	12	35.29%
Fair	14	41.18%
Poor	3	8.82%
Cannot evaluate	5	14.71%

Table 22 provides information about responses on the dimensions of quality for adjunct faculty in the area of knowledge of institutional operations. Examples provided for this question included "how to get doors unlocked," "how to have copies made," and "how to use technology in the classroom." For this question, mid-level administrators most often rated their adjunct faculty as "fair." Three respondents rated their adjunct faculty as "poor" in this area.

Table 22

Dimensions of Quality for Adjunct Faculty, Knowledge of Institutional Operations (n = 33)

Dimensions of Quality – Knowledge of Institutional Operations	*n*	*Percent*
Excellent	9	27.27%
Fair	17	51.52%
Poor	3	9.09%
Cannot evaluate	4	12.12%

To determine if there was any relationship between adjunct faculty support practices at West Virginia community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty, a bivariate analysis was conducted between select categorial data collected relating to orientation

practices and evaluation sections of the survey with the six Likert questions that measured the administrators' perceptions.

Only one relationship was noted during the analysis: a relationship between the percentage of adjunct faculty and participants' perceptions of adjunct faculty members' effectiveness in course design and delivery (CDD). This relationship was a negative one, meaning that, as the percentage of adjunct faculty increased, mid-level administrators' perceptions of quality in course design and delivery decreased. Table 23 demonstrates this negative relationship.

Table 23

Correlation Between Percentage of Adjunct Faculty and Participants' Perceptions of Effectiveness in Course Delivery and Design (CDD)

		Percentage of faculty with adjunct status	Dimensions of quality – CDD
Percent of faculty with adjunct status	Pearson Correlation	1	-.358*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.048
	N	34	31
Dimensions of quality – CDD	Pearson Correlation	-.358*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	
	N	31	34

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Bivariate analyses were also conducted between the percentage of adjunct faculty members and respondents' perceptions of how well adjunct faculty foster student success; between providing a handbook to adjunct faculty members and respondents' perceptions of adjunct faculty fostering student success and adjunct faculty members' effectiveness in course delivery and design; between whether orientation is mandatory or optional and perceptions of

course design and delivery; between whether orientation is mandatory or options and perceptions of adjunct faculty effectiveness in fostering student success; between orientation structure (self-directed or otherwise) and perceptions of adjunct faculty effectiveness in fostering student success; and between orientation structure and perceptions of effectiveness in course delivery and design. None of these tests, however, revealed any significant statistical relationships.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the availability of orientation programs for adjunct faculty at West Virginia Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) affected mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty. The survey collected mainly categorical data describing what was being done at each community and technical college regarding orientation supports for adjunct faculty.

At the 9 community and technical colleges in the study, the mean percentage of faculty who had adjunct faculty status during the year was 37%. Nationally, the data show about three quarters of non-tenure track faculty are adjuncts, an inconsistency that is likely explained by the small sample of this study. The mean percentage of all courses taught by adjunct faculty was 28.35%. Among respondents, slightly more than half (55.56%) indicated they had not received any training on providing faculty support in the area of orientation during the past five years, yet 27.06% had provided adjunct faculty support during the academic year in question.

A majority of respondents indicated in their academic units, orientation for adjunct faculty was available, but not mandatory (M = 68.57%). The human resources department (18.63%), dean (15.69%), or department chair (14.71%), were most often identified as the party responsible for providing orientation for adjunct faculty, followed closely by the division chair (13.73%).

Respondents revealed a group training for adjuncts only (37.14%) was the leading structure for orientation, followed by individualized training (28.57%), and self-directed or mixed group (17.14% each). Face-to-face (57.41%) was the most often identified method for offering orientation, followed by printed manual (14.81%). A large number of respondents (65.22%) indicated orientation was provided to adjunct faculty after the hiring process, but before classes begin. Most orientation sessions were completed in one-half day or less (69.44%), according to respondents, and the most common incentive provided for attending was a meal (32.56%). Nearly a third reported no incentive was offered.

