2022

Community College Faculty Perceptions of Online Student Engagement

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Teri Cruzan

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2013

BA, Western Washington University, 1994

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Low student engagement and high attrition rates in online classes were observed at community colleges in a Western U.S. state. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore online faculty members' perceptions of student engagement and how they described their teaching practices and experiences. The study was grounded in the community of inquiry, a collaborative and constructivist model, which posits that social, cognitive, and teaching presences are critical to engagement and online learning. Data were collected from 10 online faculty members who provided responses to an online qualitative survey. Data analysis involved coding by hand in several stages to identify emerging themes. Findings revealed that faculty members valued and promoted student engagement. However, the faculty did not foster learning communities or provide specific information about teaching strategies. Although faculty members' home institutions offered support, they did not offer a formal training program or online faculty development program. This study included a position paper supporting the implementation of an online faculty development program that would contribute to positive social change through higher levels of engagement among faculty and students, improved learning outcomes, and higher completion rates in online classes.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to David Ellis, the father of my children who was a longtime supporter of my educational pursuits. We built a unique family, after our marriage was dissolved, and remained close as co-parents and dear friends. David provided emotional and practical support to my children and me for many years, which helped make college possible despite tremendous obstacles. David passed away in August 2015 after a sudden and brief illness, and his last counsel to me was to continue my studies and not allow his death or anything to prevent me from completing my doctoral studies.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Walden University committee members, Dr. Carole Pearce, Dr. Maureen Ellis, and former committee member, Dr. Leda Santos. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Nancy Walters who served as my chair and provided me with excellent academic advice and support for many years during this journey.

I would like to acknowledge several of my professors and mentors who supported and challenged me over many years with their direction, feedback, questions, advice, and brilliant teaching and scholarship. I am indebted to many professors but would especially like to thank Dr. Myles Robinson of Grays Harbor Community College, the late Dr. Thomas C. R. Horn, Dr. James Louckey at Western Washington University, and Dr. Elizabeth Mancke at the University of New Brunswick.

I want to thank family members Richard Averre, Nathan Cruzan, Morgan Ellis, and Michael Carr for their many years of love and support during my quest to further my education. They understood and supported my need to be a lifelong learner. I must also thank my dearest friend and adopted sister, Katherine Dalen, for friendship, kinship, and love. I feel so grateful for the many hours we spent talking and listening to one another, almost daily over the past 25 years.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problems investigated in this study were low student engagement and high attrition rates in online classes at community colleges in a Western U.S. state. Student engagement, course completion rates, and grade point averages for online students have improved over the past decade since 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2013), but these rates are still very low compared to rates for students in traditional classes. Community colleges enroll more online students than other higher education institutions enroll in the United States, and access to higher education has increased because of open door admissions policies (Traver et al., 2013). According to the elearning director at the primary site (referred to as Western Washington Community College [WWCC]), low engagement is a problem reflected in student satisfaction surveys, instructor feedback, and high dropout rates (Xu & Smith Jaggars, 2011). For example, the 2015–2016 course completion rates for math were only 75%, and only 60% of those students earned satisfactory grades (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2016).

Over 20 years of research about online learning supported the problem and wider phenomenon of low engagement in online colleges (Nguyen, 2011). Researchers have argued that low student engagement is associated with poor learning outcomes, low student satisfaction rates, high dropout rates, and lower graduation rates (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Hobson & Puruhito; 2018, McClenney et al.; 2016, Quaye & Harper, 2014), and low student engagement can negatively impact a student's academic standing or access to federal financial aid (Caldalora, 2014). High dropout rates and low

graduation rates may lead to increased tuition costs and could have implications for a college's access to federal funding programs that are tied to college completion rates (Humphreys, 2012). Given the growing number of online programs in general and community colleges (Allen & Seaman, 2017), there is a need for research focused on community college online faculty and their perceptions of and experiences with student engagement. Allen and Seaman (2017) reported the number of online students continues to increase annually. Over 6.7 million students were taking at least one online course, and the percentage of online students was at a record high of 32% of all student enrollments. Even though there has been tremendous growth of online education, many academic leaders, faculty members, employers, and the general public are unconvinced about the quality or value of online classes (Protopsaltis & Baum, 2019). Leading researchers noted that a gap in practice exists between instructors' perceptions and practices in online instruction and various roles instructors assume in teaching an online class (Chang et al., 2014). This gap in practice was a problem at community colleges in the state and at the primary site (Xu & Smith Jaggars; 2011; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Moreover, there was limited published data or research on faculty perceptions, experiences, and classroom activities that promote engagement for online programs at the community colleges in this study.

This study was well underway prior to the global pandemic of 2020, and COVID-19 was not intended as a part of the discussion or study of online education during any type of emergency. However, my study was delayed during 2020, and a few references were included after the crisis. Those more recent studies made reference to the ways

college instructors adapted to teaching online courses during the global emergency (Bolisani et al., 2020). During the beginning and throughout the peak of the global crisis, many colleges and schools around the world were shuttered and educational courses were moved online to protect the public health (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). I referenced the global pandemic and its effect in my study because it was too important to education, and the global crisis underscored the potential value of online education (see Bolisani et al., 2020). Bolisani et al. (2020) added that online student engagement, student satisfaction, and higher learning outcomes have become more important since the global pandemic. Programs that support faculty members teaching online are a necessity and an investment that could save education in a future emergency and improve the educational experience for online students in every context, including the primary study site.

Campus leaders at the primary research site were concerned about low engagement and high dropout rates in the online program. The leaders reviewed students' surveys and instructors' feedback responses about engagement. The leaders also administered quantitative surveys to students to examine engagement in their elearning program. Leaders made no plans to survey or collect data from online faculty. The Office of Institutional Research on the campus of the research site formed a committee to examine student engagement, which was affiliated with The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Center for Community College Student Engagement. These educational organizations were dedicated to understanding and improving student engagement by supporting research, providing survey instruments, and publishing national survey results from universities and colleges throughout the United States and

Canada. These studies were designed to generate useful data; however, many studies that focused on individual students provided limited information. Engagement is a socially negotiated construct; therefore, the idea of engagement differed from one context, individual, or classroom to another. Many studies on engagement were conceptualized narrowly and did not include the perspectives of all participants (Jonasson, 2012). Learning about faculty perceptions of engagement and giving voice to their experiences in the online classroom may extend conceptualization and understanding of student engagement.

Rationale

Community colleges have a long history of providing distance education and as innovators using the most current technology. Community colleges also have an open door admissions policy and serve nontraditional and underrepresented student populations (Travers, 2016). After widespread public access to the internet and the development of learning platforms and content management systems, community colleges have been expanding to offer distance learning through online programs to more students than ever before (Allen & Seaman, 2017). It is imperative for the primary site and for all community colleges to offer quality online programs that promote student engagement for the success of distance education in general and elearning.

Online degree programs at the primary site and community colleges in the state reported graduation rates lower than 31% (Program Director, personal communication, November, 2016). Older studies on the state community colleges found that students were less likely to complete online courses, and withdrawal rates were estimated at 10%

to 15% higher than students who enrolled in face-to-face classes (Xu & Jaggars, 2011). More recent reports have indicated the attrition rate for online students may be as high as 50% higher than the attrition rate for on-campus students (Hobson & Puruhito, 2018). Most studies indicated that distance education is growing just under one half of all undergraduates are taking only online courses and one half of these students are enrolled in public intuitions (Allen & Seaman, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017). The concern about low student engagement and low course completion in online classes can be found in some of the earliest literature about online learning (Harasim, 1990; Harrington, 1999).

Student engagement in the online classroom continues to be a prominent subject of discourse. Numerous conferences, research studies, and national institutes have been dedicated to the problem of engaging online students, improving learning outcomes, and reducing attrition rates (Fear & Erikson-Brown, 2014; NSSE, 2017). There has been a confluence of new technologies, learning platforms, and social networks emerging as new teaching strategies, conceptual frameworks, and new learning theories have emerged. Wingo et al. (2017) argued that academic leaders could achieve success implementing online classes and programs if they had a greater understanding of faculty perceptions and experiences with online teaching. Research about faculty perceptions regarding student engagement could lead to programs that improve engagement and student retention rates and contribute to educational research.

Definition of Terms

Asynchronous online discussions (AOD): Online classroom discussions to which each student contributes from their own place and at different times within the scope and deadline that may be provided in the activity or course syllabus (Hrastinski, 2008).

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE): A survey instrument used to gather and publish information about community college quality, performance, and student engagement. The survey instrument and published surveys are disseminated to institutions and policymakers to assist in their efforts to improve student engagement, learning, and retention in community colleges (CCSSE, 2016).

Community of inquiry (CoI): A framework grounded on social constructivist theory that posits social, teaching, and cognitive presences are necessary to create a community of learners in asynchronous learning communities (Garrison & Vaughn, 2018). Each of these three presences can be broken down further into stages, phases, elements, categories, and are indicators of higher order and collaborative learning in asynchronous networks (Garrison & Vaughn, 2008).

Community of practice (CoP): Learning theories and educational communities that are formed, formally or informally, to engage in and share their learning and resources to improve their community, practice, or domain (Wenger, 2000).

Constructivism: A learning theory that posits students learn by constructing knowledge, making meaning, reflecting, and conducting self-analysis as part of the learning process (Brown, 2014).

elearning: A newer dynamic within educational systems that is involves the merging of multiple disciplines such as computer science, communication technology, and pedagogy to deliver distance education online through technology (Sangra et al., 2012).

Faculty development program (FDP): A formal program of courses, education, training, and faculty interactions in which a community or learners or faculty engage. FDP is intended to train and support online faculty members in higher education in an asynchronous online format, using the learning management system (LMS) of the college. The program is administered by the college, and faculty members participate online as one of the requirements of their job descriptions. The ongoing discussions, courses, and resources are accessible to all online faculty and staff members (Carvalho-Filhoer, & Tio, 2019).

High impact practices (HIP): Teaching and learning practices that are known to benefit diverse students, improve engagement, and increase retention rates. Some examples of HIPs in online context are first-year seminars and experiences with small groups, learning communities, collaborative assignments, diversity education, writing intensive courses, and capstone projects (Kuh, 2008).

Low student engagement: A problem when students are engaged minimally with online course content and have limited interactions with their instructors or their peers (Purajomandlangrudi et al., 2016).

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): A survey instrument used to collect data on student learning, personal development, and other engagement indicators that are benchmarks for collegiate success (NSSE, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Rapid advances in technology and the growth of online programs have led to increased educational access and unprecedented enrollment. The rapid growth in online learning programs and the increasing number of students necessitate ongoing research, flexibility, change, faculty training, and continual improvements to deliver high-quality courses and degree programs (Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Stone et al., 2016). Researchers examined student engagement and online learning from a myriad of approaches such as instructional strategies, teaching methodologies, institutional programs, departmental policies, and student and faculty experiences (Heinrich et al., 2016; Stone et al., 2016). Data gathered and published by the NSSE supported the importance of student engagement as a key factor in successful online learning (NSSE, 2017).

NSSE (2012) provided several examples of how institutions have made use of NSSE data. The University of Texas began circulating a newsletter with their most recent student engagement survey findings and reminded the faculty and campus community that student engagement increases success. The university launched an initiative to promote HIP, such as creating assessment rubrics based on survey findings, curriculum mapping templates, and strategic planning to improve levels of student engagement (NSSE, 2012). Ramapo College used NSSE survey data to identify key points of student

engagement, and then created a 4-year model with goals of academic, social, personal, and campus engagement (NSSE, 2012).

Program managers in the primary research site had not explored how faculty members respond to low student engagement, and they had not gathered data on instructional strategies or classroom activities that instructors use to improve student engagement. The current qualitative study was unique because it focused on perceptions and experiences of online instructors at community colleges. The instructors' responses added to the understanding and to the growing body of literature about low student engagement in online classrooms and online discussions (see Bollinger & Martin, 2018). The insight gained from this research could enrich the online teaching experience and foster a CoP. A CoP model could support faculty by reducing isolation and sharing teaching resources (Golden, 2016). Tinto (1998) argued that there was a need to create broader intellectual learning communities for faculty members and students, and that sharing of teaching experiences and resources could result in a revitalization and rediscovery of the benefits of engagement with others.

Findings from the current study may guide campus initiatives and professional development programs for faculty members. Findings could lead to higher levels of student engagement, improved learning outcomes, and higher completion rates in online classes. The improved faculty teaching programs and improved student outcomes could be beneficial to faculty, students, and the primary site and other online community college programs. The primary study site could gain information helpful to ongoing assessment and improvement process (see Lorenzetti, 2005). The program managers of

the college could also make progress toward compliance with college completion agendas by implementing programs, educational practices, and policies to increase in the number of students who complete courses and graduate (see Humphreys, 2012). These types of improvements are aligned with the mission statement of the community college and the commitment of educators to provide high-quality distance education with educational courses and programs available to underrepresented and nontraditional students.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQs) guided this qualitative study and were adapted from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE, 2017). The FSSE (2017) measures faculty and instructional staff members' experiences and expectations with student engagement and focuses on several aspects critical to student engagement. The FSSE focuses on the type and frequency of student interactions with faculty, how often faculty encourage students to collaborate, and how often faculty use effective teaching strategies. The qualitative research questions were used to guide the study on faculty members' perceptions and experiences with student engagement as well as classroom activities and strategies faculty use to foster student engagement.

RQ1: What are the instructional strategies that faculty members use to promote engagement in online discussions?

RQ2: How do faculty members identify or describe classroom activities and strategies they use to foster student engagement in online courses?

Review of the Literature

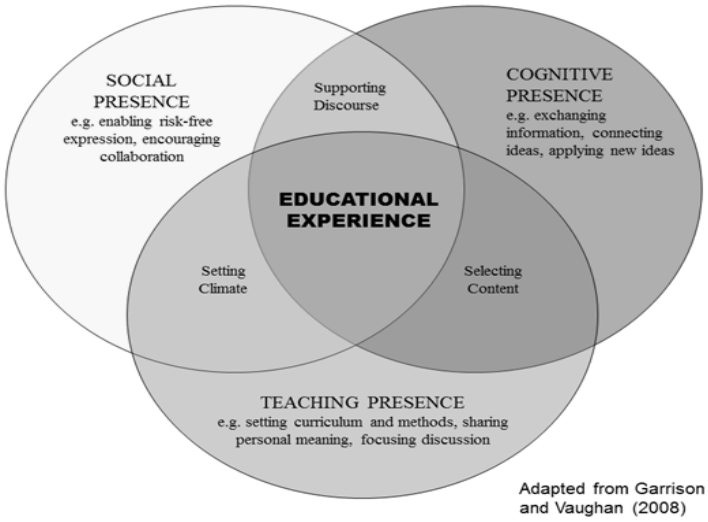
An extensive review of the literature was conducted online using Walden University Library databases and to a lesser extent Google Scholar. During my searches, I used combinations of search terms related to online education, student engagement and faculty development. Terms included related concepts such as *online discussions*, *low student engagement*, *faculty members' perceptions*, *constructivism*, and *learning community*. I also reviewed bibliographic references in some of the most relevant and current research articles, scholarly journals, and seminal texts. I found other articles and papers published online at institutes and research centers dedicated to advancing best practices in online education, student engagement, and the CoP and CoI model. I narrowed my search to include literature on community colleges, teaching and online learning, community college faculty, and professional development programs. I also searched for recently published doctoral studies through ProQuest and Walden University databases, with a focus on online learning and student engagement. The literature review was extensive because this project was in progress over several years' time. I included newer literature and the older sources that I consulted in the early stages of this research.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded by the CoI conceptual framework that applied to engagement, faculty perceptions, and classroom activities that support online learning (see Figure 1). The CoI framework is collaborative and constructivist and is a process that fosters deep learning through the social, cognitive, and teaching presences (Garrison et al., 2000; Garrison & Vaughn, 2008).

Figure 1

Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison & Vaughn, 2008)



A sense of community, fostering student engagement, and social support from instructors are considered necessary to have a positive effect on learner engagement, enthusiasm, and a learner's belief in their ability to be successful. The self-efficacy of learners becomes evident when a sense of community, engagement, and instructor support are established strongly in the classroom (Vayre & Vonthron, 2016). Students and instructors must be engaged and involved in community building; colleges should provide tools and technologies available to create a space for students and instructors to interact (Vayre & Vonthron, 2016). Yuan and Kim (2014) also presented the CoI model and proposed four essential guidelines to establish a community with an environment that supports learning and reduces isolation with increased interactions, including (a) a learning community should be established at the beginning of a course and that sense of community must be maintained throughout the term; (b) students and instructors must all

be engaged and involved in community building; (c) the instructor should use all technologies available to create a space for students and instructors to interact; and (d) instructors must stimulate online discussion and encourage task-based prompts, social interactions, and activities that require collaboration.

Online instructors should use strategies to help build a sense of community and facilitate learning by creating an engaging classroom environment with a variety of assessments to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all online students. The online environment should provide a myriad of opportunities to deliver and assess education; however, assessment practices are often limited and can be a barrier to participation that is problematic in group activities (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Gillett-Swan (2017) argued that collaborative learning and group activities will reduce isolation and contribute to engagement. Moreover, instructors can more closely observe their groups and offer assistance or support. Instructors who also share reflective experiences of assessment in local higher education community have the potential to enhance student learning (Gillett-Swan, 2017).

Denizer and Sadi (2021) used the CoI model to examine the relationships of 714 online students to learn about teaching, social, and cognitive presences, and the demographics and characteristics of students, such as age, occupation, college readiness, and student satisfaction. The amount of student presence was moderate, and there was no variation based on demographics; however, teaching and social presence had a high effect on cognitive presence and a high impact on student satisfaction. Although the courses examined in the study met the criteria for forming a CoI, the students' grades and

their moderate levels of presence indicated that the courses could be improved. A basic threaded online discussion board with one-size-fits-all prompts is no longer sufficient to promote optional leaning and high student satisfaction rates. Online courses should be more engaging and dynamic, with social and learning activities that foster deeper learning and critical thinking (Denizer & Sadi, 2021).

Capra's (2014), using the CoI framework, found that many traditional online teaching strategies and learning activities did not help improve student engagement, learning outcomes, or retention. Results of interviews indicated that the students did not find a meaningful connection to the courses; however, that disconnect was not due to a lack of presences in the CoI model. The students reported that they considered online discussion boards and PowerPoint presentations as busy work. Students admitted to doing only the minimum required, and many students stated they were not interested in the posts of other students. Capra advocated using the CoI model, problem-based learning, and authentic assessments to improve engagement and to measure student satisfaction with actual student learning instead of course outcomes.

In another use of the CoI model, teaching and cognitive presences did not have any significant impact on engagement, grades, or student satisfaction, and it was argued that online discussion may not be necessary and perhaps should not be mandatory in every online course (Cho & Tobias, 2016). Peacock and Cowan (2016) proposed an enhanced CoI model that linked the intersection of presences and their relationships to one another and the potential to positively impact online teaching and improve online students' learning experiences. Peacock and Cowan further argued that there is an

overlap of the social, cognitive, and teaching presences and that the impact of these presences has not been fully explored.

Online Discussions and Learning Communities

In a quantitative study of over 400 university students, Riaz et al. (2021) examined classroom engagement and online teaching in web-based learning environments. The results of the surveys were that student engagement was a key component of learning and had the most effect on the learning cycle, which included everything from instructional planning, fulfillment, innovations, self-coordinated learning, and determination to university scholarly achievement. Riaz et al. argued that the role of the teacher is to foster student engagement. Engagement is a key factor to online learning, and it encompasses student conduct factors such as support and enthusiasm. Students were motivated to learn when they had faculty who brought high engagement to their online classrooms and fostered conduct factors such as interest and enthusiasm.

Humber (2021) used a constructivist approach and interviewed online students to learn about their perceptions of engagement. The central questions of the study addressed (a) how online students defined engagement, (b) what activities students considered engaging, and (c) the kinds of challenges that prevented students from remaining engaged in their online courses. Most students mentioned discussion boards as the best way to be engaged in their class; however, students also stated they would not participate in discussions if they were not required. Not many students enjoyed the discussion boards and stated they preferred regular writing assignments that allowed them to do their work

independently. Most students were motivated to be engaged with their courses, they wanted to earn good grades, and they believed their studies prepared them for future employment. The challenges and barriers to engagement were based on frustrations such as an instructor who was not present, a disorganized classroom home page that did not make it easy to find sources, and insufficient announcements or reminders. Although this study focused on student perceptions of engagement, their perceptions drew attention to the importance of a well-designed classroom, instructor presence, and frequent updates and announcements that students might hear in a regular classroom at the end of a session. Finally, students' unfavorable opinions about online discussions were a sign that instructors should foster other forms of engagement in their classrooms and not rely so heavily on discussions.

Meyer (2014) noted that there was a shift in research about online engagement that moved from theoretical-based research to practice-based research. Meyer identified online instructors' engagement strategies based on student readiness to learn online and noted that "characteristics of instruction contribute to failures of engagement" (p. 85). Della et al. (2014) found that authentic discussion prompts and frequent but less formal instructor interactions had a positive outcome that could be attributed to higher student engagement. Putnam et al. (2011) noted that facilitative discussion prompts led students toward higher order thinking and led to increased levels of participation, collaboration, and cognitive engagement.

Studies have shown that although discussions may be necessary, discussions alone are not enough for high learning outcomes, and course designers should examine

the similarities between face-to-face learning and online learning instead of focusing on the differences (Fear & Erikson-Brown, 2014). Dixon (2014) described the three E's of online learning and that experience, engagement, and evaluation were necessary for students to become engaged learners. The type and quality of classroom prompts can lead students to a higher taxonomy of learning and increased levels or engagement, collaboration, and learning. Mokoena (2013) examined factors that encouraged or discouraged engagement and found that increased social presence of the instructor was vital to enhanced learning in online discussions. Instructors can set high standards with their proactive presence and promote motivation and engagement. In an ethnographic study of online teachers, Bolldén (2016) examined social, emotional, and cognitive presences, as well as teacher embodiment to engage learners. With the absence of a physical classroom, online instructors were present or embodied differently in the online classroom; their name, avatar, posts, replies, sources, and content were examples of embodiment that could sustain a teaching presence. A comprehensive study on what drives student interaction and engagement in online courses indicated that student interaction and engagement were the most important aspects of the online classroom (Purajomandlangrudi et al., 2016).

Online discussion posts may offer a better learning experience if they are less formal and more authentic and if students are not required to make posts that are more like an academic paper. A more recent mixed-methods study of online engagement in general education courses found that online discussions were helpful with engagement and learning when discussion posts were natural and contained examples of personal

experiences and reflections (Aderibigbe, 2020). Conversely, student engagement, and learning outcomes were less favorable when students were required to make repetitive posts, posts that were not reflective of authentic experiences or posts that were academic.

Instructor–student interactions have been shown to have a positive effect on online learning and final course grades and are one of the strongest predictors of student success (Butz & Substinky, 2017). Weems-Landigham and Paternite (2021) recommended asynchronous online discussions between instructors and students at three critical points during the term. The discussions would be between the instructor and student only; the three points are the start of term, mid-term check-in, and at the end of course. These personal online discussions also provide information and insight to instructors so they can assess their students' needs, refer them to resources, support their learning, and improve their teaching effectiveness. The instructor-to-student discussions are a departure from the traditional weekly student-to student discussion posts; they affirm instructor presence and provide a way for student engagement with their instructor and material and may help improve student learning. Charbonneau-Gowdy (2017) questioned the fixed research and numbers-driven data and challenged researchers to delve deeper to uncover knowledge that is essential to the understanding of elearning. Charbonneau-Gowdy called for additional qualitative research with critical reflective approaches and research models that examine the sociocultural contexts of learning with technology to gain a deeper understanding of student learning.

Assessment tools and rubrics are used to measure online learning domains in areas such as participation, engagement, reasoning, and evidence of critical thinking that

develop from engagement and participation in discussion (L. Williams & Lahman, 2011). Santosa (2015) used flow theory to examine tutorial length of pages in an online classroom and its relation to student engagement to consider the challenges and skills associated with a student's tendency to be comfortable and interested in an online tutorial. The frequency of discussions and engagement in an online classroom may have a far greater impact on engagement than the type of discussion topics. If students are logging in to check discussion responses, their logging in might be enough engagement to increase interest and learning.

Cohen and Donaldson (2021) examined the low success rates and low retention rates of online learners in the Australian university system. Cohen and Donaldson explored a pilot program of online course material that was redesigned to optimize the learning environment and use the LMS to increase instructor presence and fostering learning. Following numerous course designs and interventions that were intended to improve online classrooms, learning outcomes, and pass fails, as well as completion rates, Cohen and Donalson looked at feedback from student surveys submitted at the end of courses. Although students gave positive feedback on the course designs, the students' pass rates and retention rates remained very low. Cohen and Donaldson noted that online students were compromised because of an unusually high percentage of nontraditional and high-risk students. Cohen and Donaldson identified high-risk students and noted that they shared common characteristics such as low high school achievement, first-generation college students, maturity, or work or family responsibilities.

Many nontraditional students had other barriers and difficulties to overcome, such as financial issues, learning difficulties, challenges with technology, disabilities, mental health issues, feelings of isolation, and lack of motivation. Considering these challenges, online education courses should be designed very differently from the counterpart on-campus courses. Cohen and Donalson (2021) recommend encouraging the formation of learning communities and fostering interaction between students. These authors advocated for a strong teacher presence, flexible, adaptive learning, and innovative resources.

Protopsaltis and Baum (2019) discussed high costs, low success rates, and poor outcomes of online education and its inferior reputation among many academic leaders and employers. Protopsaltis and Baum (2019) noted that the costs of online education were very high, and student achievement results in online education classes were below expectation for low income or underprepared students. Protopsaltis and Baum (2019) argued that it would be disastrous to weaken federal requirements, cut costs, or reduce funding for online education. Research into online education indicated that supporting investments could improve over years, and that funding programs to improve student engagement and learning could benefit students (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Webb et al., 2021). Online learning could reach its potential and operate at its best when it is accessible to all students and encompasses frequent engagement between faculty and students; online education might be one of the only choice available to underserved students, according to Protopsaltis and Baum (2019).

Online Faculty

LaPointe et al. (2015) examined faculty experiences with online teaching and found that instructors felt a lack of support or belonging. Although their colleges offered quality technical support to online faculty, the faculty reported they desired stronger collegiality and a sense of community (LaPointe et al, 2015). Many colleges had low-faculty satisfaction rates with respect to online faculty development programs. Faculty development programs should be developed after assessing faculty needs, and assessments should include information obtained directly from online faculty (LaPointe et al., 2015). Another scholar recommended online learning and online communities of practice as ideally suited for faculty development programs. Faculties in online communities would be able to reduce faculty isolation, and reduce time or space barriers to faculty participation in programs (Cook & Streindert, 2013).

Williams et al. (2017) surveyed faculty members and found that online instructors were desirous of engagement from administrators. The instructors wanted additional feedback and direct communication, and they wanted to provide input on their own professional development programs. Communication was the strongest theme in the study. Instructors favored training and mentoring programs for online faculty. Ongoing quality training could be available to help educational leaders to improve online instruction, which could then motivate and engage students (Williams et al., 2017).

Faculty perceptions of online teaching were explored at a mid-sized liberal arts university in a mixed methods study that included qualitative survey responses from 79 subjects. Above 50% of the faculty respondents related that although they knew online

learning was attractive to students, they were not enthusiastic about teaching online. Over half the faculty members indicated that a conflict existed between online learning their teaching values. These instructors wanted heavier regulations, stronger faculty support, better infrastructure, and improved technology resources (Shreaves et al., 2020). Faculty members evaluated online course quality and student engagement from inferior to very poor in comparison to online learning to in-class learning. Faculty members were also discouraged by what they perceived to be a heavier workload in online classes and an increased amount of time required to teach online.

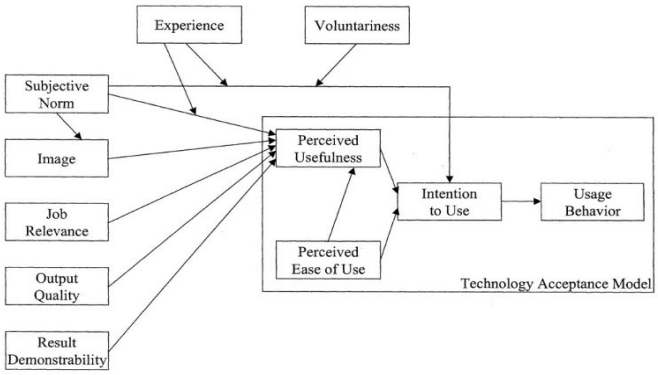
An assumption was that many faculty members who were resistant to online teaching and change could have had underlying fears. They may have feared they would begin to dislike teaching if they had to teach online instead of teach in a classroom in which they could see the impact of their instruction (Shreaves et al., 2020). However, quantitative analysis showed higher percentages of faculty members were open to gaining new skills to teach online; 86% were interested in exploring new ways of teaching, were motivated to learn new skills, and were very interested in campus-wide professional development approaches to support online teaching (Shreaves et al., 2020).

The technology acceptance framework model was used to survey faculty members to get an understanding of their perceptions and to gather data about their online teaching experiences (Figure 2). The model of technology acceptance was used to explore a very wide range of variables, including faculty members' technical experiences, perceptions about their status as online instructors, resistance, manageable class sizes, and perceived barriers to teaching and student success (Wingo et al., 2017).

Researchers noted there was a gap between the views of administrators and faculty members regarding the value of online education. Faculty members expressed concern about the learning outcomes and success of students. Faculty members were also concerned about how online teaching would affect their status or tenure, and they expressed a need for ongoing training, mentoring, and support (Wingo et al., 2017). Although this study did not focus solely on student engagement, the study was an example of how faculty members' perceptions and experiences can provide useful data to improve online teaching and learning.

Figure 2

Technology Acceptance Model (Wingo et al., 2017)



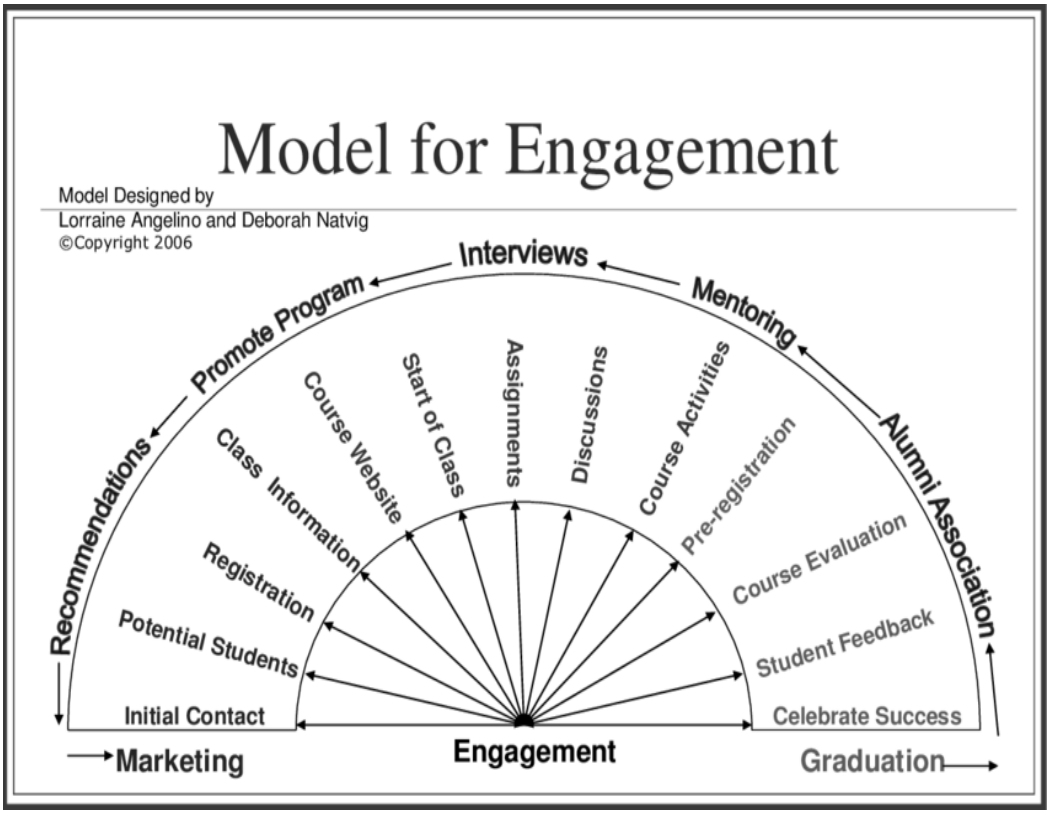
Engagement, Integration, and Persistence

Angelino and Natvig (2009) created a conceptual model of engagement for college instructors and administrators when designing online courses (Figure 3). The model for engagement (Figure 3) illustrates opportunities for engagement such as active participation, interactions, and collaboration between faculty, with students, and with members of the community (Angelino & Natvig, 2009). This model of engagement is

based on Tinto's model of student retention whereas a student's academic and social integration are critical for engagement and persistence.

Figure 3

Model for Engagement (Angelino & Natvig, 2009)



Davidson and Wilson (2013/2014) argued that Tinto's (1998) framework is useful for analyzing traditional student populations often found in traditional residential 4-year colleges. The model is limited in its provisions for understanding of retention among nontraditional students, racial and ethnic minorities, and distance, online, and community college students.

Travers (2016) discussed the problem of student retention in online programs at community colleges and noted the observations of Tinto (1976), who argued that a student's decision to remain in college could be influenced by instructors, peers, administration, external factors, personal challenges, and barriers. Although Tinto was writing decades before online colleges existed and was addressing traditional students in face-to-face classrooms, researchers have used Tinto's model and extended his ideas to support students in distance education and online education. Travers (2016) stated that the barriers many online students face in their life are often the reasons why online learning is more desirable to them. He challenged the current state of discourse about online students' success, based upon course completion rates or degree attainment. Travers (2016) argued that the community college open-door policy means not gauging student success on negative attributes, but rather gauging student success on the opportunities that online learning can provide to increasing numbers of nontraditional students (Travers, 2016). Tinto's framework remains a viable model to consider in examining student engagement and persistence rates. Any supposed limitations can be mediated by assuring concepts of the model are well-defined and applied to non-traditional students and online learning. The concepts of academic and social integration could aid in the discovery of more ways to connect online students to their virtual college to increase engagement and improve course completion rates.

Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) used data from the NSSE and the FSSE to explore faculty-student interactions, collaborative learning, and student engagement from both the faculty and student perspectives. They found faculty members that were engaged

highly with international students and all students. Minority faculty members or faculty members of color engaged in higher student-faculty interactions than their white colleagues (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). The researchers suggested that it was possible that ethnic minority faculty were highly active and engaging with their international students because minority faculty members were already highly active in engaging with all students. These authors also stated that if students had positive interactions with faculty, they were more likely to feel respected and valued.

Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) recommended encouraging faculty members to engage with international students, departments, and institutions, which would support student engagement on all three levels, including individual, departmental, and institutional wide. Wang and BrckaLorenz urged program directors at universities to allocate enough resources for this support, and encouraged the formation of faculty learning communities, collaborative learning, and peer evaluations. Although the researchers do not use the word faculty development program, they recommended programs and activities based on COP and activities that are components of a Faculty Development Plan.

Parker et al. (2021) reviewed literature related to humanizing the online learning experience and screened 83 studies about post-secondary online educational practice, and summarized findings. They argued that educators can use technology to humanize the online educational process and to personalize their classrooms by creating presence, which can be an asset to learning environments. When instructors are humanized, they facilitate engagement, motivate their students, help their students shape their identity, and

create online learning communities that encourage social interaction, collaboration, and student-centered classrooms. When students perceive the humanity of their instructors, the humanized classroom could be perceived as caring, and this feeling of caring can lead students to become highly involved and engaged. Increased student engagement can contribute to student growth and academic success as well as higher student retention. The researchers further stated the importance of reducing the awareness of the virtual aspect of an online classroom, is to eliminate technology as a factor that separates their students. Instead, instructors should use technology as an extension of themselves as they build a strong social presence to help their students to perceive human interactions and human activities in their virtual learning environments (Parker et al., 2021).

Australian students' perceptions of online engagement were examined over the course of a semester to determine which factors affected engagement and how engagement changed throughout the course with two qualitative approaches. One approach was to survey all students in a class and a second was an individual case study, detailing the experiences of one student (under a pseudonym). The results reflected findings from previous research studies about the importance of engagement. It was also noted that a lack of interaction with peers, faculty, and materials, could lead to students feeling disconnected and alienated from their studies (Farrell & Brunton, 2020). Moreover, Farrell and Brunton (2020) found that students had mixed opinions about the online discussion boards. Many students felt pressured and exposed and were not as accepting or feeling enthusiastic about discussions and literature, which suggested that discussion boards promote engagement and interaction (Buck, 2016).

Sugden et al. (2021) used a mixed method design to look at student engagement to see the various devices students used to log into their classrooms and the amount of their engagement in various activities. Survey data were collected from 63 students, nine interviews, and 16 students in a focus group. Students perceived classroom activities in a positive light and stated that authentic, problem-solving type activities were the most valuable in terms of learning and in terms of feeling supported. Overall, students believed that their online classroom activities contributed to engagement and deep learning. They found it easy to access their classrooms on a combination of devices and to fit their study time into the daily schedules (Sugden et al., 2021). Students' study habits were an important finding from this study and reaffirmed that students did indeed study anywhere, anytime, which supported the importance of ensuring that online activities in classrooms can be used on any device and at any time.

Redman and Perry's (2020) quantitative survey compared faculty group members from different years to examine their perceptions of online engagement, interaction, technology, and teaching online graduate students over time. They compared a more recent year of faculty ratings, 2016, with ratings dating as far back as 2002 and 2007 and found that the 2016 faculty ratings scored engagement and ratings for interaction much lower than the 2002 and 2007 groups, but the faculty had much higher ratings for use of technology in 2016 than they did in 2002 and 2007 (Redman & Perry, 2020). One observation was that detailed, personalized, feedback may promote student engagement and motivate students. However, the usefulness of feedback lessens over time, and its ability to foster self-directed learning diminishes as faculty workload increases and their

responses and feedback messages are delayed (Redman & Perry, 2020). The level of importance attributed to interaction and engagement may have been due to the novelty of online education and technology back in 2002 and 2007 (Redman & Perry, 2020). It is possible that faculty members realized that changes in technology over time has had the potential to improve courses and teaching strategies.

Community Colleges and Online Learning

Program planners at community colleges have assumed a leading role in distance education and online instruction to attract and offer courses to students who are unable to attend traditional on-campus classes. Akroyd et al. (2013) addressed the problems of faculty resistance to online instruction and found there was a relationship between their resistance and lack of administrative support. They argued that faculty would be less resistant if the organizational environment and campus infrastructure fostered faculty training for online teaching and technological developments (Akroyd et al., 2013).

The subject of a study in a community college focused on student perceptions of instructor presence. The researchers examined the differences between online courses and courses that were not offered online. Cutsinger et al. (2018) used the CoI framework to examine teaching, social, and cognitive presences in both types of courses and found there were no measurable or statistical differences according to the student surveys. Student satisfaction and students' grades were slightly lower in the predominately online courses, which had averages of C grades and on-campus courses averaged B grades (Cutsinger et al., 2018). Research suggested online instructors could improve availability,

communication, and encouragement, and learn new ways to increase their presence, and accessibility in online courses, which may lead to better grades in online courses.

Online instructors and course designers should value student engagement and see it as the most important way for students to connect with their instructors, course material, and their peers (Mucundanyi, 2021). The first two weeks of a course are the most critical; therefore, online course design should be clear and consistent. One approach for design is a five-pronged strategy through the lenses of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK). The first strategy is content designed using technology, the second is a strong syllabus, the third is pedagogy aimed at engaging students, the fourth is instructor presence, and the fifth strategy is ensuring that free educational materials and resources are available (Mucundanyi, 2021). The TPACK strategies should be implemented from the very beginning of a course and could increase the opportunities for successful student engagement in online courses.

Many studies examine specific modalities of instruction to determine best practices for effective teaching and student engagement. A recent mixed methods study examined students' perceptions of best practices in online lectures delivery format. The results of the study were that students enjoyed both prerecorded online asynchronous lectures and live real time lectures. Although live lectures were helpful to encourage social interactions, students preferred the prerecorded sessions for flexibility and for a better opportunity to learn and study content in the recorded lectures. The asynchronous lectures also helped students with time management and scheduling daily activities and their studies. However, the live lectures gave students a stronger sense of connection and

of perceiving their instructor's social presence (Harris et al., 2021). This study indicated that either method of delivery was well received if the lectures were engaging and interesting.

Online students need to feel a social presence in their classrooms and a connection with their peers and instructors. Online engagement consists of engagement with the instructor, peers, and course materials. In a more recent survey of online students, common themes emerged. Students were committed to their studies and finding work-life balance. Students were intent and invested in managing their course requirements, participating on discussion boards with their peers, and their efforts were affected by the teacher presence, relevance of work, and level of interaction (Muir et. al., 2019). Student engagement levels tended to change over the span of the course as students' workload increased, due dates approached, or if the instructors' social presence decreased. It seems natural that student engagement with peers would shift over the course of a term as demands or deadlines loom, or if the instructor becomes less present. However, this assumption does not mean students are not engaged; they may be engaged with course materials as they work on their final papers or major assessments (Muir et al., 2019).

Implications

Most of the previous research about student engagement has, historically, identified ways to improve student engagement by improving academic achievement and instilling a sense of belonging to the physical campus (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). As online programs continue to increase, and if they are going to survive, college program

planners should learn about instructors' perceptions and experiences teaching online, and find ways for online learners to engage and connect with their virtual campus (Bambara et al., 2009). There may be a gap in practice due to differences between the college institution and its faculty members' understanding of and commitment to quality online education. There may be a further gap in faculty members' understanding of the distinction between teaching traditional online courses and instructional presence, and teaching strategies in online courses (Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Results from this project study could contribute to further understanding of how to respond to low student engagement and improve student learning. The findings from this research could lead to faculty development programs and revised teaching strategies that could improve student engagement and online retention rates.

Summary

Program planners at the community college research site are invested in the success of the eLearning program and have included online education in the mission statement of the college. Program planners are continually assessing student learning by conducting student surveys and examining course completion rates. They have been turning their attention to increasing student engagement and are committed to providing quality online courses to all students.

In this section, I outlined the local problem of low student engagement and low online course completion rates. Online students were 10% to 15% less likely to complete courses than students enrolled in on-campus classes (Xu & Smith Jaggars, 2011). I also discussed the rationale and significance of this study and included a review of the

background literature that guided this research. I concluded this section with a discussion of the implications. In the upcoming sections, I will discuss methodology in Section 2, the project in Section 3, and in Section 4, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project before presenting the project in Appendix A. In section 2, I will discuss methodology, research design, the CoI framework that grounded this research study, as well as data analysis and results.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

Section 2 includes a discussion of the research methodology, the reason why qualitative research was best suited to the local problem, and how my research design was derived from the research questions. Qualitative methodology was selected because I explored the problem of low student engagement at the local site and collected data from community college faculty who taught online classes. Qualitative research methods are ideal for investigating complex social phenomena and allow for a deep analysis of the data that were collected in online surveys (Jabareen, 2009). Quantitative research methods were not appropriate for this study because the methodology would not have aligned with the research questions, local problem, or purpose of this study. I was not attempting to test a hypothesis, examine trends in online learning, search for relationships, or collect measurable data with standardized instruments. It would not have been possible to gain insight or deeper understanding of the local problem with numerical data, and I did not intend to generalize findings from this study to a larger population. Qualitative research methods have the potential to add to the dialogue about elearning and to enrich the understanding of instructors' perceptions and experiences in the digital classroom (Charbonneau-Gowdy, 2017). This methodology provided the opportunity to gather detailed data about the instructors' perceptions to empower and give voice to the faculty members' experiences of low student engagement in online classrooms and discussions (Vayre & Vonthron, 2016).

There were several foundational studies and conceptual frameworks on instructor interventions and student engagement that could have grounded this study. I relied on the CoI framework to aid in understanding instructors' role in the classroom and their responses in facilitating online discussions. The CoI model enabled me to investigate the type and quality of interactions students have with their instructors and the interactions students have with one another in an online or blended classroom environment (Gunbatar & Guyer, 2017). The CoI framework is one of the leading research approaches for examining online learning and student engagement (Breivik, 2016). The research questions in the current study were framed around the CoI model to illuminate ways that an instructor's social, cognitive, and teaching presence could impact or facilitate higher student engagement.

The purpose of this research was to explore and examine in depth rather than to generalize findings (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). A qualitative case study approach was used to illuminate the depth and breadth of faculty members' responses to questions about low student engagement, classroom activities, and instructional strategies (see Creswell, 2012). This approach helped me to gain insight into the problem and learn about faculty perceptions and actions such as frequency of interactions and strategies they used to facilitate interaction, collaboration, and engagement.

I considered narrative methodology; however, that approach would have led to data that focused on the subject's identity, interpersonal experiences, or personal values, and would not have aligned with the problem statement of this research. A phenomenological study would have required a focus on a central phenomenon, a single

concept or a shared lived experience. Data would have been more philosophical in nature and highly personal. A case study focused on the problem, statement, purpose, and research questions (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and provided enough data to describe the participants' perceptions.

Participants

I had planned to do in-person interviews. I had received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University and the primary college study site for the procedures I described in my proposal. However, those data collection methods were revised two times, as I had difficulty recruiting participants. I was obliged to revise procedures, resubmit to IRB for approval to change data collection methods from phone calls to emails, and change again to an email survey attachment to a Google Docs online survey. The requested changes were approved by Walden's IRB and the primary study site's IRB. Both allowed me to email my survey using a link to Google Docs. However, I had not yet recruited an approved number of participants. I submitted to Walden IRB for approval to broaden recruitment and potential participants from other community colleges and the Walden University Research Participant Pool.

When the 2020 global pandemic hit my state, all colleges were closed in March 2020 (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, 2020), which delayed participant responses another full year. I continued to reach out to faculty members via email, and by the end of March 2021 I had an approved number of participants and had collected enough completed surveys to begin analyzing the data. The

revised data collection, coding, analysis, and impressions are discussed in Section 3. In Section 2, I include my original data collection methods.