The most common institutional topics covered in orientation sessions were institutional mission, vision and goals (19.13%); workload policies and procedures (19.13%); pay schedule (17.39%); and emergency procedures (17.39%), according to respondents. Purchasing (.87%) and sick leave (2.61%) were the two least frequently covered topics. The instructional topics covered in orientation sessions most often were course syllabi (19.08%); the academic calendar (16.45%); course management software (17.76%); and classroom management, attendance, behavior, and grade posting (14.47%).

Student support services (44.64%), advising (16.07%), and student diversity (12.50%) were the most common student support topics taught during orientation, according to respondents. Among logistical support topics, email access (16.97%), technology use (15.15%), and printer/copier use (12.73%) led the responses. Nearly one-third of respondents indicated adjunct faculty received an adjunct-faculty-specific handbook (38.89%) or the same handbook that is provided to full-time faculty (27.78%).

The final series of questions addressed perceptions of mid-level administrators on the quality of adjunct faculty work. A series of bivariate analyses returned only one significant

finding: a relationship between the percentage of adjunct faculty and participants' perceptions of adjunct faculty members' effectiveness in course design and delivery. This relationship was negative, meaning as the percentage of adjunct faculty increased, mid-level administrators' perceptions of quality in course design and delivery decreased at the .05 confidence level (.358). Chapter Five will compare the findings of this study with the literature and provide recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine West Virginia Community and Technical College System mid-level administrators' perceptions of the teaching quality of their adjunct faculty, examining the availability of orientation as identified in the research literature at those institutions and to determine whether the findings in the seminal study (Oprean, 2012) can be generalized to other community college systems. Two research questions were used to examine administrative support for adjunct faculty and its possible relationship to perceptions of teaching quality:

1. What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?
2. Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

An electronic survey was sent to mid-level administrators (i.e., deans, associate or assistant deans, program directors, and/or department chairpersons) who worked at West Virginia community and technical colleges (CTCs) during the 2017-2018 academic year. Ninety-one administrators from nine institutions were identified and were provided access to the web-delivered survey. A total of forty-two participants, yielding a response rate of 46.2%, responded to part or all of the survey. The 16-item survey instrument was based on a survey from a study that was replicated in this research (Oprean, 2012). The original survey instrument was altered to fit the needs of the current study because this study focused solely on orientation practices; items related to hiring, professional development, and evaluation were therefore removed.

The instrument was divided into three sections. The first section gathered demographic information about the mid-level administrators' work in supervising adjunct faculty and about their institutions' use of adjunct faculty support practices. The second section collected information about orientation as a function of adjunct faculty support. The third section focused on mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality in six areas of teaching: course design and delivery; fostering student success; handling student challenges in the classroom; administrative aspects of teaching; support of the institutional mission; and knowledge of operations.

The remainder of this chapter highlights the significant findings from the survey data collected. Conclusions drawn will be used to examine potential implications, future practices, and recommendations for future studies.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings will be organized by research question. The first focuses on orientation practices, while the second examines a potential relationship between orientation practices and mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality across six separate categories.

Research Question One: What adjunct faculty orientation practices have been implemented in West Virginia community colleges?

The research literature provided information regarding both existing faculty orientation practices and recommendations about orientation practices in higher education. Orientation for faculty in general can be viewed as a three-part process: the first is orienting oneself to the surroundings (e.g., campus, parking, classroom or lab locations, office or cubicle, etc.); the second involves orienting oneself to the job (e.g., the kinds of syllabi that are used, which texts

are prescribed, assignment and evaluation expectations, etc.); and the third is institutional (e.g., the policies and practices to which faculty must adhere).

While the research literature does not specify whether some institutions generally perform better in the area of orientation than others, it does focus on several other areas including requirements for participation, delivery of information, type of information, length of orientation program, incentives for participating, and benefits for adjunct faculty.

In this study of West Virginia community and technical colleges, information was gathered about orientation for adjunct faculty on the following topics:

- who has been trained in providing orientation;
- availability of orientation and whether it is mandatory;
- who conducts orientation;
- what the structure of orientation programs is;
- what format for orientation is used; and
- how long orientation lasts.

During the past five years, 44.44% of mid-level administrators responding had received training focused on adjunct faculty support in the area of orientation. Most respondents (68.57%) indicated orientation for adjunct faculty is available at their institutions, but not mandatory, while 31.43% of respondents indicated orientation is available and is mandatory.

Based on the results of the current West Virginia CTC research study, the responsibility for orientation is divided somewhat equally across seven administrative positions or offices, with the human resources department (18.63%), deans (15.69%), department chairs (14.71%), and division chairs (13.73%) being identified most frequently by respondents as the responsible parties.

Responses about the structure of orientation programs demonstrated there was little difference among the four major types with the highest percentage of respondents indicating the orientation structure at their institutions was a group orientation with adjunct faculty only (37.14%). Approximately one-third of respondents indicated the orientation structure at their institutions was individualized (28.57%), including one-on-one mentoring. Self-directed orientation, consisting of a printed manual or online training was the chosen structure for 17.14% of respondents, while mixed-group orientation (i.e., all new employees, both permanent and part-time) was indicated by 17.14% of respondents.

Orientation programs were most often conducted face-to-face (57.41%), followed by the use of a printed manual (14.81%), and a reference to the institutional website (11.11%). More than half of respondents indicated orientation is offered after the hiring process, but before classes begin (65.22%) and lasted one-half day or less (69.44%). When asked about what incentives were provided to attendees, 41.86% of respondents indicated no incentives were provided.

Another aspect of orientation lacking in many colleges and universities for adjunct faculty nationwide is a handbook designed specifically for adjunct faculty. An absence of written materials that demonstrate policies, procedures, and available support structures can lead to ambiguity and discomfort for any new faculty member, and that confusion is multiplied for adjuncts.

About one-third of respondents in the West Virginia CTC study indicated adjunct faculty received an adjunct faculty-specific handbook (38.89%) or they received the same handbook that is provided to full-time faculty (27.78%). One-third of respondents indicated no handbook was provided to adjunct faculty (33.33%), and while this finding aligns with the literature, future

consideration of providing handbooks to all adjunct faculty could strengthen the faculty members' sense of departmental support and better understanding of policies and procedures (Wickun & Stanley, 2000).

Summary

The study data showed similarities between West Virginia community and technical colleges (CTCs) and North Carolina CTCs. In both states, fewer than 50% of orientation programs were mandatory for adjunct faculty. Group orientation for adjuncts only and mentoring were the two preferred methods in both states. The major difference between the states' orientation systems was in North Carolina, the department chair is most often responsible for orientation for adjunct faculty. In West Virginia, the field of responses was nearly equally divided with mid-level administrators reporting those responsible for orientation for adjuncts were human resources departments (18.63%), deans (15.69%), department chairs (14.71%), vice presidents for academic affairs (11.76%) and full-time faculty (11.76%).

According to the study data, a typical orientation program for adjunct faculty at West Virginia CTCs included an optional orientation session, which was held after hiring, but before classes began. The predominant delivery system was face-to-face group orientation with adjuncts only. The orientation lasted one-half day or less. Handbooks were presented during orientation, but incentives for attending were not.

Research Question Two: Is there a relationship between adjunct orientation practices implemented at community colleges and mid-level administrators' perceptions of the quality of their adjunct faculty?

The orientation process for adjunct faculty should include the three parts: orienting oneself to the institution, orienting oneself to the job, and orienting oneself to the surroundings

(Curtis & Jacobe, 2006). According to the current study, West Virginia's CTCs provide orientation in the following areas:

- institutional materials (orienting oneself to the institution);
- instructional topics (orienting oneself to the job);
- student support topics (orienting oneself to the job); and
- logistical support topics (orienting oneself to the surroundings).