A qualitative case study approach was intended to sample 10 full-time college instructors with at least 2 years of experience teaching online courses at the college level. A case study was suited to the problem, statement, purpose, and research questions and could have provided sufficient data to examine the instructors' perceptions and experiences. Ten to 12 participants were appropriate for this study because it would have yielded a great deal of in-depth data, with sufficient data collected to "identify themes of the cases and to conduct cross-case theme analysis" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 160). I had originally planned to meet with instructors in person to establish rapport with them. I wanted to limit power dynamics that might have led to resistance or inauthentic responses (see Creswell & Poth, 2017). I did not have the opportunity to meet with faculty members in person, and it proved to be difficult to establish a collaborative and trusting relationship with the participants via email. I did, however, make an effort to do so because I considered this a primary ethical concern that would have helped participants feel more at ease when they shared their perceptions and experiences.

After I received approval from the IRB at Walden University, I requested approval to conduct research from the elearning program director and IRB board at the local site. Once I had all appropriate permissions in place, I sent email invitations to all faculty members who were teaching online courses. The class schedule and faculty members' contact information were published on the website of the college and at the Office of Institutional Research. I had gathered faculty members' contact information,

department, and course information from the 2019–2020 term catalogs. In my revised version of data collection, I sent out email invitations with a direct link to the Google Docs survey. The selection criteria established for this study were that faculty members were currently teaching and had at least 2 years of online teaching experience. I had originally established more stringent guidelines, such as more than 10 years of online teaching experience, but revised those guidelines due to the new IRB guidelines.

My aim was to recruit 10–12 full-time faculty members who were teaching in a variety of subject areas. Purposeful sampling and recruiting faculty from various subjects would have provided enough variation to help me understand the problem and would have provided detailed, descriptive answers to my research questions. The sampling strategy was selected in advance of data collection. Maximal variation sampling facilitated development and discovery of multiple perspectives of faculty members who taught online but differed in some characteristics such as the type of classes they taught. I was to follow up to replies with a brief online demographic survey; that email was to include an attached informed consent form to be filled out and returned. If I had received more interest in participating than required, I would have contacted faculty members who were not selected, thanked them for their time, and informed them that I had reached the maximum number of participants for the study.

When I was preparing for in-person interviews, I was planning to hold one initial meeting with individual participants to ensure they had copies of the research approval and informed consent documents. I would have briefly gone over these documents and set a tentative time and date for the in-person interview. I would have reiterated the

confidential nature of the study and informed participants that they would not receive any form of material or financial compensation for this study. The initial meeting had a threefold purpose: (a) to provide faculty members with printed information and releases, (b) to set appointments and gauge their commitment to interviews and completion of the study, and (c) to begin building rapport to establish a trusting and comfortable working relationship. These in-person meetings and interviews proved to be impossible to schedule. Although faculty members were interested in the study, they were overworked, overscheduled, and unwilling to make a commitment to meet in person due to the time constraints of their demanding schedules.

I had created an interview protocol to be followed during all in-person meetings, which would have been used and attached to the questions for the meetings. The interview protocol was clear and uniform for my own records and would have provided consistency for the participants. It included written consent documents ensuring prospective participants' confidentiality. I would have introduced and explained the process at the onset of the meeting, thanked participants at the conclusion of the meetings, and informed them of the next steps in the study. I wanted to create a professional yet relaxed environment, be open to questions from participants, and assure them of their privacy by explaining data collection and storage protocols. Each participant's identity would have been protected with a number-coded system, and under no circumstances would their names be released, available, or accessible to any person, agency, or institution. I was able to revise this protocol to an online format with all forms and documents available online so that participants could read, sign, and submit. This

helped relieve the participants of the burden of extra steps and having to give up too much of their limited time. All coding documents, the original coding system, participant identities and the numbering system, and any college affiliations were stored in a secure location in my home office. The digital copies of interviews were secured and stored on my Google Docs main page, hard copies were printed and stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all other digital documents were stored in my computer and a secure online server in my private home office.

Data Collection

Data collection involved gathering participants' written responses to survey questions that were submitted and returned via Google Docs. All email replies, collected data, digital files, notes, data analysis, code books, and research logs were stored in a password-protected computer folder and a secure filing cabinet. There were to be in-person interviews, but this method of data collection was revised to be completed via an online survey. Questions for the surveys that were submitted online through Google Docs were adapted with permission from the Perceptions and Practices of E-Instructors Toward Online Instruction Questionnaire (PPEOIQ; see Chang et al., 2014). The PPEOIQ covers many aspects of online teaching: instructional design, facilitating learning, assessment, technology use, administrative management, and research development (Chang et al., 2014). This standardized instrument is a comprehensive questionnaire that covers several domains relevant to perceptions, practice, and experiences of online instructors. The revised and adapted questions from the PPEOIQ provided the framework for gathering participants' responses from several domains and

included their perceptions of engagement, teaching practice, online discussion experiences, and responses to online students.

I submitted emails with invitations to participate in the study, a description of the study, and a link for prospective participants to access the survey and all forms through Google Docs. Emails were sent to faculty members at the college study site and a second local community college in my area. The study was also posted in the Walden University Research Participant Pool. I obtained responses, informed consent, and completed surveys from 10 community college instructors who were online faculty members. I had planned to conduct the semiformal, in-person interviews on the study site campus in private offices and follow an interview protocol that participants received in advance. I had an observation sheet to take notes during the interviews and would have taken an audio recording of the interview. Although I was unable to conduct the in-person interviews, I did preserve some of the plans I had in place to add rigor and reliability to my study.

I took notes throughout my time researching. Notes addressed the process of submitting drafts, seeking IRB approval, and connecting with principals at research sites including the primary study site. I saved all drafts of my work and all sources even if they were not directly used in my final work. In addition, I stored the PDF files of the peer-reviewed journal articles and links to all referenced sources. I also kept research logs and maintained a reflective journal in which I took additional notes, posed questions, and made notes of personal bias or any difficulties I experienced. I also followed data storage and management protocols to ensure my data were securely stored.

The data storage management system was in my home office, separate from my personal computers, and was not accessible to other people in my household. I developed a consistent naming and storage system for all files, searchable documents, tables, and spreadsheets so they could be easily found and referenced. I stored all original hard copies of documents in a secure fireproof locked file cabinet, and digital documents were saved on two computers and a network server in my home office. The network server was backed up weekly to prevent data loss.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

I submitted an informal proposal about the intent, scope, and purpose of this study and obtained tentative permission to conduct research at the local site. I provided a copy of this proposal and all permissions to the Office of Institutional Research and the elearning program director at the local site. I also attached my National Institute of Health research certificate number, with an expiration date of July 20, 2018. I was going to seek renewal when the certificate expired; however, the National Institute of Health discontinued the testing program in the interim. I sought and obtained approval for this study through the Walden University IRB before I began any data collection at the local site. I had to revise my data collection methods on two occasions, and I received approval from Walden's IRB and the IRB at the local study site regarding each proposed change to my methods. I also applied for and received approval to post a call for applicants in the Walden University Research Participant Pool. I had not been employed by any of the colleges in which I recruited participants, I did not personally know any administrative

personnel or faculty members at the colleges, and no conflicts of interest with the colleges or participants.

Potential biases I brought to this research were my long-standing interest in high quality distance education and my ardent support of web-based education. Twenty-five to 30 years prior to this study, online learning with technology, was in its infancy; however, distance education has a very long history of utilizing the most up-to date-technology to deliver college courses and continuing education workshops to distance learners (Sumner, 2010). With the development of web-based platforms, threaded online discussions were a breakthrough for distance learning. Through these opportunities, distance learning became one of the main ways to engage online students, ensure participation, and track attendance (Sumner, 2010). I have witnessed an overreliance on discussion threads as the major source for student engagement. These overreliances were negative experiences, which influenced my interest in this study of online student engagement.

If online education is to flourish, maintain high standards, and meet goals of increasing access to higher numbers of students, educators would do well to question their continued reliance on simple text, based formatting, and threaded discussions. Moreover, many courses are set up with online discussions that require a high level of engagement between students. In addition, this type of pedagogical approach does not always work well in large online classrooms (Lee & Martin, 2017). These courses require a high level of learner activities and participation, a far greater number than face-to-face courses. It may not be reasonable to assume that distance learners can benefit or achieve

optimal learning from discussion activities at the level expected. Many distance learners are enrolled in online education because of constraints on their time and outside responsibilities. Distance learners and online learners may not have time in their daily schedules to be engaged in social or collaborative learning activities. Moreover, many distance learners reported that they found collaborative and social learning activities very time-consuming and much less effective than individual learning activities (Lee &Martin, 2017).

The focus of this qualitative case study was online teaching at community colleges and a Community College (WWCC *Pseudonym*) was the primary study site. The study was limited to the perceptions and experiences of 10 full-time faculty members. The intention was to understand deeply the participants' perceptions and experiences as well as to discover the terminology and language participants used to define student engagement and participants' teaching practices. Findings from this study may be useful at the primary site to address a gap in practice about faculty members' perceptions of engagement and their teaching practices. Results from this study could offer insight to policy makers, program directors, researchers, and online educators at other colleges who might want to propose a sample faculty development plan. While this study may benefit faculties in other colleges and researchers in education, this study is not intended to make generalized findings or to recommend a course of action that could be applied to online courses or online programs.

Data Analysis Results

After the original data were collected, organized, and securely stored, I began reading and reviewing the data for emergent ideas, making notes and memos to track impressions and development of ideas. Memos helped me to identify concepts within individual files to see if these concepts were found across other files. Creswell and Poth (2017) recommended using memos for discovering themes and making comparisons across questionnaires. I followed the procedure for memos with the written data, which consisted of narrative and longer essay answers to open-ended survey questions. I decided against qualitative content analysis for this study and instead, analyzed the data by making tables, coding, creating a codebook, and following the suggestions for coding in multiple stages, as recommended by Saldana (2021). In qualitative data analysis, researchers extract relevant information from original text to search for patterns that emerge from the data. This approach is suited for research questions firmly grounded in established theories (Gläser & Grit, 2013).

I completed manual coding and analyzed all data by hand. I decided against using a computer software program because the data were manageable. I had a small participant pool of 10 instructors, and I worked independently on the data analysis. Although there may have been some advantages for using qualitative software programs, such as providing organized file storage and easy retrieval, the coding process for qualitative research is the same, whether the data were coded by hand or by a computer program. I selected hand coding because I wanted to be close to the data, and to return to the data over-and-over as I coded in stages or cycles. I consider coding as a longer process that

could help to uncover or discover participants' values, perceptions, insights, and experiences. The coding process can also provide researchers with time for considering their own reaction to the data, thoughtful reflection, and creative analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I returned to the data numerous times to review and to take notes. I saved and stored all notes taken each time I reviewed the data. This method of reviewing ongoing data sources and the research questions imbued confidence and helped lend rigor and credibility to my data analysis.

Reviewing the research questions as I studied the data helped guide me as I identified codes. From those codes, I was able to build shorter two-to-four word themes. The research questions that guided this study were used to examine faculty members' perceptions of student engagement and instructional strategies they used to promote engagement. Survey questions were targeted to show how the faculty members viewed engagement and the types of discussion board prompts, classroom activities, and assignments they used to increase student engagement. The faculty members' survey responses were rich with data related to how engagement was critical to learning. Survey responses also included specific actions of the instructors that were intended to encourage their students to engage with one another, their instructor, and the course materials.

Once I reached saturation and identified all major and minor themes, I added rigor to my study by layering themes and looking for interconnectedness of major and minor themes. Themes and data analysis were written down and presented in narrative form for ongoing review and cross referencing. I created tables with a display of key words, phrases, codes, and themes, and used color coding to self-reference and cross-reference

against my narrative for reviewing and rechecking. I also implemented member checking strategies to validate the accuracy of my data analysis and to add credibility to my research findings (Creswell, 2012). Each participant was provided with my email address and phone number, and they were advised that they could review, revise, or omit any survey responses at any time. I did request an external audit from the Office of Institutional Research at the primary local research site to ensure the research study findings were grounded in the data and that the report met with standards of the original proposal. The primary study site, however, waived that requirement.

I had planned several quality procedures in order to further assure accuracy and the credibility of this study. I maintained detailed notes, logs, and a reflective journal of my steps, procedures, methods, impressions, and insights. In addition, I shared these details in my analysis for validity and trustworthiness. Roberts et al. (2019) recommended qualitative researchers maintain a detailed reflexive account of procedures they followed so that readers are able to follow their methods and steps taken during inquiry that led to recommendations and conclusions. I was very open in discussing my biases and personal interpretations, and showing how my biases and interpretations could have affected my analysis. I added notes on how the analysis and findings of the data challenged my biases, assumptions, and preconceptions. I also considered online learning theories and the literature that most influenced me to undertake this study and examined how the literature supported or did not support my coding and thematic analysis of the data.

The faculty members' survey responses, all data, notes, journals, and logs, collected for this study were stored securely and backed up electronically. Data were stored on a password-protected computer and server and locked in a filing cabinet in my home office. I was able to send confidential emails to participants, with a link to Google Docs so that they could access the study information and survey. All email addresses and the links to the survey were confidential. Participants were not able to see one another's identity, email address, or responses to the survey. I included my email address and phone number in all correspondences and in documents on link to the survey. Once completed, this survey was anonymous, so member checking took the form of messages in emails and posting in the study, reminding subjects they had the right to change their mind, withdraw from the study, add, change, or request removal of any survey responses they had supplied at any time. Applicants were provided with notice of how to leave the study or to change their responses on the first page of the study, and they were required to accept or agree before they continued. I kept a research journal, research logs, notes, and memos and notes, and these private documents served as referral sources and were stored securely on my computer and server.

In analyzing the data, as a beginning researcher, I used descriptive coding and causation coding to summarize the data in words and short phrases for the codes identified within the data. I did a first cycle coding, made extensive notes, and returned to the data for a second coding cycle after stepping away and allowing myself distance from the data for a brief period (Saldana, 2011). During the first coding step, I used causation coding to identify beliefs, influences, causes, and conditions, while descriptive coding in

the second step provided a means to summarize and categorize (Saldana, 2021a). I identified six themes that arose from the research questions and emerged following data coding. The themes were repetitive words, phrases, or short descriptive expressions written in the faculty survey responses. Themes were also terms and expressions that arose from the research questions of this study. These themes were also related to the Community of Inquiry framework, and the themes indicated instructors were referencing teaching, social, and cognitive presences in their replies about student engagement and how they fostered engagement.

My initial impressions on the first step on coding were that most faculty members believed engagement was critical to effective course outcomes, such as critical thinking, deep learning, and higher grades. Although impressions reflect my opinion about student engagement, I do not believe my biases adversely affected my reviewing and coding of the data. Faculty responses overwhelmingly were consistent that engagement was critical, and this belief was borne out across all responses to the survey questions. These responses were in line with findings from multiple studies of online and distance education over 20 or more years.

Many studies have shown that increased interaction and engagement makes a difference; different types of engagement, such as engagement with peers, materials, and instructors have a positive effect on student learning and learning outcomes (Anderson & Garrison, 1998, Walters et al., 2017, Wingo et al., 2016). In Table 1 the themes, actions, and activities are identified within the Community of Inquiry framework, which includes teaching, social, and cognitive presences.

Table 1

Themes, Actions, and Activities Identified Within the Community of Inquiry Framework

Theme	Instructional Strategy	Faculty Description
1. (Teaching and Social Presence). Active and Involved Daily	Log in daily Assume active presence	Post often and encourage students. Posting and responses. Foster engagement.
2. (Teaching Presence) Create a Welcoming and Easy to Navigate Classroom	Link to Class, Campus, Library Resources. How to Contact Instructor	Introductions, Interact with student Office Hours and How to Contact Post Weekly Reminders
3. (Teaching and Cognitive Presence) Assign and Discuss Weekly Reading and Assignments	Align required reading with assignments. Present and discuss assignments, point out resources on class home page.	Students must engage with material Videos and assignments Present problems for easy Assignment. Written and verbal tasks
4. (Social and Teaching Presence) Engagement in The Class Discussion Boards.	Encouraging feedback in grading and on discussions. Foster to further discussion	Richly and highly engaged Active, fast-paced, quality over quantity. Require engagement
5. (Cognitive Teaching Presence) Pose Challenging Questions to Engage Students	Pose challenging questions for reading	Written and verbal tasks Students analyze, evaluate
6. (Teaching and Social Presence). Foster engagement With materials and connected	Praise engagement. Ensure active participation Ensure students are connected	Point out important points Encourage sincere reflections and responses

Note. (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020)

The Garrison, Anderson, and Archer diagram model of the CoI framework shows that the presences intersect with and complement one another (Figure 4). The themes identified in this study list actions that reflect more than one presence. Castellanos-Reyes (2020) noted that researchers described and confirmed the intersection of presences, relationships, and correlations among the presences and with other variables when using the CoI framework (Stenbom et al., 2012).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to learn about online instructor's perceptions of student engagement. I wanted to learn about the instructional strategies and classroom activities faculty members used to promote and foster student engagement. There were two research questions guiding this research, and the selection of the survey instrument and questions submitted to faculty participants. I used faculty members' responses and data collected from the study to present a faculty development program based on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) and the Community of Practice (CoP) frameworks to the primary college study site. In analyzing the data, I identified six themes related to the research questions about engagement and activities. These themes helped form the basis of an online faculty development program as informed me in the selection of materials, resources, and recommendations for an online faculty development program.

Data, Themes, and Research Questions

When analyzing the data to see what themes emerged and my research questions to see if the themes, and research questions were aligned with the Community of Inquiry

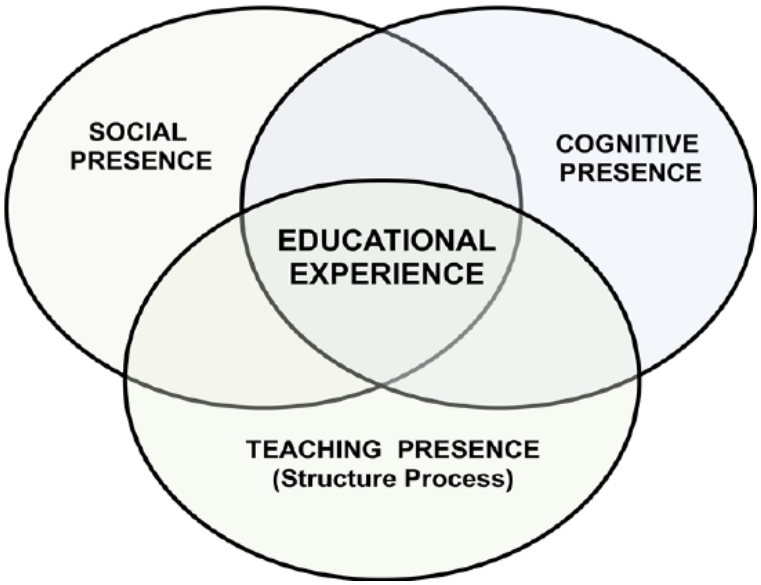
(CoI) framework. In the CoI model instructors exhibit and embrace three interdependent elements, which are teaching, social, and cognitive presences and these presences support learning in collaborative-constructivist online classroom environment (Garrison et al., 2000). The themes of teaching, social, and cognitive presences occurred and reoccurred frequently in the data, as the instructors gave responses to describe their teaching strategies and perceptions of student engagement. For example, instructors were asked about instructional strategies they used to encourage engagement and they described teaching and social presence activities such as logging into their classrooms daily, posting often, and providing encouraging feedback. When describing classroom activities, they used to foster engagement, instructors' discussed activities that were reflective of cognitive and teaching presences, such as posing challenging discussion questions, aligning discussions, readings, and assignments, praising engagement. Most of the faculty response to the research questions shared perceptions and described activities that embodied themes in the CoI as these more specific examples indicate.

In theme one, the instructors responded that they understood teaching presence as they described their actions of logging in daily. They also described a social presence when they discussed how they posted in the classroom. Theme two of creating a welcoming classroom described activities that were intended to assist students with course and campus resources, was also describing a teaching and social presence. The social presence of instructors was high, according to data collected, and the instructors noted their students were engaged with their instructor and the material. Although social presence was observed, the participants did not discuss how students interacted with one

another. Yildirim and Seferoglu (2020) used the CoI to study social presence of students in an online class and found when social presence and student interactions were low there was a negative impact on student satisfaction and cognitive presences. A faculty development plan (FDP) could offer courses or hold discussions where instructors share teaching strategies that foster more student-to-student interactions and social presences to improve student learning.

Figure 4

Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison et al., 2000)



Theme three differs from the first two themes as instructors discussed course readings, assignments, and other requirements indicative of actions and activities that were reflective of their cognitive presence. Nearly all faculty respondents stated that they believed engagement was critical to learning and that engaged students performed better. A lone exception was that faculty members did not have online discussions in their

classes. Many faculty members reported that engagement was promoted through discussion and active participation. Nine of the 10 instructors had in-class discussions, and only two instructors mentioned that they used break-out groups in their discussions. To enhance engagement, most instructors stated they planned discussions to align with assignments and material. They encouraged and required interaction between students. One aspect of the CoI framework was the instructor's presence, and all faculty members, except one, mentioned that they made certain to be active and present in their classrooms. Almost every faculty member stated that they monitored, participated, and reviewed discussion often. Several instructors mentioned that they logged in every day. Daily monitoring is reported to increase students' perceptions of the instructor's presence, and this factor increases student engagement.

Most instructors reported that their students were engaged highly or deeply in discussions and that larger class sizes led to higher levels of engagement. This comment was reflected in responses of theme four. Many of the faculty participants stated they believed that their involvement in the class and high engagement of the students meant that students learned at a high level and received better grades. These assertions aligned with a 2017 study on student engagement. Frazer et al. (2017) found that high engagement and social presence of the instructor in collaborative activities, positive interactions, and timely feedback led to students finding meaning in the discussions. Finding meaning in discussions helped students to feel connected to their peers and their instructor. The faculty members in this study exhibited attitudes and discussed actions

and behaviors indicative of social, cognitive, and teaching presences and the Community of Inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2000).

Every instructor, with one exception, had stated clearly and repeatedly that that their presence, visibility, and actions in the classroom deliberately were intended to foster students' engagement. Moreover, there was a high level of agreement among faculty members about how classroom discussions, activities, and assignments, led to student engagement and positive learning outcomes. The percentage in agreement would be 90% and, as general rule, adequate levels of agreement in a study should be 75%. Less than that amount would not be adequate to consider consistency and reliability in establishing codes for analysis.

In theme five, most instructors stated they posed challenging questions and encouraged students to analyze and evaluate the course readings and material. This theme embodies the cognitive and teaching presences of the instructor; however, the students' response reflects a social and cognitive response and presence. Park and Kim's (2020) use of the constructivist framework in their study of online students found that a higher number of interactions and engagement among students, led to better elearning experiences. Several instructors in my study stated they believed that students were engaged at a higher level when they were excited about a topic and that a higher level of interactions and engagements led to stimulating levels of discourse and a better chance of reaching additional students.

Faculty reported that they believed their course work, discussions, and assignments promoted critical thinking, and that reading material was aligned with all

types of activities or assignments. This response was identified as theme six and as indicating a teaching and social presence as instructors fostered and praised engagement

All but one faculty member used rubrics for assignments, and many also mentioned the importance of giving detailed feedback. One faculty member used rubrics for major assignments but did not use them for day-to-day work or discussions because they did not have class discussions. Every one of the respondents stated that they did not like or assign group work. Their reasons were that it was unfair and usually did not turn out well. I noted that I agreed with this assertion and that it was most likely my personal bias against group work for students who are learning, especially undergraduates who may not be accustomed to the intense levels of engagement required in group work. Projecting personal ideology into the data can be a problem and a serious limitation of thematic analysis (Roberts et al., 2019).

I was cautions to ensure I was not projecting my ideology into the procedures used as I interpreted the data or identified themes. All faculty members stated that their assignments promoted critical thinking, but they did not give specifics on the type of assignments they used to stimulate critical thinking or what type of assignments were required in their courses. They did not say whether they assigned essays, research papers, course projects, or student portfolios. I admit that I was disappointed that the data they provided were not more specific.

Discrepant Cases

I had mentioned that most instructors stated they worked to foster student engagement and activities in their online classrooms. A discrepant case was an instructor

involved in teaching an online course that did not allow for any student-to-student contact and the class did not have an online discussion board. This discrepant case had responses that were different from most of the participant responses. Participants stated that their students did not interact in any way, so instructors did not foster engagement or interaction among students. The instructor said that although their course was asynchronous, instructors did not have online discussions or places in the online classroom for the students to post or interact with one another. The course shell, syllabus, and assignments were online and the instructor posted videos with lectures and discussions about the courses materials and assignments. Many of their responses about student engagement and activities were short answers such as "they don't, "we don't," "I don't." There were several N/A responses. Faculty members did not indicate their discipline or type of courses they were teaching. It was reasonable to find that there were online courses that did not include student-to-student interactions or online classroom discussions. However, the majority of online courses did include student engagement with one another, and the majority of the respondents in this study stated they believed engagement was important for learning and student success.

Classroom Rules, Course Planning, and Learning Communities

The faculty members in this study did not have issues with online protocol, poor behaviors, classroom misconduct, or problems with net literacy. Each respondent indicated that the rules and policies for their class and college were included in their course syllabus and posted to the main page of the classroom bulletin board. I took notice that there was not a single report of classroom or discussion board conflicts or instances

in which students were inappropriate. I realized that I had some bias as I looked for such problems, based on my early experiences.

I am from an older generation of early internet users and online education borne out of the 1990s before internet classroom social and behavior conventions were established. When I was a student in the 1990s and early 2000s, many students were pushing boundaries with inappropriate posts in which faculty had to intervene. Perhaps those problems are no longer an issue that a digital society is the norm, socially networked with informal and formally established rules and socially acceptable behaviors on the internet.

On staying current with online teaching, faculty members reported that they enjoyed talking with and networking with colleagues, they engaged in self-learning, reading journals, and websites in order to stay as current as possible. A few faculty members indicated that they had monthly Zoom meetings and quarterly on-campus meetings. One instructor said their college provided training and that faculty were required to have one hour of study annually for each course they taught. Another said that their college had staff development initiatives associated with Apple products and required faculty to participate.

Finally, although faculty members said their college required staff training, they did not provide specific information on the type of training required. Not one faculty member used the terminology of faculty development, mentioned any on-going support program, or identified any formal system of networking and learning. I considered it an optimistic sign and was hopeful when I found that all faculty members valued

engagement and considered it critical to their students' success. However, faculty members did not provide many specific examples of strategies or techniques they used to encourage engagement or to share insight into what worked in their classroom, and what support they needed to improve their teaching practice or help their students learning.

Most faculty respondents were not cognizant of making efforts to form learning communities, nor did they identify factors indicating they understood the value of learning communities. Faculty members stated that they thought classes went too fast for learning communities to be possible or to have an impact. One of the respondents' replies below is illustrative of themes related to social presence that emerged from the data. When asked, "Can you outline the steps you follow in order to encourage your students to form an online learning community; do you use language, descriptions, or refer to sources about online learning communities?" A faculty member stated,

> My classes only last from five to eight weeks, forming a lasting community is a lot harder than it is for a longer course. I prefer to let the community form organically, as students find common ground among each other, and engage, although this generally does not happen in my shorter duration classes.

Another participant shared how instructors related to their students and encouraged them, but did not require students to form a learning community or engage in group work,

> I ask my students about their long-term interests and goals and point out when others have similar interests. I explain to them how important creating long-term community can be to their success. I use language and descriptions about learning

from one another as a community, but I do not point students to sources or require them to network or do group work.

Other comments and responses to questions about fostering engagement and the formation of learning communities were vague and noncommittal. Although faculty members thought learning communities were beneficial, they did not indicate that they thought learning communities were much more than a form of informal support or a social outlet.

Summary

In the analysis of the data, I expected to see a higher level of interest in forming learning communities and realized that my expectations could have derived from my own biased experience as a student and being influenced by scholarship associated with the CoI framework and the CoP models that grounded my study. I may have held unrealistic expectations about finding feedback that matched the findings I had found in the literature. Perhaps it is difficult to form learning communities in community colleges because other conflicting issues exist. For example, classes cycle too fast, general survey courses have high student enrollments, and students are not in a sequence of classes in which they will see one another in subsequent terms. It is just possible that undergraduates at the community college level do not have the time or opportunity to build relationships with their peers and are not yet prone to forming communities in an organized manner. However, students can take skills and experiences learned in one class and apply new skills to their next classes. The concept of a learning community does not

need to be limited to one specific course and time period of 12 weeks, and a learning community does not need to be limited to students.

A significant finding uncovered in the data was that none of the instructors reported that they were encouraging students to form or foster learning communities. Perhaps community college instructors are so overworked and rushed with deadlines that they are unable to make time to foster learning communities, and they may be unaware of the impact learning communities can have on their students. However, I noted that none of the instructors reported that they were participating in online faculty learning communities or that their colleges were offering faculty development programs. Faculty members stated they were required to attend monthly meetings, or take classes, but most of their ongoing training was self-directed. If educational leaders of a college do not offer their instructors faculty development programs or at least require peer participation in an online community, it may follow that the instructors may have little to no direct experience and understanding of the benefits of an FDP.

An online FDP that fosters a learning community would provide faculty members with direct experience of participation and engagement with social, teaching, and cognitive presences. Faculty members could become aware of how learning communities could benefit their students in courses, because of their own experiences in the college FDPs. Forming initiatives for FDPs that are imbedded in the mission of a college could support faculty members, provide them with opportunities to engage with and learn from one another, and gain skills and experience to engage their students. Imbedded FDPs may improve student engagement and learning outcomes (Elliott & Oliver, 2015).

Elliott and Oliver (2015) found a connection between faculty development programs and student success in a study of community college students. The connection between FDPs and the problem of student engagement, my research, and data analysis led me to understanding the importance of faculty support programs and the development of the project. In Section 3, I will introduce the project and goals as well as present an extensive literature review covering best practices of online teaching, online training programs, and various models of faculty development programs.

Section 3: The Project

In this section, I discussed the purpose, goals, and rationale for this project. Following a review of the literature is a discussion of best practices. Also included are approaches to creating the building blocks for a model online FDP. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty members' perceptions of online student engagement and to use insight gained from the results of the study to present my position about the benefits or a FDP based on the CoI and CoP frameworks. The FDP discussion in this section includes examples of model online FDP programs, the rationale for and benefits of FDP, model programs, as well as research studies and scholarship dedicated to advancing FDP. The contents of this section are presented in a concise position paper in the appendix. The position paper will be presented to key stakeholders, administrators, and educators in the elearning program at the primary study site.

The primary study site is a large community college in the Western United States; this college has an established elearning program that offers courses, certificates, and degree programs to a diverse student population. This FDP is intended to create an online CoP for online faculty in which the current LMS might be used more fully to implement ongoing education, support, networking, and engagement among faculty peers, administrators, and staff in the elearning program. The community college serves approximately 11,000 students, with over 76% of the students from the local population and a third of all enrolled students being first generation and students of color. About 53% of the students attend classes on campus as full-time students; the remaining students are part-time and online students; however, the college does not provide exact

numbers for the percentages of students attending elearning programs. Over 79% of the students earn a 4-year transfer degree, and 21% of the students earn professional and technical certificates or degrees. The results of this study could provide college leaders and stakeholders with insights about faculty members' perceptions of student engagement and the types of instructional strategies that foster student engagement.

Data were collected from 10 faculty members who had at least 2 years of online teaching experience. The faculty members were emailed a confidential Google Docs link that directed them to information about the study, the informed consent document, the confidential nature of the survey, and how to contact me via phone and email. Following this information was the link that contained the study, which consisted of 15 open-ended interview questions. Participants could answer with as much or as little information as they wished to share. The 15 open-ended interview questions were adapted from the PPEOIQ survey, which was based on the CoI model that also served as the framework for the study. The author of the survey granted me permission to use the complete survey instrument in its original format, to use portions of the survey relevant to my research, or to adapt questions as needed for my study to answer the research questions posed.

Rationale

The primary study site offers many online programs and learning options, including full online courses and online degree programs, as well as hybrid courses that are offered in a mixed format of online and face-to-face, as well as traditional on-campus classes. The study site includes digital learning or elearning as part of the mission and long-term strategic planning, and program planners assess learning outcomes on a regular

basis. College leaders should consider how their mission addresses the needs of students and the college while ensuring that there are long-range strategic plans to improve and support the ability of the college to offer high-quality elearning programs (Bailey et al., 2018). Any long-range planning should include not only courses and programs for students but also programs to support online instructors. College leaders and faculty development programmers must also consider the challenges, benefits, and goals when planning their online FDPs. Such challenges may be budgetary constraints, faculty resistance, and the problem of creating programs that are accessible to full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty members (Scarpena et al., 2018).

Some of the challenges with a new FDP may be mediated by using the existing Canvas or Blackboard LMS with updates and the new content held in the existing faculty area. The program planners of the college could offer incentives and encourage participation as career advancement. Program planners could feature special topics or online presentations by the elearning director, campus librarians, or experienced online educators, or they could feature special published reports and articles as topics for discussion. The FDP could be more successful by limiting deadlines for discussion and instead facilitating remote, asynchronous participation and encouraging ongoing discussion and collaboration. There could be numerous benefits that come about from an FDP, not the least of which could be increased faculty experience and knowledge. A more engaged faculty may present an opportunity to increase student engagement and student success within their online programs as the college becomes a more supportive learning community for faculty and students (Scarpena et al., 2018).

Faculty development, community building, and learning communities have long been identified as areas of study that have an ongoing and long-term need for more research due to the potential to improve online and distance learning education programs. Eib and Miller (2006) argued that a faculty development approach can aid a college in supporting high-quality teaching and faculty engagement while fostering a culture of connectedness across all sectors of a college. Hew and Hara (2007) interviewed 20 online instructors using the CoP framework and found that the sharing of knowledge was one of the most compelling motivators and was a powerful catalyst to support literacy for online teachers. CoP was found to have positive long-term effects on an instructor's performance due to interventions targeted toward support, networking, and long-term experiential learning. The current project was based in part on data collected from faculty at the primary study site, which was a nearby community college, a second community college, and the Walden University Research Participant Pool. The current project was also based on an extensive review of the literature related to online teaching, adult learning theories, online engagement, faculty development, and CoP.

Review of the Literature

For this project literature review, I focused on books and peer-reviewed sources related to online faculty development, CoP, CoI, online discussions, and online student engagement. I originally searched for sources published after 2013, but because of the extensive time involved in the research for this study, I did further research and focused on articles published between 2017 and 2021. In my second deeper search for sources, I searched the Walden University Library education databases and used Google Scholar to

locate peer-reviewed journal articles, research studies, and recently published dissertations. I searched with keywords related to faculty development and then reviewed articles with subjects, keywords, and themes found in the data collected from faculty members. Most of the sources in the literature review section were published between 2017 and 2021; however, I included a few older studies due to the importance of a particular study in the evolving field of research related to online faculty development. Cook and Streindert (2013) argued that the evidence base for online faculty development was not extensive or substantial; however, in the interim, many studies on faculty development included promising results with asynchronous, web-based FDPs, which I also reviewed for this project.

Online Faculty Development Models

Lewis and Ewing (2016) used the robust learning model to examine an asynchronous online FDP at an online university in the United States. The 1988 robust learning model includes the premise that successful distance learning or student leaning outcomes are dependent on multiple factors and interrelated components. The online university programmers used the same online LMS that students used, and the instructors were familiar with the system. The asynchronous nature of the FDPs provided anytime access, which reduced faculty barriers to participation because of differing schedules or remote locations. Lewis and Ewing found that faculty members' engagement and online activity were similar to online student engagement and activity and faculty members shared teaching tips in their discussion area. This sharing fostered teaching skills for other instructors, and many faculty members reported improved student outcomes in their

courses. Lewis and Ewing also noted that faculty members who were very engaged in the online program had higher student course enrollments and higher student learning outcomes.

Bunk et al. (2015) examined motivational factors of excitement versus fear among online faculty and proposed that these contrasting emotions could be used to mediate or moderate faculty attitudes toward the efficacy of online instruction and positive student outcomes. Bunk et al. found that when inexperienced instructors were pressured to teach online, they experienced fear and had negative attitudes about learning outcomes. In contrast, more experienced faculty felt excited about online teaching, even when they did not have experience teaching online. However, more experienced faculty had a more positive attitude about learning outcomes. Bunk et al. urged university administrators to implement policies and practices that fostered excitement about distance education to ameliorate negative attitudes about learning outcomes or resistance toward online teaching.

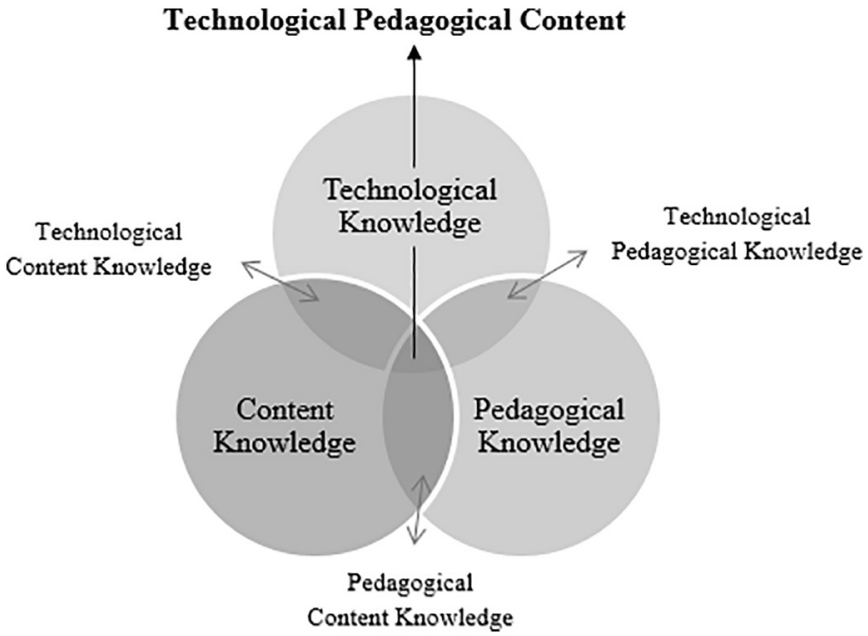
In another study, programmers used the existing LMS of the college to support and mentor online adjunct nursing faculty who had less clinical experience or formal online instruction (Slade et al., 2017). The adjunct faculty members were not as prepared to teach online as regular faculty, and they did not have access to campus services or opportunities to interact with full-time campus faculty. By using the LMS on campus, the nursing program was able to support new and returning adjunct online faculty. The program provided adjunct faculty with resources for practical support, collaboration, mentoring, and involvement in the teaching community. This connection facilitated a

sense of belonging. This study highlighted the importance of faculty programs and learning communities for all faculty members who are teaching online. In the current study, the primary study site had full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty; all instructors needed a system of support and a means to become engaged within a faculty learning community. It was not necessary to create a separate community for adjunct faculty; however, it was advantageous to consider adjunct faculty support as a critical component of a FDP.

Another faculty development training program used the TPACK model to train new online instructors in a mixed-methods study to measure their teaching effectiveness (Brinkely-Etzkorn, 2018). The basis of the TPACK model is that content-specific teaching knowledge and elementary pedagogical skills are not adequate or effective in technology-based classrooms. The original framework was revised in 2006 by Mishra and Koehler (2006) to include technological knowledge (see Figure 5). This is the model Brinkely-Etzkorn (2018) used in the model for a FDP that sought to integrate content, pedagogy, and technology. Brinkely-Etzkorn found the endeavor challenging, and the training program was unable to achieve full integration. There were several problematic areas of the program, and the integration of the domains proved to be more complex than originally thought. The issues were that faculty members had different content expertise and levels of teaching experience and fact that technology changes faster than pedagogy. Although I did not use the TPACK framework in the current study, it is an important model because it is one of the few that focuses on the relationships among content, pedagogy, and technology.

Figure 5

Conceptualization of TCAPK Framework (Brinkely-Etzkorn, 2018)



Cognitive coaching was found to be an effective model of mentoring when more experienced faculty were paired with less experienced faculty (Bair, 2017). The less experienced faculty had identified aspects of their teaching that they wanted to improve with critical reflection and self-analysis. Cognitive coaching posits that there are five states of mind in each person (consciousness, efficacy, flexibility, craftsmanship, and interdependence) and that structured conversations between mentor and mentee can facilitate change or conversions of these states of mind. Bair (2017) examined the outcomes of a 2-year cognitive coaching program, the mentor, and mentee relationships, as well as the success of the program, which helped mentees meet their goals. The mentors learned valuable listening skills and how to build trust with mentees while

remaining nonjudgmental, and mentors learned the difference between serving as a coach and being an expert.

Bair's (2017) study was based on a face-to-face training program that was adapted to a content management system in an FDP. Experienced online teachers would mentor new online teachers would establish goals and then use reflection to identify how they were meeting their goals. The mentors and mentees would have private online discussions in which coaching and reflection could take place. Mentors would be awarded for their service, and mentees would also receive recognition for participating in the program. Similarly, the current study site could utilize their experienced faculty members to serve as mentors in the online FDP and reward them with incentives such as small grants, recognition, and credit toward future pay raises. This type of program would offer professional growth opportunities for all faculty members and could help keep the expenses of the program within budget.

O'Shea Lane (2018) examined a faculty development program in a community college setting to examine the response to a semester-long program that focused on learner-centered instruction. Finding that new college instructors needed to move well-beyond their content expertise so they could meet the needs and challenges that students face. Learner–centered instruction has changed over time, and Lerner-centered instruction is a broad term with varying definitions. However, most definitions include active learning, collaboration, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and authentic learning. O'Shea Lane (2018) stated that instructors could share their content

expertise, but they should be moving from teacher-centered instruction or transmitting knowledge, to a learner-centered model.

In the learner-centered model, instructors help their students learn to construct knowledge and build skills of critical inquiry, critical thinking, communication, and problem solving (O'Shea Lane, 2018). In the proposed model, students complete additional work and have higher learning outcomes. Greater learning may become possible when students are involved actively in learning. As they maintain engagement, they share ideas with peers in their class and work on assignments that have application and meaning in the real world (O'Shea Lane, 2018).

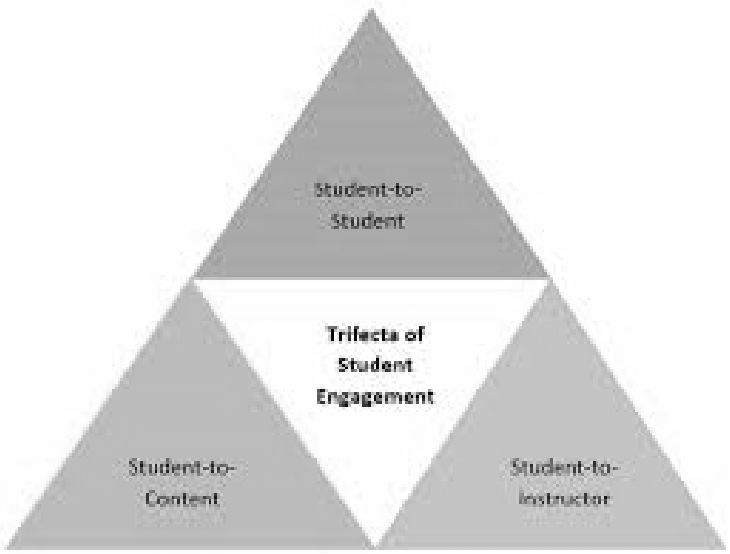
Leslie (2018) discussed a pilot study, including eight university faculty members who completed an online faculty development course to learn how to engage their students. The online faculty development program occurred on the campus LMS and modeled on the Trifecta of Student Engagement framework in the courses offered to faculty members. The Trifecta framework results in improvement in student engagement, satisfaction, and grades. Student-centered teaching is an essential component of ensuring engagement and the efficacy of the Trifecta model (Figure 6).

In this model, students are engaged with the course content, their peers, and their instructors as illustrated by the diagram below. When the instructors applied their new skills and the Trifecta model to their own classes, instructors reported increased student engagement, and half of the instructors reported that their students' grades had increased from 8% to 11%. Leslie's (2018) study illustrated how participation in a program

provides support, skills, and experience. In Leslie's (2018) example, instructors received firsthand experience of engagement among online students.

Figure 6

Trifecta of Student Engagement Framework (Leslie, 2018)



In another example of an approach to faculty development, Zones of Agency were developed as a model of faculty development for instructors to determine their effectiveness in teaching and their degree of presence in their online courses. Five measurable domains represented aspects of presence, showing that instructors were able to exert control and influence over the success of these domains of presence. The Zones of Agency model is a tool instructor can use to improve their experiences with presence. The five determinants were (a) content, (b) format, (c) strategies, (d) technology, and (e) students (Samuel, 2020).

Samuel's (2020) study included instructors as participants in their personal online classroom environments, impacted by presence or lack of presence, which contributes to isolation. The lack of physical interaction may further contribute to a sense of isolation, which may have a negative impact on an instructors' motivation to teach online. Samuel's (2020) study focused on instructors' experiences and how their experiences could be an important source for insight about instructor's presence and engagement as well as motivation to teaching online courses. Instructor perceptions of engagement tools used to examine their teaching presence and effectiveness as well as to improve their motivation to teach online could improve student engagement and student learning.

Learning Communities and Communities of Practice

Learning communities are considered one of the top-10 high impact practices that lead to greater student outcomes. These outcomes could benefit faculty by providing them with opportunities for professional growth (Steiner, 2016). An advantage to an online faculty development program and learning community is that the programs promote scholarly teaching.

Steiner (2016) discussed a pilot program at Kennesaw State University and noted that a main contributor to its success was in a design that met the needs of faculty members with busy and diverse schedules. The program was a faculty-driven model that employed different faculty members to provide essential and urgent training, which included the scholarship of teaching and learning model and campus and community engagement. The pilot program Steiner (2016) conducted offered a course that was months in duration; it was asynchronous and 100% online. The learning modules covered

educational theory and integrative assignments, the format allowed faculty participants from many disciplines to network, exchange ideas, and then apply their new knowledge and learning to their own classroom learning communities (Steiner, 2016).

Fewer than one-quarter of the faculty signed up for the program, and because the participation was low. No formal study existed. Participants responded to an anonymous survey, stating that they felt like they had experienced professional growth, appreciated access to new information and articles, and were able to use some of what they learned in their classroom learning communities (Steiner, 2016). Ongoing interaction among faculty members is well-known to be an important form of professional development, professional learning. Sharing among peers is an effective method of professional growth (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018).