Elements of the hiring process often contribute to problems in accomplishing two of the steps – orienting oneself to the job and to the surroundings. Adjunct faculty are often hired at the last minute to fill positions. The swift hiring process leads adjunct faculty to lack familiarity with the campus and the curriculum.

Baldwin and Chronister (2001) described a short-term hiring process for adjunct faculty that excluded important faculty support practices such as orientation. Even in cases when adjunct faculty were hired to teach the same classes each year, they were frequently kept on a list of potential hires and notified to report to work with very little notice. This process has been even more difficult for new adjunct faculty because they were unfamiliar with the institution, its policies, or where to find basic faculty needs such as a copier, the library, or classrooms.

Last-minute hiring and a lack of orientation also creates a difficult situation for adjunct faculty members to affiliate with the institution. This lack of connection often leads them to decline to participate in campus life as full-time faculty do. Adjunct faculty are often paid only to teach, and so they rarely perform other important duties such as serving on committees and advising students. They also frequently lack a clear understanding of "how the courses they teach fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole" (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006, p. 9).

A benefit of orientation programs was a feeling among adjunct faculty of an affiliation with the institution. Hutti et al. (2007) found orientation programs can make adjunct faculty feel "more a part of the academic community" (p. 176). Wagoner, Metcalfe, and Olaore (2005) suggested that administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality were a product of the level to which adjuncts were included in the institution's culture. The study recommended administrators identify the cultural framework (traditional, service, hierarchical, or business) under which their institution operates and examine how the culture aligns with the institution's mission in order to determine whether the use of adjunct faculty falls within their overall mission and goals.

Few studies have examined administrators' perceptions of quality of their adjunct faculty. Green (2007) suggested administrators must provide both initial orientation and ongoing training to ensure quality in part-time faculty, and that these activities are of "critical value" (p. 32) to the institution.

Six measures of quality (i.e., course design and delivery; fostering student success; handling student challenges in the classroom; administrative aspects of teaching; support of the institutional mission; and knowledge of operations) based on Oprean's (2012) study were incorporated into this study as independent variables. Of the six, only one yielded a significant finding. A bivariate correlation between the percentage of faculty with adjunct status and the course delivery and design dimension of quality reflected a negative relationship. In other words, the higher the percentage of adjunct faculty identified at the institution, the lower mid-level administrators' perceptions of quality were in the area of course delivery and design. A natural recommendation might be to hire fewer adjunct faculty if one anticipates reduced instructional quality. Given the economic reasons for hiring adjunct faculty (e.g., lower cost to

the institution versus full-time faculty and the flexibility in engaging and disengaging adjunct faculty), however, this is an unlikely scenario.

West Virginia CTCs provide orientation in a variety of ways and on a variety of topics, but a more straightforward, uniform system adopted by the CTC system would be helpful in assuring adjunct faculty are provided with a full body of needed information. Perhaps a system that included an initial group face-to-face orientation that includes the receipt of an adjunct faculty handbook and followed by mentoring by a more experienced faculty member could strengthen the adjunct faculty members' feeling of connection to the institution (Green, 2007). This type of orientation structure could also help adjunct faculty better understand how they fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

While the current study did not seek to discover how adjunct faculty feel about their role or connection with the institution, the survey did ask mid-level administrators how they viewed the quality of their adjunct faculty with regard to their support of the institutional mission. More than three-fourths of respondents rated their adjunct faculty as excellent or fair on this survey item.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ADJUNCT ORIENTATION

Mid-level administrators participating in this study provided further insight into the role of orientation for adjunct faculty within their institutions that can contribute to the existing research. As a result of their input, one recommendation that can be made to strengthen orientation programs and provide a more inclusive environment for adjunct faculty is to create a uniform orientation program within the West Virginia Community and Technical College System that includes the following opportunities:

a. initial face-to-face orientation session, optional but with incentives for attendance;
b. an online orientation course that can be completed at the adjunct faculty member's pace;
c. one-on-one or small group mentoring by a more experienced full-time or adjunct faculty member; and
d. an adjunct faculty-specific handbook.

These four components of an orientation program could strengthen the adjunct faculty members' feelings of connection to the institution (Green, 2007) and help them better understand how they fit into the overall instructional objectives of their department or the institution as a whole (Curtis & Jacobe, 2006).

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

This study provided information related to current literature about adjunct faculty in community colleges, which served as an overall strength due to the timely nature of the topic, but also experienced several limitations. The study occurred at a time when adjunct faculty numbers were a growing force in the community college system. The subject of the study, mid-level administrators' perceptions of adjunct faculty quality, had not been markedly researched. A further strength was a survey instrument that had been reviewed by a panel of experts, pilot tested, and pre-/post-tested by the original researcher in 2012 was used to gather data.

There were, however, some limitations in this study. The survey would have benefited from the inclusion of a question that asked respondents to list their administrative titles. This factor would have yielded a great deal more data with which to work. A second limitation of the study was the overall sample size (i.e., N=91); however, the survey yielded a return rate of approximately 46.2% -- so while the potential participant pool was small, nearly half participated

in the study. Because of this limited pool of subjects, following up the survey with interviews or focus groups of selected mid-level administrators in order to tease out more pertinent information about their perceptions of adjunct faculty quality could have enhanced the findings.

Having knowledge of the percentage of adjunct faculty who attend orientation could also be helpful in understanding its importance to adjuncts, as well as its importance to institutions (e.g., Do they view it as sufficiently important to require attendance? Are there consequences for not attending?). Adding a question asking what percentage of adjunct faculty attend orientation could provide some insight into those issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Mid-level administrators participating in this study provided further insight into the role of orientation for adjunct faculty within their institutions that can contribute to the existing research. Future studies could extend these findings by taking a qualitative approach to better capture the experiences and views of mid-level administrators, or others who hire and supervise adjuncts, regarding a number of things, the quality of orientation practices and perceptions of the adjunct faculty members under their supervision among them. This type of research could perhaps shed some light on the negative relationship that appeared between the percentage of adjunct faculty teaching and administrators' perceptions of their quality.

Future research could also be conducted on how adjunct faculty view the orientation practices at their institutions. Adjunct faculty participating in the orientation activities would be in an excellent position to provide feedback about the quality of the practices, as well as their perceptions about their inclusion in the culture of the institution. Green (2007) recommended continuing to gather feedback from adjunct faculty about the institution's orientation process, asserting that the information is "easily attained yet rarely acquired" (p. 32).

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

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

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

September 24, 2018

Barbara Nicholson, PhD
College of Education and Professional Development

RE: IRBNet ID# 1305705-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Nicholson:

Protocol Title:	[1305705-1] How the Presence of Adjunct Faculty Orientation affects Perceptions of Mid-level Administrators about Adjunct Faculty Quality in West Virginia Community Colleges
Site Location:	MUGC
Submission Type:	New Project APPROVED
Review Type:	Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(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 (including the addition of research staff) must be submitted and approved by the IRB Chair/Designee.

This study is for student Gina Taylor.

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.

APPENDIX B: ADJUNCT FACULTY SURVEY

Dear Colleague:

You are being invited to participate in a statewide research project entitled *How the Presence of Adjunct Faculty Orientation affects Perceptions of Mid-level Administrators about Adjunct Faculty Quality in West Virginia Community Colleges.* The study is being conducted by Gina Taylor, EdD candidate, and her faculty advisor Dr. Barbara Nicholson from the College of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University. The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies at Marshall University.

Participation in this survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. The survey is comprised of a series of multiple choice and Likert-scale questions and should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Do not enter your name or other identifying information anywhere on the survey. Your IP address will not be collected, and once you complete the survey, you can delete your browsing history for added security. Results will be reported only in aggregate form. There will be no reporting of individual responses.