A compressive review of 52 studies of faculty learning communities published since the mid-2000 included an examination of formal and informal communities for higher education among online educators (Lantz-Andersson et al., 2018). Regardless of the intentions or outcomes, participants thought that the learning communities were important sources of support for teaching techniques and equally important as a place for meeting the social and technological needs of instructor participants (Lantz-Anderson et al., 2018).

In summarizing the main commonalities of the studies, Lantz-Anderson et al. (2018) noted that the informal learning groups were social in nature, and the protocols and conventions of informal groups were established by a single moderator and key participants. These factors could be problematic if key participants become instrumental

in creating the courses offered in the professional development program. These factors would not only put the planning and power of faculty development programs into the hands of a few instructors, but those few instructors might not make choices or plan courses that align with the mission statements and long term plans of the college. This review relates the importance of a formally planned and administered faculty development program that is designed for the good of the college, faculty members, and students.

Another model or approach to a CoP is a sustainable Virtual Community of Practice (VCP) for faculty development. A VCP utilizes best practices, the most current resources, and information to support online teaching in an asynchronous online environment. Pimmel et al. (2013) created a VCP model program based on best practices associated with face-to-face teaching, web-based social networking, content management, and web-based teaching. Faculty participation was high, which could have indicated the effectiveness of the virtual model (Pimmel et al., 2013). The researchers noted that researchers used CoP's in the virtual environment to change faculty members' instructional strategies. Instructional strategies should proceed in stages, beginning with formal activities to develop trust, exchange ideas, and share experiences. Instructional strategies should then move onto more complex experiential learning activities such as re-designing courses, while discussing issues and problems with their peers (Pimmel et al., 2013).

For online faculty development to be most effective, program designers should endeavor to create conditions that foster a learning community; however, the program

should offer more than a community. The program could offer technological support and disseminate information about pedagogical methods, various college resources, and requirements, as well as resources, suggestions, and practical application of methods to foster student engagement and student success (Scarpena et al., 2018).

As adult learners and professional educators, online faculty should have some voice and freedom to make decisions about participation in a faculty development program. Faculty participation cannot be optional for it to yield benefits to educators and their students. Moreover, a more practical way to measure the success of a program might shift focus toward student engagement and learning outcomes than tracking the number of clock hours' educators spend participating in faculty development (Scarpena et al., 2018).

In a survey of 143 educators, Suh and Jenson (2020) noted that although educators had placed a high value on professional connections and collaborations, they did not have an awareness about a broader community of practice, a transdisciplinary model, or the importance of making connections with educators from varied institutions and diverse fields. This study examined the professional identities of developmental educators in the context of building a stronger sense of community, shared professional identities, and banding together across disciplines and institutions to advocate for their students and their profession.

In response to criticism about the quality of learning in online courses, researchers at Boise State argued that high-quality online courses are possible when faculty members are supported and trained with skills in the pedagogical, facilitative, instructional, social,

management, assessment, and technical realms (Chen et al., 2017). The researchers noted that many online instructors had not experienced learning in an online environment. They created a faculty support program that was a series of online seminars for faculty to gain firsthand experience with online learning. The seminars were designed to be authentic experiences with discussions, quizzes, and deadlines, and they were designed so the faculty could gain insight into the many issues students faced. Although the seminars were designed to support faculty members with the training of skills in the many realms, the underlying purpose of the seminars was intended for faculty to have the authentic experience learning online (Chen et al., 2017).

CoP was found to have long-term effects on instructors' performance because of interventions targeted towards networking and long-term experiential learning (Lum, 2016). Golden's (2016) research into the effectiveness of CoP showed that collaborative faculty groups were an ideal platform for supporting online faculty and were a venue in which faculty could share ideas, co-create new knowledge, discuss challenges, and find solutions through meaning-making and productive dialogue.

Limitations of a CoP were differences in faculty members' confidence, technological skills, and persistence in participation, which could be resolved partially through activities to address the social needs of faculty members as well as instilling a sense of commitment and institutional pride that might lead to a stronger sense of purpose (Golden, 2016).

Members of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) in Dublin created a professional development program based on a new CoP

framework and social theory of learning. The Irish professional development framework includes five domains that support teaching staff throughout their career and enable teachers to take charge of their own professional development. The NFETL program provides guidance for institutions, stakeholders, and policymakers. The researchers conducted a pilot program with over 215 participants who were overseen by 10 mentors for four months (Donnelly & Maguire, 2018).

The feedback received from instructors in the NFETL program indicated that the program was embraced by most participants. The instructors reported that they liked learning with peers from other disciplines, and they valued the nonjudgmental nature of the learning community where they felt safe asking questions. Instructors also reported that they liked the work on reflection as a peer group. The faculty enjoyed work assignments, and the support they found in the group seemed to reduce stress they usually experienced at busy times of the academic year (Donnelly & Maguire, 2018).

Lum Kai (2016) examined 24 faculty development studies to identify gaps in knowledge about the use of CoP in faculty development. Most studies were mixed methods or qualitative studies that included in-depth, rich narrative data collected from members of the various communities. The research indicated that in all studies, except one, CoP made a difference to educators in the practical application of knowledge, skills, tools, and social relationships.

CoP had positive and long-term effects as a result of early interventions, and long-term programs facilitated learning, networking, and developing a community of teachers was considered an unintended benefit. Another factor that influenced the effectiveness of

CoP's was time. Time was required for reading, studying, and meetings, as well as time for integration of the groups so members could to get to know one another, build relationships, collaborate, and find balance between the needs of individuals and the needs of the community.

In a 6-year qualitative study, Liu et al. (2016) examined teacher professional development programs (TDP) and the various interpretations of what TPD means. They also noted that one university-based program had used the same program for many years and only focused on competency. The researchers proposed that a TPD should focus on principles associated with lifelong transformative learning, and ongoing growth and development (Liu, et al., 2016).

Lui et al. (2016) suggested TPD programs use a virtual CoP framework, with a goal-centered model to focus on the democratic potential of participants and the social aspects of learning to reinforce goals and create a self-sustaining online community. The CoP model in this study was a hybrid. Each teacher identified their personal learning goals, yet each teacher remained opened and strengthened their capacity to engage in, participate with, and learn from others in the community (Lui et al., 2016). The dynamic mix of online and face-to-face workshops, as well as social media, helped the TPD teachers grow far more than they could have if they were to attend a face-to-face annual workshop (Lui et al., 2016).

Paskevicius and Bortolin (2016) mixed methods study used the community of inquiry framework to analyze data and shared insight from faculty members' feedback about participation in a month-long faculty development program. The program was

based on the CoI framework and included a combination of online activities and face-to-face meetings. Faculty members engaged at a high level in online sessions, when they were offered in advance of the face-to-face sessions, and faculty members said that they appreciated emailed reminders about upcoming activities. Overall, most faculty members believed they had a sense of connection and exchanges but did not feel that they were part of an online learning community (Paskevicius & Bortolin, 2016).

Technology and Competency in Faculty Development

Technological advances, on-going changes in higher education, and the digital environment have meant that librarians have adapted, refined, and expanded the role and purpose of academic libraries. Librarians are focusing increasingly on users of the library and what they can do to advance teaching, learning, and research to stay relevant and align the library with the services and programs that may be needed at the college (Misa, 2015).

Many libraries have begun offering online programs that consist of community-building courses or webinars where faculty and students can learn and engage with librarians and with one another in a CoP environment. A FDP that includes library staff can help promote relationships across campus, build identities, reduce isolation, while building a community of learners (Kimmel et al., 2019). The primary study site is not utilizing the potential of the library and library staff of the college or supporting library staff with ongoing training. The library at the primary study site has extensive online holdings, several master's degree level librarians, and the library is able to use the LMS

system. With innovation, planning, and support, the WWCC library could become an integral component of the proposed faculty development program.

To gain insight into how much training and support were provided to online faculty, researchers in the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) surveyed 73 faculty members with extensive experience teaching in the classroom and online. The survey results indicated that a mere 24% could rely on formal training, over 50% were self-taught, 26% learned informally, and only 38% thought formal training was useful (Kessler, 2016). The low percentages for the survey may suggest that a closer examination of the training is necessary to see if there is a problem with online teacher training.

Kessler (2016) argued that the best part of an online classroom is the ability to drive engagement, and program planners in higher education should not be creating faculty training or faculty development programs based on an instructivist model. Kessler (2016) stated that online teacher training programs should be focused on meaningful interactions and collaboration, skill-building through experience, and practical application of new tools and knowledge. The most effective faculty programs should provide the instructors with experience as a student, as an instructor, and peer coaching from colleagues. Effective faculty programs should provide opportunities for instructors to work with classroom instructional designers, and the instructors should spend less time listening to lectures, reading, and completing written assignments (Kessler, 2016).

Scoppio and Luyt (2017) examined the range of skills and skill gap of online instructors and observed that many instructors lacked experience with course delivery

and knowledge of online pedagogy and many online instructors did not have sufficient technological skills. The researchers in this study presented two models of faculty support at two different higher educational institutions, with two different learning management systems.

Despite the differences in size of these institutions, the types of support needed, and learning management systems, Scoppio and Luyt (2017) found there were unique similarities between the institutions. The smaller institution had less funding; yet, they were still able to offer course design and support services that was adaptable and flexible to meet the changing needs of faculty. The larger institution, on the other hand, had a substantial budget, but the support system in larger institutions had to be adapted to provide a higher number of individualized support and another system for on-going support. Program planners at each study site recognized the need for a nonlinear and flexible approaches to faculty development and the need for faculty members to network and collaborate with one another to form a learning community.

Campus initiatives for faculty development programs are not always a high priority, and funding for the programs are not secure. Therefore, many colleges have difficulties remaining current about opportunities or possibilities available to support a strong program (Condon et al., 2016). Emerging data support the connection between faculty learning and student learning. Evidence on campuses show the presence of a culture of teaching and learning and strong learning communities (Condon et al., 2016). A learning community or culture of learning leads to improvement in teaching in an on-going cycle, and on a long-term basis, learning communities promote faculty growth and

development that leads to improved student outcomes, higher engagement, and higher-order student learning (Condon et al., 2016).

Bolliger and Martin (2018) used the online engagement questionnaire to survey online instructors' and online students' perceptions of the value they attached to strategies that promoted student engagement in the online classroom. The researchers examined perceptions of engagement in learner-learner interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-content interactions, and found that instructors considered all forms of engagement and interactions to be more significant than students' interactions.

Faculty listed instructor presence and personal contact, relevant course content, icebreakers, collaboration, and frequent communication with students as the most important strategies to support engagement. Faculty members reported too much textual content, in-class discussions, student lounges, and synchronous class meetings as the least helpful strategies (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). Students valued some of the same items as instructors; however, they did not score those strategies very high in comparison to the instructors. Students valued posting due dates and checklists very high. Students stated that the prominent posting of these items helped them stay organized, ensured that they met all course requirements, and that they submitted assignments on time. This study by Bolliger and Martin (2018) illustrates the importance of examining faculty and student perceptions about online engagement to see where strategies and expectations are aligned and when faculty could improve engagement strategies by providing the support that their students need most.

Martin et al. (2019) examined the multiple competencies required to be an effective online instructor and interviewed 15 instructors to learn their perspectives. Findings showed that online instructors had to assume five different roles, including facilitator, course designer, content manager, subject matter expert, and teacher, with responsibilities to serve as mentors and course designers. All instructors interviewed for the study stated that they were proactive in gaining competencies by utilizing professional development programs at their institution. A professional organization such as the Online Learning Consortium and Quality Matters was available, or they found sources and learned on their own. Martin et al. (2019) recommended that program planners in colleges can use the competencies model as components or as building blocks to create faculty development programs. The faculty members' high ratings of faculty development as an important tool in supporting quality online instruction further underscores the value of supporting online faculty development.

Portugal (2016) recommended program developers at colleges identify best practices for online faculty and then employ teachers who have those characteristics and abilities, instead of relying upon academic credentials during the hiring process. Portugal (2016) conducted this phenomenological study to examine best practices of online faculty and identify which factors caused stress and burnout. One factor that created burnout was that faculty members felt an emotional need to log into their classrooms multiple times a day and to work on their courses at all hours and in excess of traditional hours. Better institutional support, including time management support, could help reduce the burnout (Portugal, 2016). This study highlighted the importance of additional ways faculty

development programs could benefit faculty by offering support for the rigors and challenges online instructors face with time management.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that 6 million students were enrolled in online courses, and 19% of enrolled students reported having a disability. Guilbaud et al. (2021) recommended higher education institutions adopt policies and revise faculty training programs to meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities. It was recommended that program planners in colleges examine faculty perceptions and knowledge of accessibly education, practice, and legal issues, and then incorporate further accessibility training in their online FDP. Guilbaud et al. (2021) included a comprehensive assessment survey on teaching students with disabilities and a detailed faculty demographic survey to gather data prior to implementing changes in a training program.

One study on CoP examined the effectiveness of using multimedia technologies, such as social media, games, portfolios, and applications as tools not only to reach students online, but also to include different media, and integrate selected media into faculty training initiatives. Ragupathi and Hubball's (2015) faculty development initiative involved 45 new faculty members who voluntarily participated in their program at the National University of Singapore. These authors found that new online faculty members were eager and enthusiastic to learn new technologies, pedagogies, and be able to engage in a learning community or CoP with peers. The faculty members also took their new skills and their enthusiasm to their classrooms where they fostered student engagement in

discussions, social media postings, and activities that supported critical self-reflection, and many learning activities (Ragupathi & Hubball, 2015).

Riverine and Stacey (2016) discussed the long standing problems associated with implementing successful face-to-face faculty development programs. They argued that barriers to successful faculty development program can be resolved with technology and online programs. The researchers conducted a 10-year longitudinal study of an online faculty development program in a Canadian university and paid particular attention to perceptions and responses of faculty member participants. The 12 participants agreed that the online environment helped them feel as a part of a community and provided them with support as well as tools and resources to use in their classrooms. Faculty members stated they felt supported by their institution, but it was also noted that the faculty development programs had to be required in order for there to be high levels of faculty participation (Riverine & Stacey, 2016).

Scholarship and Professional Growth in Faculty Development

In a 2021 Glocalisation study at University of British Columbia (UBC), researchers examined scholarly approaches to campus initiatives and faculty development programs that embraced cultural diversity. These authors found the approaches were inclusive and offered responsive programming for faculty members in higher education. The researchers from UBC outlined a scholarly approach for faculty development that was accessible to a broader range of colleges, disciplines, and programs. They argued for a scholarly approach to faculty development and stated that parent institutions should have an invested commitment and strategic partnership with agencies or departments in

the college that support the scholarship of teaching and learning model (Webb et al., 2021).

In a 2020 qualitative study, Farrell and Brunton (2020) examined online student engagement, using a case study approach. These researchers noted that there were very few in-depth reports with discussions about students' perspectives. Although their study focused on instructors' perceptions of student engagement, understanding students' perspectives on engagement could illuminate and improve an understanding of faculty member's perceptions of how students felt about engagement. The findings from the study pointed to a number of factors that affected the way students felt about engagement. An involved instructor, a strong community of peers in the online classroom, course design, and the students' life-to-school work load balance, all contributed to a sense of positive engagement. This study provided insights into successful and positive learning experiences; however, a limitation to this study was the small number of participants (Farrell & Brunton, 2020).

A mixed methods study was published with the results of a 2-year faculty development program targeted toward faculty members, with a goal of earning certification. The study included quantitative analysis to score faculty member's manners of teaching and participation both before and after the program. Qualitative analysis was used to review post-session discussions and reflection papers. The researchers in this study found that the certificate program tended to show there were changes in attitudes and behaviors of faculty members. The most notable changes were that they shifted from the old teacher-and content-based methods to student-centered and learner-centered

methods of teaching (Salter & Rushe, 2020). The faculty members' responses to the program were positive and over 90% of the participants stated that the sessions had helped them develop new teaching strategies.

Ranieri et al. (2018) also argued for self-paced, accessible online faculty development programs to limit the barriers to faculty professional growth. The researchers designed a self-paced program for professional development at the University of Florence for the 2016-2017 academic year and presented their analysis and findings. The results of the quantitative study revealed that the participants were very diverse in terms of their motivation and experience, factors that played a role in the type of content participants selected. Self-paced learning meant that instructors with years of experience could pass over sections according to their skill level and their interests, and they could access the program on their own time. There were no attempts to enforce rigid schedules, orderly requirements, or to control the learning paths in the self-paced programs (Ranieri et al., 2018). Another unexpected result of the study was that the researchers found less experienced users were highly motivated, indicating that motivation was a greater incentive than experience. This finding supports the notion that online faculty members should be rewarded with incentives, and that time spent on improving their teaching practice and professional development should be recognized and rewarded.

Program developers from an Australian university created a program that challenged educators to learn new ways of engaging their students and to consider dropping the fixed, rigid, and predictable online activities designed to monitor engagement and increase attendance. In their study, the program developers followed the

progress of nine highly motivated and engaged students throughout a term and found that those students defined traditional online activities as “busy work” that was not essential to learning, and in some cases, impeded learning. One example they gave was that when major assignments were coming due, students needed time to work on those assessments. The students tended to shift away from their classroom online discussion boards, and instead, focused on their major assessments or term papers. The students were engaged with their assessments and became disengaged with the discussions, despite the fact that the course did not adjust students’ discussion requirements for that period (Dymet et al., 2020). Not all engagements were social and this study illustrated why program planners should expand the definition to include engagement with the course materials, as well as engagement with peers or instructors, and that online discussions need not be assigned every single week of a term.

The Tools of Engagements Project (TOEP) is a model online professional development program for the faculty and support staff at the State University of New York. TOEP uses web-based technology and social media to deliver learning activities and peer-learning communities to support life-long learning among faculty and staff. Sullivan et al. (2018) examined the final summary reflective posts in the program to understand participants’ experiences in the program. The summary posts reflected that faculty members gained new knowledge from their peers, and faculty members were integrating newer technology into their courses, with an expressed intent to continue to learn when the program ended.

The TOEP community is considered to be a unique learning community that nurtures faculty in a safe and supportive environment. The program was in effect consecutively for five years and was considered to be successful. Faculty members became interactive in an online social learning community. They were able to adopt additional instructional technologies into their teaching practice (Sullivan et al., 2018).

Project Description

The need for faculty development programs is greater than ever. Program planners in colleges are offering online courses and programs as a way for students to earn their college credentials or degrees. Learning outcomes could improve, and online faculty might find satisfaction and become successful educators if they are supported with tools and resources to teach and improve engagement with their online students.

Some experts agree that institutional support and funding are essential for FDPs, and that program planners at colleges should have training mandates and requirements for their online faculty members (Frass et al., 2017). It is equally important that faculty development personnel and campus stakeholders have similar thoughts about training and requirements for online learning, and that there is long term strategic planning so that the mission and goals of the FDP are aligned with the vision and the mission statement of the college for online learning programs (Haras et al., 2017).

This present study and the FDP proposal are presented in a concise form in Appendix A as a position paper to stakeholders at WWCC. A position paper was considered as an effective way to convey the results of this study, especially because I was not employed at the study site, in a position as a change agent, or was on the

leadership team. A position paper is an appropriate manner to present evidence and argue for recommendations to activate initiatives for change and adopt a faculty development program (Wilson, 2012).

I have studied the problem and resources extensively, can present a strong and persuasive argument on the benefits of an FDP program, and discuss disadvantages of other programs (SFU.AA, 2022). I can also defend the merits of the program in relation to the research problem and framework, defend the data analysis results, and demonstrate how the FDP program will enact positive social change for the WWCC Faculty community and students. The proposed FDP differs from many college faculty programs that are shorter in duration, such as on-campus meetings, in-person retreats, or as an in person attendance-required workshop, or conference. Those types of in-person typical programs are shorter in duration for scheduling and logistical reasons, so that all faculty can have time away from their classes to attend the training. Often community college trainings are geared toward a specific activity or pedagogical lessons and are intended to deliver educational resources that lead to rapid instructional change (Kandakatla & Palla, 2020). The purpose and goals of this project are to transform the FDP into a CoP in order to facilitate long-term faculty support that could lead to systemic change at the individual, program, and institutional levels. The program is not targeted toward a specific date or place in time, and the program topics or learning modules are broader and more open-ended to facilitate differing perspectives, various disciplines, and a range of teaching experiences.

This proposed faculty development program could be useful as an asynchronous online program consisting of courses, threaded discussion topics, resources, links, and news posted about scholarship, conferences, and new technology for online educators. The FDP could be hosted on the LMS of the college that faculty and staff members use to access their online classes, resources, campus news, and information. The courses could have a start and end date reflective of the terms of the term start dates and concluding a week or two of the college before the term ends so that faculty members can focus on their students and courses at terms end. The courses could feature topics ranging from practical tips, student engagement, assessments, online pedagogy, teaching skills, discussion prompts, videos, and interactive activities.

Each course in the program could be set up in advance, in sequence, for one year, or 2-years to create a program that award credit for participation or a certificate at the conclusion. The FDP could be mandatory; however, the program should be flexible and adaptable for the faculty and staff community so that participants are able to access it at any day or time because the program is online and asynchronous. Ibrahim (2020) presented an outline of a faculty training program that could be easily adapted to an online FDP at the primary study site. Table 2 describes an overview of comprehensive online teaching training.

Table 2

Overview of Comprehensive Online Teaching Training

Module	Topic	Assessments
1	Student Learning in the Online Space	Content quiz Posting welcome message
2	Creating Alignment	Create an alignment table
3	Preparing Your Syllabus	Create an online syllabus
4	Setting Up Your Canvas Site	Develop course Canvas site
5	Using Web-conference	Record a videoconference practice session
6	Creating Videos	Record an asynchronous video lecture
7	Asynchronous Activities	Content quiz Practice with discussion board and voice thread
8	Designing and Delivering	Content quiz
	Synchronous Sessions	Develop a synchronous session lesson plan
9	Providing Feedback to Students	Content quiz on feedback to students
10	Online Assessment	Content quiz Demonstrate feedback to online assignment
11	Inclusion, Accommodations and Accessibility	Content quiz

Note. (Ibrahim, 2020)

Professional Development and Scholarship

This project study presents a model faculty development plan with suggestions to address gaps in practice for online faculty training and support program at a Western United States community college or any community college that has online courses or programs. Although the primary college site offers an array of workshops in annual programs termed Faculty Educational Workshops (FEW), the program planners of the college do not have workshops or programs geared to online teaching and online faculty, and the program planners do not help facilitate a community of practice among online educators. Moreover, many of the workshops are offered on campus, or they may require real time, on-site attendance. This option is less than ideal for supporting online instructors who have differing scheduling needs and want to become part of a community of online educators and online learners.

Although online faculty development is a rather recent field of study, faculty development is not a new field, and it is accepted widely that faculty development leads to better student learning outcomes (Condon et al., 2016). Some FDP are operated inconsistently or are operated by part-time faculty members or temporary and rotating interim directors. Haras et al. (2017) recommended that faculty development programs or teacher training centers should be funded and staffed adequately by dedicated full-time program administrators who are committed to administering a program that advances teaching quality. Haras et al. (2017) also argued that the FDP programs should be an integral partner and have a voice as participants in college-wide decisions that impact

student learning such as accreditation, institutional research, and assessments. Moreover, the FDP or program planners at the teaching center can also promote teaching expertise across programs and departments and connect the quality of teaching with student learning, with a focus toward increasing motivation and engagement among underserved students (Haras et al., 2017).