There are no known risks involved in participating in this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the research study. If you choose not to participate, you may leave the survey site. You may also choose not to answer any question by simply leaving it blank. Once you begin the survey, you may end your participation at any time by simply closing your browser. Completion of the online survey indicates your consent to use your responses as part of this study.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Barbara Nicholson at 304-746-2094 or at bnicholson@marshall.edu, or Gina Taylor at Gina.Taylor@mail.wvu.edu.

If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Marshall University Office of Research Integrity at 304-696-4303.

By completing this survey, you are confirming that you are 18 years of age or older. Please print this page for your records.

If you choose to participate in this study, please access the survey using the link below.

Part I

1. Regarding adjunct faculty employed under your supervision during the 2017-2018 year:
   - Estimate the percent of the total faculty who had adjunct faculty status during the 2017-2018 year _____
   - Estimate the percent of all courses taught by adjunct faculty under your supervision during the 2017-2018 year _____
   - Estimate the percent of fully online courses taught by adjunct faculty under your supervision during the 2017-2018 year _____

   For the purpose of this study, "Orientation" will be defined as the following:

   Orientation – The process used when new adjunct faculty are introduced to their role at the institution. Orientation will be identified as occurring from a period of time prior to employment through the first month of employment.

2. During the last five years, have you received training (e.g., instructional, seminar, or conference-related) focused on adjunct faculty support in the area of orientation?

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

3. Thinking about the 2017-2018 academic year, indicate any of the areas listed below in which you provided adjunct faculty support.

   ☐ Hiring ☐ Professional Development

   ☐ Orientation ☐ Evaluation

Part II: Adjunct Faculty Orientation Practices

In this section, think of orientation as the process used when new adjunct faculty are introduced to their role at the institution. Orientation will be identified as occurring from a period of time prior to employment through the first month of employment. Your responses should be based on the 2017-2018 academic year.

4. For adjunct faculty in my academic unit, orientation is

    ○ available and participation is not mandatory.

    ○ available and participation is mandatory.

5. Who is responsible for providing orientation for adjunct faculty? Click on all that apply.

    ☐ Vice-president of instruction (academic affairs)

    ☐ Dean

    ☐ Division chair

    ☐ Department chair

    ☐ Human resources department

    ☐ Academic support department for faculty

    ☐ Full-time faculty

    ☐ Adjunct faculty department

    ☐ Other (explain) _____

6. Which of the following best describes the structure of the orientation program for adjunct faculty?

    ○ Self-directed (e.g., printed manual, online training, etc.)

○ Individualized (e.g., one-on-one mentoring)

○ Group (adjuncts only)

○ Mixed group (all new employees, both permanent and part-time)

○ Other (explain) _____

7. Which of the following institutional materials are covered during the orientation? Click on all that apply.

☐ Institutional mission, vision, and goals

☐ Pay schedule

☐ Pay scale

☐ Benefits

☐ Sick leave

☐ Workload policies and procedures

☐ Emergency procedures

☐ Purchasing

☐ None

☐ Other (explain) _____

8. Which of the following instructional topics are covered during the orientation? Click on all that apply.

☐ Instructional material (e.g., books, supplemental, and testing materials)

☐ Academic calendar

☐ Classroom management, attendance, behavior, grade posting

☐ Course syllabus

☐ Course management software (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, publisher-specific, etc.)

☐ Scheduling

☐ Training opportunities

☐ Pedagogical strategies

☐ Learning styles

☐ None

☐ Other (explain) _____

9. Which of the following student support topics are covered during the orientation? Click on all that apply.

☐ Student support services (e.g., tutoring, labs, etc.)