Program planners at community colleges are committed to providing education for underserved students. Online programs may help bridge the gap and increase access for underserved students. Program planners are encouraged to provide online faculty teaching support to ensure the best educational opportunities possible for students. According to Rizzuto (2017), the first steps to designing faculty development initiatives or faculty development programs are to conduct a needs assessment and solicit feedback from elearning administrative personnel and faculty who teach online.

A faculty development program needs assessment could be distributed among all faculty members who teach online courses, as well as department heads, online programmers, and online support instructional staff or assistants. The faculty development needs assessment would cover several domains and areas of potential development, such as faculty demographics to include educational level, teaching experience, teaching subjects, or topics that are of interest. The needs assessment should be completed by full-time, part-time, adjunct faculty, and teaching assistants. Including all faculty members in the assessment promotes fairness among faculty and could contribute to motivation for participation. Elliot et al.' (2015) study on faculty development included a compressive needs assessment that I adapted for the Appendix.

This needs assessment could be completed by all online faculty members, and data collected could inform the teaching topics and resources in monthly learning modules.

Toward a CoP and Model Faculty Development Program

This study was grounded by the CoI framework and research questions about student engagement, and instructional strategies instructors use to promote engagement in online classrooms. The CoI framework and the CoP model for faculty development are effective, long-term approaches; they are sustainable and adaptable to each institution. The CoI and CoP are also adaptable to faculty members' needs so they can improve teaching skills, implement best practices, network, and learn with peers (Carvalho-Filhoer & Tio, 2019).

Program planners of the college need to define and develop requirements and institutional expectations that are specific to their own campus as well as responsive and supportive of faculty and staff members (Elliot et al., 2015). Carvalho-Filhoer and Tio (2019) discussed 12 strategies for launching a successful CoP model of faculty development. The 12 strategies suggested below are to be used as a guide, rather than to be enforced as strict rules. These strategies can encompass CoPs that are grounded by different sociocultural theories and can be adapted to meet the faculty, staff, and institutional needs. The revised list of strategies is in Table 3.

Table 3

Strategies for Implementing a CoP Faculty Development Program

Strategy
1- Gather a core group to create and launch the progress. 2- Articulate the goals and value of the CoP. 3- Start with a specific task or project – make it problem-oriented. 4- Keep the CoP open. 5- Intentionally invite members with expertise and innovative ideas. 6- Choose a facilitator – "primus inter pares." 7- Make it worthwhile for members and the institution. 8- Work to ensure institutional support. 9- Promote sustainability. 10- Communicate success 11- Go online 122 Evaluate the CoP

Note. (Carvalho-Filhoer, et al., 2019)

Program planners at each college can create their own faculty development program, which can be revised annually to meet the changing needs of the college, faculty members, and students as well as changes in technology. The template above could be used to create an online faculty development program that is based on the CoP model. This model includes domains, components, sections, characteristics, and subjects to be included in courses and the overall program (Richardson et al., 2020). Rizzuto (2016) also recommended a template that was a self-paced model FDP as a strategic approach that could meet the needs of the faculty and the college.

Online FDP courses should remain flexible and open-ended to be of the most benefit to instructors who adopt various teaching approaches or styles. For example, it

would not be helpful to focus on how to turn a lecture-based in-person class into a lecture-based online course, when many instructors might not adopt a lecture-based style in their online classes. Online professional development might have positive results when the courses in the program are modeled after the types of courses offered in the college and those faculty members design and teach (Borup & Evmenova, 2019). These researchers added that it makes sense to model training that is flexible, accessible, asynchronous, and open-ended.

Program planners could also take advantage of any number of programs, courses workshops, conferences, and offerings from the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) and the OLC Institute for Professional Development. These programs could pave the way for planners to begin offering FDPs on their own. The OLC workshops and programs could be a starting point for program planners in a college in which planners want to begin a program immediately and may need time to develop their own campus infrastructure. The OLC has certificate programs, mastery series programs, OLC workshops, webinars, as well as two annual online conferences (OLC, 2021).

OLC (2021) workshops encompass the Community of Practice (COP) model and provide a flexible and supportive framework for faculty professional development. Another option would be for the college to have dedicated online programming and online staff members to enroll in a few OLC programs or workshops, with the intention of using their experiences and learning to benefit their home institutions. The staff members then use their new skills and resources, study the needs assessments of the

college and then begin building their campuses own programs within a COP and OLC framework for faculty development.

Recommendations for Faculty Development Self-Paced Course Design

A need exists for additional faculty development programs that are not only remote and asynchronous, but that are self-paced due to the varied teaching schedules of faculty members involved in teaching online at a particular college. Faculty members carry heavy teaching workloads and this means there is less time for classes, seminars, and professional training. They need courses and programs that are flexible and accessible when they are available and have time to participate.

Online FDP's support instructors as they develop new pedagogies, skills, and experiences in the online environment. Instructors can also learn new ways to integrate technology in the classrooms. These competencies can lead to higher satisfaction rates and online instructors who have positive attitudes about online teaching and learning (Adnan, 2017). Saunders (2021), an instructor who experienced completing an online FDP, stated that the use of a good program does more than offer instructors' the opportunity to network, gain new skills, and use digital tools. Program planners could use a strong program to cultivate a keen interest in emerging technologies and pedagogical practices and foster an appreciation for online learning.

Rizzuto (2017) presented a model, self-paced online program of courses that was based on design recommendations derived from a needs assessment that aligned with the needs of the instructors and the needs of the college as an educational training institution. The self-paced model Rizzuto (2017) created for this project was recommended to

WWCC to consider as an example online faculty development program. This project is a template-based model, with guidelines, suggestions, and domains that are flexible, open-ended, and address the needs of newer and more experienced online educators. This adaptation included a Community of Practice (CoP) model to create a sense of belonging and empowerment for the faculty participants in the courses and programs at WWCC, the primary study site.

Professional development should be available and accessible to all online teaching staff, from the beginning teacher engaged in the induction process to the experienced, online instructor, the full-time and part-time, tenured, as well as adjunct faculty (Caldwell et al., 2020). The opportunity to learn and grow as professionals, while networking, should be available to all professionals.

Richardson et al. (2020) observed that the CoP and development of faculty learning communities yielded positive results and relationships among faculty members. The forming of relationships and community building were unexpected benefits that came about when faculty members participated in professional development programs of longer durations. Faculty members also were able to network and offer support to their peers throughout the length of a particular program or course instead of the limited support that might be offered at a faculty meeting or during a week-long course (Richardson et al., 2020).

Subjects and Courses

Developers and programmers should ensure the program and courses are easy to access and navigate within the content management system or learning management

system currently in use. The courses should feature topics and subjects that are relevant to the faculty member's experiences. Faculty members' needs assessments could guide the planning of courses and topics. Courses should be designed to include authentic learning and problem-solving experiences. Courses should include sections with up-to-date reference materials, recent publications, emerging theories, conferences, and news about the wider community of faculty members teaching online in higher education (Elliot et al., 2015).

FDP designs should focus on what to learn and how to learn, and incorporate effective online instruction to avoid the pitfall of increasing skills, yet not improving faculty members teaching practice. Moreover, a multiple pronged strategy that focuses on the types of courses as well as teaching strategies ensures courses are more accessible to faculty members. I created a nine-month long program, with modules that delineate each month's objectives, resources, and activities (see Appendix). Additionally, course syllabus and overall objectives of the FDP, which follows the monthly program modules and schedule are included.

Framework for Faculty Professional Development

Colleges that include online learning courses and programs may have higher student satisfaction and success rates when the institution fully supports faculty development with training and technology (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). A nonexperimental quantitative study on the impact of faculty development and degree status revealed that FDP, training, and faculty degree types were not a guarantee of student satisfaction and rather showed faculty longevity was a significant contributor to student satisfaction

(Kane et al., 2016). The study findings led to suggestions that faculty development programs could be used as a tool for faculty retention, rather than as an instrument to improve student satisfaction.

Kane et al. (2016) noted that their study was limited by a very small sampling of student survey answers per course that might not have been fair or accurate. Kane et al. recommended further qualitative research to examine faculty perspectives on professional development to gain a stronger sense of student satisfaction and to see if student satisfaction changed over time as faculty received additional training (Kane et al., 2016).

Mohr and Shelton (2017) and Kane et al. (2016) made suggestions and outlined a framework of learning goals, topics, and domains to cover in a faculty development programs. I have listed many of the topics and domains, which could be covered in FDP courses in an online LMS at the primary study site or any college program, including implementing online courses in their FDP. I selected topics and domains aligned with the research questions in this study that focused on instructors' perceptions of student engagement and instructional strategies that might be used to promote student engagement. Table 4 describes a sample CoI framework suggested by Fiock (2020), which is a model that influenced the topics I selected for the FDP.

Table 4

Community of Inquiry Framework for Course Design

Seven principles of Good practice for the Online environment	CoI Framework Presence	Instructional activities
Student-teacher contact	Social Presence	Develop initial course activities (e.g., ice breakers) to encourage the development of swift trust (Peacock & Cowan, 2016).
		l and encourage the use of verbal immediacy behaviors in interactions with students (Richardson et al., 2009).
		Incorporate audio and video within the course content (Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008).
		Share personal stories, professional experiences, and use emoticons (Lowenthal & Parscal, 2008).
		Make many human connections early in the course to ensure all feel comfortable communicating with each other (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018).
	Cognitive Presence	Use content and process scaffolds to support discourse behaviors (Richardson et al., 2009). Reflect on peer-peer interactions (Redmond, 2014)
	Teaching Presence	Provide frequent opportunities for both public and private interactions (Richardson et al., 2009).
		Design diverse, activities to be completed on a flexible schedule (Richardson et al., 2009).
		Explicitly introduce participants to the importance of interaction (Stewart, 2017).
		Show your character; personality is a good thing (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2018). Have a sense of humor and share it if and when appropriate (Dunlap & Lowenthal,

Note. (Fiock, 2020)

Interactions

According to Yilmaz et al. (2020), interactions and engagement are critical aspects of an online FDP; virtual CoP's in faculty development can use the campus LMS and features of that program such as chats, videos, and discussion boards. The FDP can expand to include Apps and social networking groups such as WhatsApp and Facebook as long as those groups remain private for the campus faculty and staff (Yilmaz et al., 2020).

The FDP interface in the LMS should be established to foster interactions and identify faculty members' roles as learners in the environment. The roles of facilitators and moderators of the courses should be made very clear to all enrolled in the courses and create opportunities for faculty learners to interact, seek support from, or give feedback to peers. Scholars suggested offering an array of materials that instructors can access at any time and to create optional and additional areas extend learning and grow community (Mohr & Shelton, 2017a). Finally, a good FDP should allow faculty participants opportunities for feedback on content of the program or evaluation at the conclusion of the course or program.

Motivation and Rewards

Some faculty development programs offer certificates of completion, Rushe and Salter (2020) created one- and two-year certificate programs, with post-session activities, tasks, and reflections that indicated 94% of the participants were pleased with what they learned in the program and pleased to have earned the certificate. Another type of badge

system could be to auto-dispense badges to participants on the LMS as they reach certain stages of time or a certain number of posts.

Auto-fill systems can be prepared to launch at various intervals and can be revised (Carey & Stefanie, 2018). Although FDP should be required, faculty members must remain motivated and should be rewarded for participation. Modest financial compensation and recognition award should be available to faculty participants or those who complete any type of certification. Borup and Evmenova (2019) designed a badge system for the FDP at a mid-Atlantic university for their Online Teaching Initiative (OTC Program). Figure 7 is an example of a system of digital badges that were available for faculty in an FDP (Borup & Evmenova, 2019).

Figure 7

Professional Badge System for Online Training (Borup & Evmenova, 2019

After an introduction to the project and an extensive literature review about various models of faculty development programs, I focused on a Community of Practice

framework as a model for my FDP Project. The literature review included a discussion of the benefits and limitations, promising results and outcomes from model programs. The framework for CoP by Fiock (2020) outlined seven principles for course design to consider when establishing a CoP for online faculty. Fiock's (2020) framework is flexible and can facilitate established and innovative ways to present curriculum and activities for a FDP and create opportunities for faculty members to learn, contribute, and reflect while participating in the program.

Reflections

Reflective learning is an important component to a faculty development program. The FDP creators can find ways to combine discussions and self-reflections with topics and course content. The developers can create a variety of self-reflection type discussion prompts to include critical thinking, questioning, and reflecting on past experiences, role playing, or simulation, and have faculty members maintain a learning journal (Rizzuto, 2017). Faculty development programs that are planned to highlight reflection and application make it possible for faculty participants to engage deeply with the material in the online discussions as well as in later post-session study when they can reflect on their own (Salter & Rushe, 2020).

Salter and Rushe's (2020) 2-year certificate programs for faculty development consisted of about 30 hours of study. They designed three certificates and each certificate had four main components that included required and elective courses and reflections. Another example of the power of reflections was at a Tokyo University in which all faculty members were teaching online during the 2020 global emergency. The instructors

maintained a 7-week journal of their experiences, the resources they found, and problems they encountered. Instructors with extensive online teaching experience had a larger battery of skills and material to draw upon, but all instructors referenced their journals and became self-reflective teacher-learners.

Another example of journaling and reflections as effective tools to help faculty members find ways to solve their problems and improve their skills was discussed following an auto-ethnographic study. This 2020 study chronicled the experiences and analyzed the reflective journals of instructors required to teach online during the global pandemic in early 2020. Besides learning that teaching online without adequate preparation was difficult, the journals revealed that reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were effective in helping educators refine skills during a crisis (Jung et al., 2021).

If reflective journals and reflection on action helped online instructors during an emergency, reflection, and reflective practice are important for non-emergency teaching situations. This study also highlighted challenges unprepared online instructors must face, the need for institutional support during non-emergency times and reasons why online faculty development programs should be an ongoing feature of colleges (Jung et al., 2021).

Potential Problems

Attendance and ease of access are two main obstacles to successful faculty development programs. Faculty development programs are available at most colleges and often have taken the form of in-person seminars, monthly meetings on campus, weekend

retreats, or multiple day-conferences. These in-person sessions make attendance challenging.

Moreover, an FDP should be offered in the online format as a mandatory program and not a program only to overcome attendance barriers of time and place. An FDP should be offered for the opportunity to create a community of faculty learners who gain direct experience of learning online (Elliot et al., 2015). My proposed plan helps eliminate the barriers to attendance as faculty can log in anywhere or any time and participate when they are available. To avoid the potential for the program to lack participants, the FDP must be mandatory. Online instructors must register, be engaged with, and participate in, the online FDP.

Budget cuts, reduced funding, and other financial concerns are also a potential barrier to creating and supporting a long-term FDP. It is outside the scope of my proposal to create and allocate a budget; however, it is reasonable for me to argue that college stakeholders should ensure funds are available for faculty development programs. According to Wynants and Dennis (2018), it is in the best interest of an online college to ensure members of the faculty are supported and equipped to teach online to meet the needs of their students. Supporting faculty with the programs can help to transform the campus community to be seen as a college that promotes diversity and fosters success for all students (Wynants & Dennis, 2018). Perhaps a portion of the tuition of each student's online course is set aside for faculty development, in addition to funding from the annual operating budget of the college.

Program Resources and Time Line Implementation

The success of the proposed FDP is dependent upon institutional support at the primary college study site or any program planners of the college who undertake a FDP. The college leaders and the Office of Institutional Support help launch FDP by creating a faculty development program initiative, which that include enough human and financial resources for creating and sustaining the program. For example, a revised wording of the primary college study site could include language stating that they are an innovative college, engaged with diverse and changing communities. In addition, the college has four main core themes that make up strategic planning, and these core values align with the FDP, including: (a) achieving success, (b) building community, (c) advancing equity, and (d) enhancing effectiveness. The program planners of the college strongly believe students come first and a strong FDP to enhance online education may support faculty and improve student learning.

I am not employed at the primary research site and will not be employed in the future in any capacity related to launching a faculty development program. The program planners of the primary college site granted me permission to collect data for my study. The program planners asked me to share the results of my study and to submit a copy of any final formal document. My study is also a proposal to create a faculty initiative that could lead to an online faculty development program. However, I am not slated to be involved in an FDP and am presenting a position paper about the results of this study, findings, and recommendations.

The program director or elearning department head would oversee the development and implementation of the FDP, which would be launched within a 6-month time frame, with the assistance of critical team members. The elearning director could oversee a team of personnel responsible for setting up and running the program. The college personnel staff would need to include a full-time facilitator, a faculty developer, and at least one course content creator. These two staff members would work in conjunction with a technology expert and staff members assigned to support the technological needs of the program.

The college already hosts an instructor's home page on the LMS of the college. The page regularly includes news and updates; therefore, the infrastructure to host the FDP is in place. Once the shell and structure of the course are set up, which may take up to two quarter terms in the spring and summer, the program could be launched in the fall of that year. The Faculty Developer and course content creator would be full-time positions, as these personnel would remain involved to facilitate the FDP after the program was created and launched. The college employs qualified personnel in the technology department, and the support staff would be available and on call, as needed.

The FDP Developer, course content creator, and Instructional Technology Person would work full-time so that the program would be developed over a 6-month period, from January to July, and be ready to launch by late August, in time for the start of the new academic year. These staff members would need to remain on full-time status to sustain the program and to do annual revisions of the core program. The LMS could be revised annually to host new topics, new discussions, and post the latest teaching

techniques or emerging theories as well as post new social tools and technological innovations.

Project Evaluation Plan

When an institution uses online technology to develop an online faculty development program, feedback provided by variety of stakeholders would be essential in building and maintaining a quality program. Research has shown that faculty development can help instructors become effective educators and gain skills that are transferable to other courses or programs (Schmid et al., 2021). Faculty members' engagement is essential in the creation, participation, assessment, and evaluation of an online teaching professional development program. The program should allow for formative and summative evaluations. Instructors can provide open-ended responses in a compressive needs assessment prior to the program, and they can become engaged in the program by sharing self-reflective experiences throughout the duration of the program (Ibrahim, 2020).

A proposed tentative timeline for evaluation is recommended (Adnan et al., 2021) and I have included a schedule suggested by Ibrahim, (2020) in Appendix A of this project. For example, in the schedule, faculty members could offer shorter summative evaluations at the conclusion of each term and then complete an annual comprehensive program assessment at the conclusion of the academic year (Adnan et al., 2021).

In addition, faculty members who have had spent years teaching online courses could also share their first-hand knowledge, answer questions, or respond to prompts by sharing experiences. Saunders (2021) suggested the sharing of experiences as an

excellent way to present courses and for faculty members to discuss and connect, but faculty members cannot become the instructors or facilitators. There must be professional staff, serving the needs of the college and faculty members participating in the FDP.

Online colleges can meet the needs of their diverse students by providing their faculty members ongoing professional development that addresses evidence-based teaching strategies in an easy to access online format that creates a community of learners (Wynants & Denis, 2018). Faculty members participating in the program should have the opportunity to provide feedback on the program and a survey is also included in Appendix A. Open-ended survey questions could be submitted to faculty members at the conclusion of the annual program. Data collected from the survey could provide insight into the effectiveness of a program and provide guidance on areas that could benefit from revision and the types of courses to develop in future terms.

Project Implications

The primary college study site already committed to long-term strategic planning of their online learning departments, course, and degree programs. Online learning is an integral component of the mission of the college to provide educational opportunities to a diverse student population, including underserved and remote students, as well as adult students with work and family caregiving responsibilities. Adopting an initiative for an online faculty development program and allocating financial and human resources to sustain the program is a natural step in the process of strategic planning.

The online FDP has the potential to provide greater levels of instructional and technological support to online instructors on a consistent basis, accessible anytime,

while serving as a flexible learning platform. Online faculty can work within the FDP on their schedules and can interact with and learn from one another as a cohesive faculty community of learners as a CoP in the faculty only learning management system.

Faculty members receiving this level of support could gain new instructional techniques and teaching skills and they could experience engagement. The instructors could be exposed to new resources, emerging theories and technologies, the latest scholarship, as well as suggestions and feedback from their colleagues, while gaining firsthand experience of learning online. Instructors' could transfer their new skills and direct experiences to their courses and teaching practice, and this transfer may result in improved levels of student engagement and better learning outcomes among their students.

Final grades and higher course completion rates are very desirable outcomes, and program planners in colleges want to see improved rates in these areas. However, it may be challenging to see improved grades and higher persistence rates if online faculty and students are focused solely on these external attributes. If online faculty can simulate their own experiences and strive to create a community of learners, their online students might feel internally motivated to become engaged students as they experience higher course satisfaction rates, and better learning outcomes (Hobson & Puruhito, 2018).

The stakeholders at the primary study site include, but are not limited to the Vice Provost for instruction, the elearning director, administrators, and staff at the Office for Intuitional Research. Stakeholders at the primary study site constantly strive to offer support services and programs to improve student learning and student persistence rates.

A new faculty initiative and this proposed FDP, could become an important component of the mission of the college for their online educational programs, their faculty, and their students.

This local college, as a primary site launching a new FDP program, could contribute to social change by transforming isolated online educators into collaborative scholar practitioners participating in a community of practice. Better faculty support could lead to higher student engagement and improved student outcomes, such as better grades, higher course completion, and higher graduation rates. The elearning department and FDP directors could also publish or report the FDP evaluations to the stakeholders, in academic journals, and through professional affiliations. In addition, the elearning department and FDP directors could present their findings, results, and experiences at regional and national online conferences.

Faculty members who have participated in the program could share their experiences at online conferences or write and publish papers on how the FDP enhanced their teaching skills and benefitted their students. Finally, students who become engaged highly and have better learning outcomes may be more likely to compete their courses and programs. The experience of doing well and completing courses can build students' self-esteem and contribute to their personal growth. Students can share their newfound confidence and abilities and positively impact their peers, their families, and their communities.

Conclusion

In Section 3, I provided an introduction and a rationale for an online faculty development program, based on the CoI model to create and build an on online learning community faculty members. The CoI framework is a dependable model that includes social, cognitive, and teaching presences, which can improve engagement and help to fill any gaps between instructors and students (Fiock, 2020). I conducted an extensive literature review with older and newer sources to support the creation of an online FDP, using the CoI model. This study took place over a longer period, and I was immersed in literature from 2013 to 2022, at the conclusion of my research that I conduction for this study and project.

I discussed models of various faculty development programs and recommended a project evaluation plan that could be implemented prior to the creation of the courses for the program. During this phase, the programmers could solicit information from department heads and faculty members to learn more about the types of content to include and the support faculty members want. Using a needs assessment plan and survey to collect data will provide further direction about the type of subjects the FDP should cover.

This study has implications for the field of online FDP and online teaching as it calls for faculty to participate as a community of learners and experience the online course environment of their students as learners. Faculty members' reflection and direct experience with online learning as part of a community of learners may contribute to

stronger social presences in their own classes. Stronger presences could improve student engagement and course learning outcomes.

In Section 4, I discussed the project's strength, limitations, and the importance of ongoing support and training for online educators. I also discussed the limitations of my study and the small sampling size, recommendations for future research, implications for social and leadership changes, and recommendations for future research. I also included a reflection on my experience as a researcher and the potential importance of my work. I concluded the section with an introduction to the position paper and project that is presented in Appendix A, which is a flexible and adaptable model online faculty development program.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this FDP are that it is based on successful models and solid research by experienced scholar practitioners. The plan can be launched in a few months using existing campus technological infrastructure and can be created and facilitated by a relatively small staff. The program is flexible, adaptable, and asynchronous and can be revised annually or as new technologies become available and as new developments, trends, or online pedagogies become known and available to use in online programs. Online education has been around for over 25 years, and it is clear that not only is it here to stay but that it has the potential to meet the needs of many students including working students, students with family responsibilities, students with illness and different abilities, students residing in remote locations, and students with lower income. In addition, as witnessed in the 2020 pandemic, online education has the potential to meet the educational needs of the world's population. There is much to learn from the pioneers of online education and the experiences of current educators and administrators. Moreover, research that includes data from faculty members in the field is valuable and adds strength to projects that are informed by the voices of educators.

The current study was limited to a small sample of online faculty who teach at different community colleges and universities. Although the study offered recommendations to the primary research site, the findings may be transferable to other campuses or online programs. On the one hand, the study could have been strengthened by a dedicated focus on a single college. On the other hand, collecting data from more

than one study site may enable findings to be transferable to more colleges. The two main research questions that guided this research also gave the study strength and significance as the problem of student engagement and how to improve engagement were extensively reviewed in the literature. Through exploration of faculty members' perceptions at different colleges, this study could have wider appeal and broader implications for understanding student engagement and the instructional strategies online faculty members use to foster student engagement.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The CoI framework includes domains from the social, cognitive, and teaching presences, which intersect and overlap while also supporting discourse and learning (Garrison et al., 2000). The framework embraces a community of learners among faculty members who are learning new skills and technology while learning from one another and being supported by their home institutions. A variety of FDPs are offered at colleges and universities by scholars, administrators, professional associations, and teaching organizations that use differing approaches, models, and frameworks that include alternate terminology and are known by various names. Although these localized and national FDPs may have different titles, most are built on a similar framework or model, and many are grounded in research by some of the same scholars.

One example of this is the Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation at the University of California, Irvine, which developed a long-term faculty development program called the Active Learning Institute. The Active Learning Institute offers a series of workshops that culminate in a certification program. The program is dedicated to

encouraging faculty members to use active learning strategies and create active learning classrooms. This program is not only for online instructors, and each workshop is offered in a scheduled time slot in a physical classroom, requiring faculty members to participate in real time and in person (Aebersold, 2019). Program planners in colleges can offer short training programs such as on-campus weekend workshops; however, the logistics of arranging the sessions and scheduling to meet the needs of all active faculty members can be challenging. As noted by Kandakatla and Palla (2020), shorter programs do not allow time for CoPs to form and do not lead to campus-wide or large-scale changes in undergraduate instruction.

Picciano (2018) proposed a multimodal framework for online education and professional faculty training, with seven elements of an online learning community:

- Content (platform, media, and games)
- Social emotional (face-to-face teaching, tutoring, advisement)

  Self-paced independent study (adaptive software)
- Dialectal/questioning (discussion board)
- Evaluation/assessment (assignments, learning analytics)
- Collaboration/student-generated content/peer review (wiki, mobile tech)
- Reflection (blog, journal).

The seven elements were unique. They were found to be adaptable, interpretive, self-paced, and flexible enough to support faculty training programs for instructors. Instructors were teaching all types of online courses. Courses included synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid online courses, and hybrid courses (Eldridge et al., 2021).

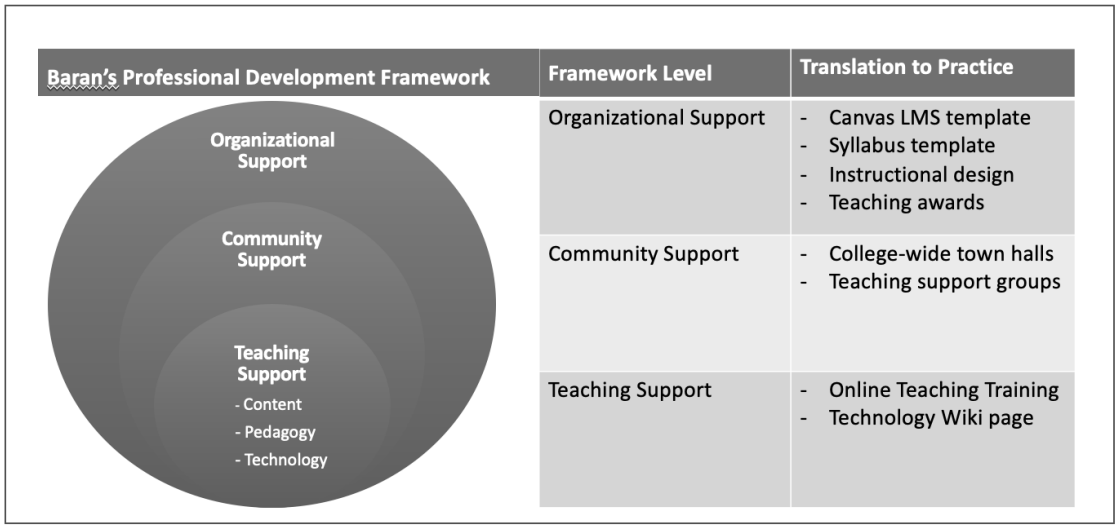
Another approach to FDP planning might be seen in types of subjects or courses that are included as discussed in Ibrahim's (2020) program based on Baran's professional development framework for online teaching. Baran's framework is built on three layers of development: teaching, community, and organization. The teaching level of this model requires solid pedagogy, content-specific knowledge, and technology to better engage with students. Baran's model is also an example of a faculty community of learners that supports networking and engagement between online instructors who are engaged in the FDP. Organization is the outermost layer of the framework that draws attention to the importance of the administration, the academy, or the institution to demonstrate and commit to ongoing support of continuous professional development (Baran & Correia, 2014). Although Baran's model includes different language and concepts, the framework is a three-tier layer of support similar to the CoI framework as well as practical and immediate ways to move framework to practice.

Ibrahim's model was interactive and self-paced and offered training that could be used immediately and developed in response to the 2020 COVID-19 crisis and the need for education to be offered online (Bolisani et al., 2020). The 2020 COVID-19 crisis meant that all teachers had to get up to speed with pedagogy and technology and be teaching courses online on very short emergency notice (Hebebci et al., 2020). My study was underway before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic impacted educational institutions globally, and I did not directly examine programs that were created in response to the emergency. However, there are some lessons to be learned from programs and support services created during the 2020 pandemic, not the least of which underscores the

importance of well-developed online FDPs and faculty members with the skills, experience, and readiness to teach online.

Figure 8

Translation of Professional Development Framework Into Online Teaching Training



Note. Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change (Baran & Correia, 2014).

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

During my time spent researching the background for this study, I learned that the concept of faculty development dated as far back as the 1950s and that many online colleges had been implementing faculty development programs since online education became available (see McQuiggan, 2012). I became aware of the importance of online faculty support and came to understand that colleges must provide continuous, organized institutional support to ensure the quality of their online programs; however, it was not clear to me that formal support was always offered to online instructors. During the

course of reviewing my survey answers, I got the impression that many faculty members who participated in my study were not fully supported by their colleges with formal programs. I also got the impression that they were overworked, that they were short on time, that their classes rolled by quickly, and that they were somewhat on their own teaching online. Perhaps I read between the lines or brought a bias into my impressions. At any rate, my impressions reminded me of when I served as a graduate teaching assistant to professors who were beginning to teach online in the mid-1990s. My supervising professors were on their own to design and teach their courses on early text-based platforms, and they did not have any form of informal or formal institutional support. Now most colleges offer some form of informal support, encourage networking and collaboration, and may require training. More colleges have formal FDPs, and there are many resources available to support colleges and individuals. There are many published studies and journals, training and conferences, as well as professional associations and national programs to support faculty development (National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, 2022).

Eiselein et al. (2019) argued that FDPs are necessary for colleges to achieve their goals of optimal student learning and student success. There are challenges associated with establishing a first-year experience program and delivering it to college faculty members with diverse backgrounds and teaching experience. Eiselein et al. stated that the challenges can be overcome with concerted efforts toward improving conditions for students such as learning outcomes and better attrition and graduation rates. The first-year experience program should also positively impact faculty members and result in a

higher satisfaction rate, a stronger sense of engagement, and attainment of new teaching skills and refinement of teaching practices. Eiselein et al. reported that 24 of 30 faculty members completed their first-year experience course, and results were positive. A total of 96% of participants reported that they gained new skills, that the content of the program was relevant, and that their teaching efficacy had increased by 40%.

FDPs may be associated with the programs in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL is the study of student learning with the goal to improve learning and enhance teaching through publishing or presenting experiences, research, or the results of classroom practice (Felton, 2013). SoTL has a long history and is a compliment to FDP, but it differs from faculty development in that it involves examining how students are responding to the instructor's teaching (Felton, 2013) rather than teaching faculty members new skills in courses or programs among their peers. There has been a tendency to equate SoTL with other programs and activities or to say various approaches overlap; however, this is not the case with SoTL and FDP (Boshier, 2009). Faculty development will be different at each college and is dependent on the needs and culture of each institution, their faculty, and their student population (Potter, 2011). For this reason, I have recommended and included a model FDP needs assessment to be completed before project development and have provided a model for summative and formative evaluation. I have opted to present a position paper in the appendix to convince stakeholders at the study site of the value of this research on student engagement and the importance of my recommendations for a FDP.

Project Development and Evaluation

FDPs should have methods of internal evaluation by the faculty participants, administrative personnel, and external review (Hines, 2009). A program could be evaluated with different approaches and use various methods in each approach. One approach would be to evaluate participation by tracking attendance, and another approach would be to survey participant satisfaction. Participant satisfaction could be assessed with satisfaction surveys regarding the program's impact on teaching; these surveys could be faculty self-reporting or student surveys (Hines, 2009). In most models, courses are designed and evaluated afterward, and evaluation cannot always be related to proof of satisfaction or learning outcomes (Jaggars & Xu, 2016).

Martin et al. (2019) proposed a conceptual framework for effective online course design with overlapping domains that included recommendations for design, facilitation, and evaluation. Martin et al. proposed that forms of assessment and evaluation be part of a course design process from the beginning to the conclusion of the program. In my FDP, I suggested a schedule of formative and summative assessments and program of evaluation (see appendix).

A FDP has the potential to improve faculty support systems, and the impact of a program can increase over time if the faculty developer and college stay up to date on faculty development. The college could affiliate with Magna and subscribe to the associated peer reviewed publication *Journal of Faculty Development*. Magna is a professional organization founded over 50 years ago with a mission to provide faculty development and leadership support in higher education. In addition to the *Journal of*

Faculty Development, Magna offers many resources such as hosting conferences and offering online courses and programs, and they remain up to date with technology, pedagogy, and administration (Magna Publications, 2022).

Leadership and Change

Campus leadership and organization change is a complex process; organizational theory and organization identity are fields of study that could inform campus leaders as they move forward to enact change (Kezar, 2018). Kezar (2018) recommended that in lieu of undertaking complex research in a new field, leaders and change agents should assess their missions and goals, their organizational identity, and their strengths prior to enacting change or adopting new initiatives. The literature and research studies I read in preparation for this research, both in advance and throughout the duration of this study, have helped me realize that the strength of an institution's online program will be determined by the college's leadership, strategic planning, long-range goals, institutional support, funding, and initiatives that support FDPs. The learning outcomes for students are dependent on faculty members' online teaching skills and institutional support (Condon et al., 2016). Instructors must be equipped with pedagogical and technological skills to integrate and adapt to online teaching (Adnan, 2017). The success of a college's online program will be reflected in levels of student engagement, persistence, and success rates (Eiselein et al., 2019). College leadership, institutional stakeholders, and faculty development staff must remain committed and up-to-date with the types of resources, materials, and technological tools they deliver to faculty members. College leadership, institutional stakeholders, and faculty development staff should also be flexible and

adaptable to change with an understanding of the scholarship of change and that change in college policies or initiatives can be a complex process (Kezar, 2018).

Reflective Analysis

This research project required several years to complete, and I faced obstacles in collecting data as participants did not respond or commit to inquiries for in-person or telephone interviews. The potential participants did not have the time to commit to real-time scheduling or to respond to long survey emails in their inboxes. I was obliged to revise my data collection methods on two different occasions, which meant extra time was needed for new requests to IRB for approval. Later, when I had a data collection method that had IRB approval and was more flexible for faculty members, their participation was delayed by the global pandemic of 2020, which created extra work and stress for educational instructions and faculty members. Later in the year, faculty members were more eager to participate; the online Google Docs survey was a tool that faculty members could complete on their own terms and on their own schedule.

I experienced firsthand what it was like to expect or request extra work and effort from busy college instructors. I also realized that online faculty were stretched for time, had heavy workloads, and that they needed to be able to take on extra work or commitments on their own terms. The instructors were able to find time to participate in this research project after I adapted the delivery and data collection methods to an accessible and flexible format. Not only did I discover that adaptation and flexibility were essential for my study, but I also became convinced that faculty development courses and programs had to be offered in an accessible and flexible online format. The literature

supported my realization (Rizzuto, 2017). I gained a keen respect for the pressures and heavy workloads that college instructors faced daily. My experiences and realizations influenced how I approached an FDP design and affirmed commitment to an asynchronous online flexible plan.

The longer duration of my study meant that I was immersed in researching and reading new articles and studies for several years longer than would be required for a typical doctoral study. The act of researching, finding studies, making connections between studies, tracking down sources and citations, and considering how different studies could apply to or be used in my own work was a very enjoyable aspect of this project. I also liked the stage of data collection and reviewing data, and I appreciated studying the responses to my survey questions.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

In this study, I wanted to learn about how online college instructors perceived student engagement and the types of strategies they used in their classrooms to foster engagement. I examined the research questions and the faculty survey responses through the lens of a Community of Inquiry framework to understand the social, cognitive, and teaching presences within an online classroom and created a faculty development program based on the CoI. Faculty development must broaden and expand programs and how programs are presented to support faculty members so they have tools and skills to improve student engagement and learning outcomes for online courses. Programs that are flexible, adaptable, and self-paced, will meet the needs of the fast paced environment that faculty members navigate daily as they have assumed ever increasing teaching workloads

(Rizzuto, 2017). The findings of this study and proposed FDP will be presented to the primary study site, community college, elearning directors, and the lead contacts at the Office of Assessment and Intuitional Research (OAIR) at the college.

Personnel at the OAIR were supportive of my research proposal, readily provided approval for data collection procedures, and requests to learn about the results of my research. At the time I stated, I submitted a copy of my final study and all recommendations when my study was completed. If program planners at the college were to consider adopting my FDP in the online format and utilize existing infrastructure, program planners would be providing a resource that could have a positive impact on the faculty members and their students. Improving online courses and providing support for faculty members is part of the program planners' long range intuitional goals. If my program were adopted, it could contribute to social change by facilitating a scholarly community of learners among the campus faculty members. Social change would also occur if the program led to higher levels of faculty engagement, improved teaching resources and techniques, and offered up-to date technological tools in a cost-effective, flexible, and adaptable online program. Finally, the FDP could contribute to the most notable aspect of social change; higher student engagement and measurable levels of student success, such as better course completion rates, improved learning outcomes, and higher student satisfaction rates on the end-of-term course feedback surveys.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study has implications for program developers who are implementing and improving faculty development programs by offering flexible, self-paced sessions,

courses, and programs accessible at any time via the online learning management system of the college. By offering authentic courses with peer interactions, and discussions within a CoI and CoP framework, faculty members could be able to network, support, and learn from one another, while having a first-hand experience of online learning. Faculty members experience the learning centered environment similar to the classrooms they teach as their students engage with their peers, course instructors or facilitators, and with course materials and content.

Interested researchers could conduct a similar study, using the frameworks of adult learning theory (Merriam, 2017) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1997), and this research could be helpful for educators who are transitioning from in-class to online-teaching and are resistant to change. Using transformative learning theory means that faculty members are viewed as adult learners, with the ability to adapt, learn new techniques, and change their beliefs. One point to note is that instructors could spend time reflecting on teaching and learning experiences in this model, and that this part of transformation should be incorporated in a FDP program for online teaching (McQuiggan, 2012).

McQuiggan (2012) noted that all faculty members are able or willing to reflect or challenge their assumptions and beliefs. Many faculty members also stated that there was not enough time for reflection on their teaching practice, professional growth, or to be engaged with their colleagues about the transformative learning processes. However, the time constraints could be reduced if activities and discussions about new beliefs or changes in perspectives were shared in the online program as part of the participation.

I believe this study could be conducted to include a higher number of online faculty member participants. A larger pool of subjects could yield additional data that could provide increased insight into how faculty members view student engagement and determine actions and skills being used to encourage engagement. I could reframe several of my survey questions in order for instructors to offer specific examples of assignments or activities and explain the approaches used for teaching in more detail. The need to ask for clarification or probe for specific answers is an example of why I wanted to originally do in-person or scheduled phone call interviews.

Benefits to the Google Docs online survey forms were obvious, but a significant drawback to these forms was that the format did not allow an opportunity for me to gather specific faculty demographic information and ask questions that prompted participants to open up and share. A future study might include faculty demographic survey created for use to generate the first participant recruitment emails (Table 5), which was created for this study, but unused due to format changes. Years of teaching experience and a description of academic disciplines are important variables that might have a significant impact on the types of answers respondents provide and could affect the data collected from the survey.

Table 5

Faculty Demographics

Participant	YTE	Discipline	T Course	Online Teaching
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Note. Table adapted from (Cavalier, 2014). YTE = Years of Teaching Experience; T Course =Traditional Course

Socialization and online networks are changing rapidly and are incorporating the latest technologies to meet the needs of people in social, workplace, lifestyle, and educational contexts. The importance of research and allocating resources to faculty development programs cannot be overstated and should be a key component of a long-term strategic planning in colleges. Program planners in colleges should consider employing both an elearning program director and a director of online faculty development. A successful online FDP can be achieved with key personnel, adequate budgeting, allocations, and use of existing resources and staff who are working on campus.

The proposed online FDP in this study has the potential to create a faculty community of practice that will provide faculty with more support and more instructional strategies to use in their online classrooms to better engage their students. A need for faculty members to engage in ongoing study, research, and networking to improve their own teaching practice, and this could result in higher quality online educational programs, students that are better engaged and more successful learners.

Conclusion

This study was an examination of online faculty members' perceptions of student engagement in their online classrooms and how instructors described their instructional strategies and online classroom teaching experiences. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009) and Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2011) frameworks guided the research and recommendations presented in this study based on the premise that social, cognitive, and teaching presences are critical to student engagement and improved learning and outcomes.

This project study includes qualitative data that I collected from 10 full-time faculty members at three separate colleges. Faculty members responded to a comprehensive online survey questionnaire with 15 open-ended essay questions from a standardized instrument based on perceptions and practices of online instructors. All faculty members were teaching full-time, had heavy workloads, and also had least two years of online-teaching experience. Data analysis was completed by hand, and coding was performed in several stages to find emerging and developing themes. Findings from this study could have implications for social change through the adoption of campus

initiatives and professional development programs to provide ongoing support to instructors who teach online.

This project study also includes examples and discussions of how to create a flexible, adaptable faculty development program offered online and using many current resources, including the LMS of the college. The proposed FDP could lead to highly engaged faculty members who have an opportunity to gain new skills and experiences in an online community of learners. The instructors could also gain enhanced teaching and technological skills; skills they could use in their classrooms to strive for higher levels of student engagement, better learning outcomes, and higher course completion rates. Perhaps the most important aspect of this study is that the research features a CoI model online faculty development plan as an approach to support online faculty.

The FDP could be launched in 6 to 9 months with the existing LMS technological infrastructure and key staff members working as a team. Once launched, this online program could continue with yearly revisions, additions and advancements, and this program could benefit the campus community of teacher-learners by providing up-to-date, adaptable, and flexible support. The FDP has the potential to transform an online campus faculty community, and consequently, the online student community. Higher levels of faculty and student engagement could lead to improved learning outcomes and better course completion rates. It could be further argued that increased faculty and student engagement and support for a campus community of learners could benefit instructors, students, the elearning department, and the program planners of the college that invest in faculty development.

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Appendix: The Project

Western Washington Community College

Faculty Development Program for Online Faculty Members

Presented by Teri Cruzan Walden University Doctoral Candidate January 2022

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Problem Statement

To examine the problem of low student engagement, lower course completion rates, and high attrition rates in online classes at Western Washington Community College and Washington state community colleges.

Goals of the Study

To learn more about online faculty members' perspectives of student engagement and instructional strategies instructors use to foster student engagement. To create a faculty development plan that will offer professional development opportunities and establish a Community of Practice (CoP) among online faculty members.

Toward a CoP and Model Faculty Development Program

This study was grounded by The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and the Community of Practice models for faculty development that are flexible, effective, and long-term approaches to the study of faculty development. The proposed Faculty Development Program (FDP) is sustainable and adaptable for each institution and individual faculty member's needs. The online asynchronous program is set up in monthly modules with resources, activities, and discussion prompts that can be accessed when each faculty members' schedule permits.

Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative case study grounded in the Community of Inquiry Model and a confidential online survey of ten community college faculty members. Faculty respondents reported the following:

High levels of student engagement were necessary for optimal learning in online courses.
Faculty logged into classrooms often and fostered engagement in online discussions.
Faculty members stated their discussions, readings, and assignments were aligned.
Faculty members stated they did not attempt to establish a community of learners.
Faculty members reported they were required to attend faculty meetings as training.
Faculty members mentioned online learning communities or community of learners.
Faculty members described activities or terminology related to faculty development.

Implementing Faculty Development

A faculty developer, faculty assistant, and IT Person would be responsible for program development and implementation.

Community of Practice

The Faculty Development Plan could lead to supported and trained faculty members who gained new skills and confidence, as well as growth as online educators engaging in a community of practice.

Benefits and Implications

The faculty development program could contribute to social change by facilitating a scholarly community of learners among the campus faculty members. Faculty members could foster higher student engagement and measurable levels of student success which could lead to higher course completion rates, improved learning outcomes, and higher student satisfaction.

This proposed Faculty Development Plan is aligned with the mission and goals of WWCC which affirm that the college will be innovative and place students first with a focus on retention and completion. Moreover, the FDP could be a significant academic investment of time and resources that would support teaching, learning, campus leadership, and provide the best educational opportunities for its students.

Position Paper

Goals of the Project Study

The purpose of the position paper is to share the results of this research study on faculty perceptions of student engagement and to provide recommendations to Western Washington Community College (WWCC) about the value of online faculty development program. Research undertaken for this study supports better student engagement and learning outcomes are possible when faculty participate in a faculty community of learners or community of practice programs.

WWCC leaders and change agents are encouraged to support initiatives to launch ongoing faculty development programs. These programs will offer WWCC faculty professional development opportunities and establish a Community of Practice (CoP) among online faculty members

The goals of the study were to learn more about online faculty members' perspectives of student engagement and instructional strategies instructors used to foster student engagement.

The WWCC community and leadership understand the connection between student engagement and student learning and are committed to improving student success in retention, completion, transfers. The college evaluates their online programs with professional survey instruments, annual reports, and assessment services from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (WWCC, 2017-2019), The college gains information from student and faculty surveys and uses data driven results to improve student learning and faculty development.