☐ Student diversity

☐ Advising

☐ Campus events

☐ Club information

☐ None

☐ Other (explain) _____

10. Which of the following logistical support features are covered during the orientation? Click on all that apply.

☐ Campus map

☐ Campus tour

☐ Printer/copier use

☐ Library support

☐ Office space

☐ Telephone access

☐ Mailroom access

☐ Telephone directory

☐ Email access

☐ Voicemail

☐ Office supplies

☐ Technology use

☐ None

☐ Other (explain) _____

11. Is a handbook provided to the adjunct faculty?

○ Yes, an adjunct-specific handbook

○ Yes, the same handbook that is provided to full-time faculty

○ No, a handbook is not provided

12. Which methods are used to deliver the orientation program? Click on all that apply.

☐ Face-to-face

☐ Video/CD/DVD

☐ Online using content/learning management program (e.g., Moodle, Blackboard, etc.)

☐ Institutional website

☐ Printed material

☐ Other (explain) _____

13. When is the orientation program provided? Click on all that apply.

☐ During the hiring process

☐ After the hiring process, but before classes begin

☐ After classes begin

☐ Flexible delivery (available when desired – for example, online)

14. How much time is required to complete the orientation program?

○ One-half day or less

○ One full day

○ Multiple days

○ Various time (self-paced, online orientation)

○ Other (explain) _____

15. What incentives are provided to adjunct faculty for attending the orientation program? Click on all that apply.

☐ Required as a condition for hiring

☐ Additional pay/stipend

☐ Gifts (e.g., pen sets, briefcase, branded college items, etc.)

☐ Recognition (e.g., certificate or other)

☐ Release time

☐ Meal

☐ No incentives

☐ Other (explain) _____

Part III: Quality of Adjunct Faculty

Your responses should be based on 2017-2018 practices for adjunct faculty under your supervision.

	Excellent	Fair	Poor	Cannot Evaluate
Course design and delivery	○	○	○	○
Fostering student success	○	○	○	○
Handling student challenges in the classroom	○	○	○	○
Administrative aspects of teaching (e.g., attendance, paperwork)	○	○	○	○
Support of the institutional mission, which includes vision and goals	○	○	○	○
Knowledge of operations (e.g., how to get doors unlocked, how to use technology in the classroom, etc.)	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY POPULATION

Invitations to participate in this research study were sent to mid-level administrators at the following institutions of higher education:

1. Blue Ridge Community and Technical College (Martinsburg, WV)
2. Bridge Valley Community and Technical College (South Charleston, WV)
3. Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College (Moorefield, WV)
4. Mountwest Community and Technical College (Huntington, WV)
5. New River Community and Technical College (Beaver, WV)
6. Pierpont Community and Technical College (Fairmont, WV)
7. Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (Mount Gay, WV)
8. West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College (Wheeling, WV)
9. West Virginia University at Parkersburg (Parkersburg, WV)

APPENDIX D: VITA

Gina M. Taylor

Education

EdD, Marshall University, 2020
Major: Leadership Studies
Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Higher Education Administration

MA, Mary Baldwin College, 1995
Major: Teaching
Supporting Areas of Emphasis: Grades 4-9 - Reading, Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics

BA, Mary Baldwin College, 1992
Major: Economics

Professional Positions

Extension Agent/Extension Associate Professor, West Virginia University Extension Service, Cottageville, WV, USA. (2008 - Present).

Interim Director for Families & Health Programs, West Virginia University Extension Service, Morgantown, WV, USA. (2015-2017).

Program Leader for 4-H Youth Education/1890 State 4-H Program Leader – Gus R. Douglass Institute, West Virginia State University Extension (2005-2008)

Interim Program Leader for Family and Consumer Sciences Program Area – Gus R. Douglass Institute, West Virginia State University Extension (2006-2007)

Extension Specialist/1890 State 4-H Program Leader - Division of Agricultural, Consumer, Environmental and Outreach Programs – Office of 4-H Youth Education, West Virginia State University Extension (2004-2005)

Adjunct Faculty – Bridge Valley State Community and Technical College – *College 101* (2004-2005)

Extension Agent (Instructor level) – Center for 4-H and Youth, Family and Adult Development, West Virginia University Extension Service (2000-2003)

Licensures and Certifications

85-4 Adult Teaching Permit, State of West Virginia. (June 20, 2010 - Present).

Published Intellectual Contributions

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