Core themes of WWCC's strategic mission and planning include a commitment to support faculty and staff, and foster a safe and sustainable environment for teaching and learning. The college is also invested in creating teaching and learning communities and providing opportunities for faculty and staff professional growth (WWCC, 2020).

Over the past ten years, WWCC has offered a number of faculty educational workshops on various topics such as writing course outcomes, using, rubrics, and engaging students. Faculty participation is not required, but it is encouraged. Most topics are just repeated with a couple of exceptions, and workshops are facilitated by regular online faculty members (WWCC, 2022).

There are on average about four on campus workshops per year, although since the pandemic some workshops have been scheduled as video conferences with Zoom. However, all workshops have been on a synchronous schedule of specific dates which may prove difficult for full faculty participation. WWCC's longstanding support of the program reflects a commitment to the campus mission to support faculty members' professional

growth with an understanding that faculty support will lead to improved teaching and better student learning (WWCC, 2020).

The goals of this position paper are to recommend that WWCC leaders extend their commitment to faculty support and student learning and adopt initiatives that encourage and facilitate faculty participation in a dynamic and flexible program. I encourage WWCC to support the development of a continuous asynchronous online faculty development program offered to all faculty members year round.

Faculty development can offer instructors the opportunity to acquire new skills and to improve their teaching practice, and as teaching improves, so does student learning (Condon, et al., 2016). Furthermore, by offering the Faculty Development Program (FDP) as an asynchronous online program this may motivate faculty members and reduce barriers to participation as each faculty member participates at the times that work best for their own optimal learning and on their own schedule (Eliot et al., 2015).

The FDP program should be mandatory and year round, with monthly modules of different topics to teach and support online program participants (Haras et al., 2017). It may not be necessary to require faculty contribute specific numbers of posts or lengths of discussions.

The extent of an individual faculty members' participation will vary on each monthly module as some topics may be more relevant to an individual. The courses should be flexible and self-paced throughout the monthly modules and they may have varying levels of engagement (Ranieri, (2017). Participation levels may correspond with faculty members' questions about a topic or a faculty member's willingness to share their experiences.

Target Audience

This proposed faculty development plan is presented to the following stakeholders responsible for guiding the mission and goals of WWCC:
The Vice President of Instruction, Dean of Instruction, Director of Assessment & Institutional Research, Library Director, Executive Director for Institutional Advancement, Elearning Department, Campus Diversity Committee, Technical Support, and the WWCC Foundation.

The Problem

The problems investigated in this study were low student engagement, lower course completion rates, and high attrition rates in online classes at Western Washington Community College and Washington state community colleges.

Low student engagement is a problem at WWCC and Washington state community colleges as evidenced from the results of student satisfaction and end of course surveys (WWCC, 2016). Online instructors report low student engagement in their courses and that low numbers of students' complete courses (Xu & Smith Jaggars, 2011). The 2015-2016 course completion rates for online math courses were only 75%, and only

60% of those students earned passing grades (SBCTC, 2016).

There is a lack of understanding about how online instructors respond to low student engagement and the type of teaching strategies they implement to support student engagement and better learning outcomes.

Research Questions

Two overarching qualitative research questions guided this study.
1. What are the instructional strategies that faculty members use to promote engagement in online discussions?
2. How do faculty members identify or describe classroom activities and strategies they use to foster student engagement in online courses?

Participants

Data were collected from ten community college faculty members currently teaching online with at least two years online teaching experience. The faculty member participants were from three different Washington state community colleges.

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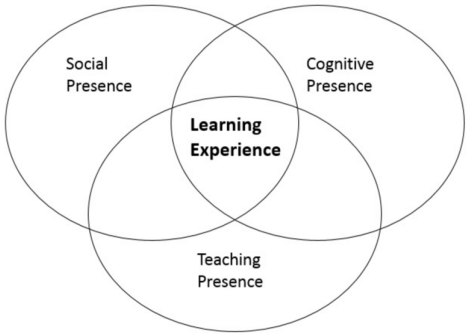
Research Design

A qualitative case study with open ended research questions that focused on the problem, statement, purpose, and research questions was implemented to examine student engagement. The purpose of this research was to explore and examine faculty members' perceptions of student engagement in-depth and learn as much as possible about faculty perceptions and approaches to foster student engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative case study was grounded by The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and the Community of Practice models for faculty development that are flexible, effective, and long-term approaches to the study of faculty development (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020). The COI framework is a model that shows how the students educational experience benefits from three instructional presences that are identified beyond a physical presence in a physical classroom (Garrison et al., 2000).

In online classrooms, instructors can exhibit a teaching presence a social presence, and a cognitive presence.



Garrison et al., 2000

The proposed Faculty Development Program (FDP) is sustainable and adaptable for each institution and individual faculty member's needs. The online asynchronous program is set up in monthly modules with resources, activities, and discussion prompts that

can be accessed when each faculty members' schedule permits.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection involved gathering participants' written responses to survey questions that were submitted and returned via Google Docs. Questions for the surveys that were submitted online through Google Docs were adapted with permission from the Perceptions and Practices of E-Instructors Toward Online Instruction Questionnaire (PPEOIQ) were adapted for this study (Appendix H).

The PPEOIQ is a standardized instrument that contains open ended questions addressing many aspects of online teaching. Some of the topics in the instrument are; instructional design, facilitating learning, fostering engagement, assessment, technology uses, administrative management, and research development (Chang, et al., 2014). This standardized instrument is a comprehensive questionnaire that covers several domains relevant to the perceptions, practice, and experiences of online instructors.

Data Analysis Results

Data was analyzed by hand in several settings to identify codes and themes that would be associated with the Community of Inquiry framework. I noted many responses to questions about engagement and teaching strategies indicated faculty members were sharing their experiences with teaching, social, and cognitive presences. I identified five related and interconnected themes from the data.

Theme 1
Teaching and Social Presence
Teaching and social presence were strong, and instructors understood the value of teaching presence as they described their actions of logging in daily; they also described a social presence when they discussed how they posted in the classroom

Theme 2
Teaching Presence
Teaching presence was evident as faculty members stated they created a creating a welcoming classroom and included activities to help students use course and campus resources.

Theme 3
Teaching and Cognitive Presence
Teaching and cognitive presences as instructors discussed course readings, assignments, and other requirements indicative of actions and activities that were reflective of their cognitive presence.

Theme 4
Social and Teaching Presence

All but one faculty members stated clearly and repeatedly that that their presence, visibility, and actions in their classroom were deliberately were intended to foster students' engagement. They also believed that classroom discussions, activities, and assignments, led to student engagement and positive learning outcomes. These conclusions are supported by recent research studies (Martin, 2019, Richardson et al., 2020).

Theme 5
Cognitive and Teaching Presence

Instructors said they posed challenging questions and encouraged students to analyze and evaluate the course readings and material.

Faculty reported that they believed their course work, discussions, and assignments promoted critical thinking, and that reading material was aligned with all types of activities or assignments.

Summary of Findings

Faculty respondents reported the following:
High levels of student engagement were necessary for optimal learning in online courses.

Faculty logged into classrooms often and fostered engagement in online discussions.

Faculty members stated their discussions, readings, and assignments were aligned.

Faculty members stated they did not attempt to establish a community of learners.
Faculty members reported they were required to attend faculty meetings as training.

Faculty members mentioned online learning communities or community of learners.

Faculty members described activities or terminology related to faculty development.

Proposed Recommendations

The goals of this position paper from the results of research are to recommend WWCC adopt an imitative to establish and create an online Faculty development program. An asynchronous online faculty development program offered online with any time, any place accessibility is set up to motivate faculty and reduce barriers to their participation (Rizzuto, 2017). The program should be mandatory, active, and available year round, with monthly modules of different topics to teach and support online program participants (Fiock, 2020).

The CoI framework and the CoP model for faculty development are effective, long-term approaches; they are sustainable and adaptable to each institution (Fiock, 2020). The CoI and CoP models can serve faculty members with diverse skill sets and wide range of teaching experience and are adaptable to faculty member's needs. The diversity of faculty members and their experiences may increase opportunities for participants' to improve teaching skills, network, and learn with peers (Carvalho-Filhoer & Tio, 2019).

Implementation

A faculty developer, faculty assistant, and IT Person would be responsible for program development and implementation of the program. The

faculty developer position would be a new full time executive position created to oversee the successful creation, launch, and maintenance of the FDP. The faculty developer would also ensure there were regular evaluations of the programs' impact on faculty growth and teaching skills, as well as improved outcomes for faculty growth, student engagement, retention, and learning.

12 Strategies for Implementing a Community of Practice for Faculty Development

1 – Gather a core group to launch the process
2 – Articulate the goals and value of the CoP
3 – Start with a specific task or project – make it problem-oriented
4 – Keep the CoP open
5 – Intentionally invite members with expertise (memory) and
fresh ideas (innovation)
6 – Choose a facilitator – "primus inter pares"
7 – Make it worthwhile for members and the institution
8– Work to ensure institutional support
9 – Promote sustainability
10 – Communicate success
11 – Go online
12– Evaluate the CoP (Carvalho-Filhoer & Tio, 2019)

A Model Cop Program

An asynchronous online faculty development program is recommended as the model of program that is flexible, adaptable, and reduces barriers to participation because of differing schedules of the various participants (McQuiggan, 2012). There is no need for faculty members to meet on campus, set aside evenings, give up weekends, or travel to engage in faculty development. The FDP courses and content will be accessible to all participants at all times and they will log in to the program and classroom as their schedule permits and work at their own pace within the framework of the monthly scheduled module.

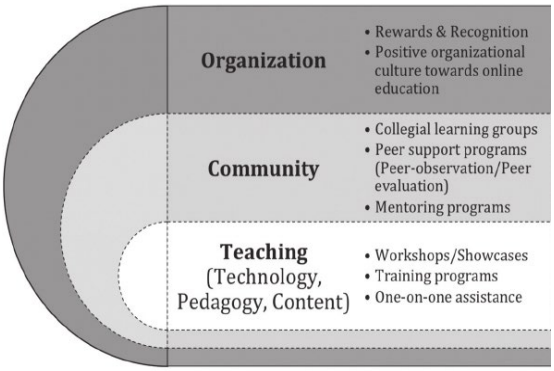
The monthly topics, resources, and discussions would center on a particular subject that would be explored, studied, and discussed in the faculty development program. There will also be a common discussion area open and accessible to all faculty members and the area where the monthly discussion module prompts, and questions are posted. Yilmaz et al. (2020) recommended specific start and end dates for the monthly modules or monthly topics to ensure active participation.

Instructional strategies, teaching tools, and trends that improve engagement and learning outcomes for students, can also be applied to create strong faculty development programs (Yilmaz, et al., 2020). The following subjects are salient topics to cover in an online faculty development program which should include topics and sub-topics to feature in each monthly module Mohr & Shelton, 2017).

Professional Development Framework

Below is a framework for a successful faculty development program that shows an organizational approach and community of learning to better support

faculty. The framework also shows examples of how different activities support each level within the framework. Faculty development is most successful when faculty members feel supported, engaged, and are provided resources online. Programs should be flexible and adaptable to the individual needs of faculty members, their personal schedules as well as their learning styles and professional goals (Scarpena, et al., 2018).



(Baran &Correia, 2014)

Sample Course Introduction

Western Washington Community College Faculty Development Program (FDP) is proposed to be a stand-alone training course; delivered online through Canvas the college's learning management system. The program is offered online over a nine-month period of time, with 9 monthly leaning modules beginning in August and concluding in May.

Participation in the program is required, however because the program is online and the topics are broad, faculty members have great flexibility in terms of when and how they will participate. Moreover, the program should be available to all online faculty and support teaching staff, full and part-time, remote or off-campus, temporary, and adjunct faculty should have access and participate in the FDP (Caldwell et al., 2020)

The goal of this faculty development program is to support our online faculty members' professional growth while offering a supportive community of learning environment.

Online Learning Community

The online FDP is a place for faculty to learn and engage with their peers and it is a place for faculty members to ask questions, share their experiences, find resources, collaborate, and network. The FDP can serve as a place for faculty members to learn new strategies and techniques to become more effective online instructors (Borup & Evmenova, 2019).

Faculty members are already familiar with Canvas, the campus wide learning management system for faculty news and training resources and the online classroom format for our students. The monthly modules will remain posted throughout the year of the program for easy reference to past discussion topics, resources, and retrieval of shared teaching techniques or strategies (U.S. Aid.Gov., 2022).

OLC Ethics and Goals

WWCC can establish ethics and goals of the FDP that are aligned with the

mission and long term goals of the college, some examples of ethics and goals follow.
Promote a learning atmosphere that respects, understands, and values differences. Challenge faculty members to determine and question their assumptions and consider how their viewpoints affect their perspectives. The curriculum for this program will include sources authored by historically underrepresented groups (Sotto-Santiago et al., 2019).

The FDP program advocates for cultural competence in the classroom and address accessibility issues in course delivery for learners of differing abilities.

Engage in a learning community with faculty peers throughout the academic year.

Faculty members will contribute to the college, their department or discipline and remain current in their academic field and with online technology related to teaching.

Collaborate with peers both in and outside of their own discipline or academic field. Discover problems, solutions, and insight through reflective thinking, writing, and discussions among peers. Engage in a learning community in expanding institutional and personal connections to the community (Tulsa Community College, 2022).

(Quote master, 2022)

Suggested Topics

Faculty Roles
*Creating a faculty presence in the online classroom.
*Developing a teaching presence.
*Managing an online classroom.
*Understanding the role of the faculty member in the online classroom.

Classroom Design
*Planning, structuring, and organizing an online classroom
*Utilizing course objectives as the foundation for developing an online course
* Managing the online classroom
*Upholding quality standards online

Learning Processes

*Writing measurable course objectives.
* Applying active learning strategies.
* Adapting teaching pedagogy

Legal Issues and Inclusion

*Copyright compliance and fair use
*ADA compliance guidelines
* Academic integrity (Hsiao et al., 2019)
*Reducing racial and gender bias

*Reduce social exclusion anxiety
*Promote academic and social inclusion

Diagram below is a segment of a theoretical model of faculty training that was based on social inclusion research. The goals of the model and practices are very much in line with the Community of practice model. This inclusion model encourages faculty members to implement caring classrooms and foster many types of engagement for meaningful interaction and learning with peers.

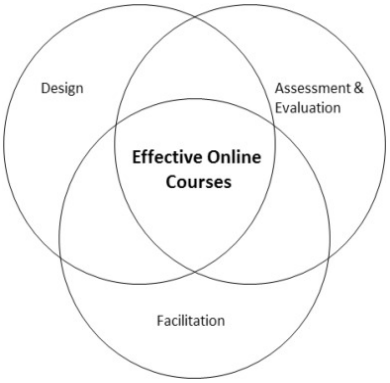
Inclusive Instructional Practice

- Integrated Curriculum – Cross-Curricular Connections
- Student Choice and Autonomy
- Flexible Groupings/Cooperative Learning
- Differentiated Instruction and Assessment
- Self-Regulated Learning
- Assessment for Learning/Class Profiles
- Technology
- Discipline-Based Inquiry
- Meta-Cognition
- Understanding by Design
- Problem-Based Learning
- Inquiry
- Social & Academic Inclusion as Guiding Principle for Tier 2/3 supports

Inclusive instructional practice (Hymel & Katz, 2019)

Evaluation

FDP should be aligned with a college's mission statement and vision of the program that would include assessments and evaluations as goals built in at the foundation of the program (Haras, et al., 2017). Goals would include built in methods of assessing and evaluating a program's effectiveness its effectiveness. I have recommended formative and summative evaluations by faculty participants and program developers. Martin et al, (2019) recommend continuous evaluations throughout every stage of course or project development and proposed of conceptual framework as shown below. Continuous evaluation of the program ensures developers are striving for best practices and the highest standards in the FDP.



(Martin et al., 2019)

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for this faculty development program are to establish an active and engaged online teaching faculty as a community of learners with direct experience teaching, learning, and constructing knowledge in online classrooms. Teaching faculty at WWCC will be exposed to new sources, technologies, and trends, as they have opportunities to learn from materials and one another. Program participants may share experiences from their practice and their perceptions and impressions from research. In addition, participants may collaborate, ask questions, seek and provide support to their peers and colleagues.

Significance

This project study was unique to community college online research as it examined faculty members' perceptions about online student engagement. The study also gave a voice to the faculty members where they described their experiences, and teaching strategies to foster student engagement and improve student learning.

The faculty development program could contribute to social change by facilitating a scholarly community of learners among the campus faculty members (McQuiggan, 2012). Faculty members could foster higher student engagement and measurable levels of student success which could lead to higher course completion rates, improved learning outcomes, and higher student satisfaction.

This proposed Faculty Development Plan is aligned with the mission and goals of WWCC which affirm that the college will be innovative, place students first with a focus on retention and completion. Moreover, the FDP could be a significant academic investment of time and resources that would support teaching, learning, campus leadership, and provide the best educational opportunities for its students.

Socialization and online networks are changing rapidly while incorporating the latest technologies to the meets the needs of people in social, workplace, lifestyle, and educational contexts. The importance of research and allocating resources to faculty development programs cannot be overstated and should be a key component of a college's long term strategic planning.

WWCC and community colleges should consider employing both an elearning program director and a director of online faculty development. These two positions would work closely with campus services and offices, such as department, the library, Institutional Research, and include academic and social support programs for all online faculty members and students.

Conclusion

A successful online FDP can be achieved with key personnel, adequate budgeting, allocation, use of existing resources and, creating a Faculty Developer position. Caldwell et al. (2020) argued that all administrators be aligned with program developers in supporting the creation of community of practice. The community is an essential component of an effective online program and faculty development as the CoP provides faculty support and exchange of information. The sharing of experiences and skills could lead to lead to a transformative practice for faculty members (Scarpena, 2018) and this could improve student engagement and learning.

The proposed online FDP in this study has the potential to create a faculty community of practice, provide faculty with more support and more instructional strategies they can use in their online classrooms to better engage their students.

There is a need for faculty members to engage in ongoing study, research, and networking to improve their own teaching practice; this will result in quality online educational programs, students that are better engaged and more successful learners (Ibrahim, 2020).

This position paper was presented to inform WWCC stakeholders about the results of my research about online student engagement, the importance of online learning communities, or communities or practice.

This study examined online faculty members' perceptions of student engagement in their online classrooms and how instructors described their instructional strategies and online classroom teaching experiences. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009) and Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2011) frameworks guided the research and recommendations presented in this study based on the premise that social, cognitive, and teaching presences are critical to student engagement and improved learning and outcomes.

This case study collected qualitative data from ten full time faculty members at three separate colleges who responded to a comprehensive online survey questionnaire with 15 open ended essay questions from a standardized instrument based on perceptions and practices of online instructors. All faculty members were teaching full time, had heavy workloads, and also had least two years of online teaching experience.

Data analysis was completed by hand and coding performed in several stages to find emerging and developing themes. Findings from this study could have implications for social change through the adoption of campus initiatives and professional development programs to provide ongoing support to instructors who teach online.

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Western Washington Community College

Faculty Development Program for Online Instructors and Faculty Members

Sample Needs Assessment for WWCC Faculty Development Program

Recommendations for Topics in an Asynchronous Self-Paced Program

Monthly Modules with Learning Activities and Timeline

Syllabus Faculty Development Program

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheets for Nine Months

Evaluation Schedule and Timeline and Faculty Development Program Surveys

Conclusion

Sample Needs Assessment for NWCC Faculty Development Program

Dear Faculty,

The following survey is intended for all faculty members, teaching assistants, and support staff that teach online or hybrid courses. Your survey answers will assist faculty developers as they prepare the program of courses, resources, and activities that will comprise WWCC's online faculty development program (FDP). Your answers and replies for the FDP are confidential and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

Highest Degree Attained

Please check the appropriate boxes		
Bachelors		
Masters		
Specialist		
Doctorate		
Other Certifications		

Academic Position or Rank

Please check the appropriate boxes		
Programming		
Staff		
Adjunct Faculty		
Assistant Professor		
Associate Professor		
Other (Visiting, Part Time, Emeritus)		

Teaching Experience

Please fill out relevant boxes		
How many years teaching at WWCC		
Total years' experience teaching online		
Total previous years teaching experience at other colleges		
Do you teach online and in traditional classroom		
Do you have any preference for online or in class teaching		

Teaching Topics

Please check boxes to indicate interest	**Yes**	**No**
Best practices for online educators		
Online Syllabus and Course Requirements		
Fostering student engagement		
Teaching multiple learning styles		

Classroom assessment and efficient grading		
Emergent education theories and technologies		
Enhancing critical thinking for online learners		

Professional Development Topics

Please check boxes to indicate interest	**Yes**	**No**
Using the content management system		
Orientation to college policies		
Presenting and publishing research		
Career advancement and self-basement		
Prevent burnout		
Mentoring		
Strategies to improve efficiency		

Motivation or Barriers to Faculty Development

Please check the appropriate boxes	**Yes**	**No**
Interest in improving teaching		
Professional growth and career advancement		
Promotion or salary increase		
Experience and publication		
Strategies to improve efficiency		
Scheduling		
Repetitive or irrelevant topics		
No Time or work load already too heavy		
Lack of promotional or financial incentive		
Poor experience in prior programs		
Requires too much time and investment		

Recommendations for Topics in Asynchronous Self-Paced Program

An asynchronous online faculty development program is recommended as the model of program that is flexible, adaptable, and reduces barriers to participation because of differing schedules of the various participants (McQuiggan, 2012). There is no need for faculty members to meet on campus, set aside evenings, give up weekends, or travel in order to engage in faculty development. The FDP courses and content will be accessible to all participants at all times and they will log in to the program and classroom as their schedule permits and work at their own pace within the framework of the monthly scheduled module. The monthly topics, resources, and discussions would center on a particular subject that would be explored, studied, and discussed in the faculty development program. There will also be a common discussion area open and accessible to all faculty members and the area where the monthly discussion module prompts and questions are posted. Yilmaz et al. (2020) recommended specific start and end dates for the monthly modules or monthly topics to ensure active participation. Instructional strategies, teaching tools, and trends that improve engagement and learning outcomes for students, can also be applied to create strong faculty development programs (Yilmaz, et al., 2020). The following are suggested topics to cover in an online faculty development program which should include topics and sub-topics to feature in each monthly module (Mohr & Shelton, 2017).

Faculty Roles

• Creating a faculty presence in the online classroom
• Developing a teaching presence
• Managing an online classroom
•Understanding the role of the faculty member in the online classroom

Classroom Design

• Planning, structuring, and organizing an online classroom
•Utilizing course objectives as the foundation for developing an online course
• Managing the online classroom
•Upholding quality standards online

Learning Processes

• Writing measurable course objectives
• Applying active learning strategies
• Adapting teaching pedagogy for the online classroom

Understanding Legal Issues in the Online Classroom

• Copyright compliance and fair use
• ADA compliance guidelines
• Academic integrity

Proposed Faculty Development Program: Monthly Modules TimeLine

Month	***Topic of Discussion and Resources***	**Faculty Assessments & Activities**
August Month One **Resources and Reading**	***Student Learning in the Online Space*** Martin, F., Stamper, B., & Flowers, C. (2020). Examining student perception of their readiness for online learning: Importance and confidence. Online Learning Journal, 24 (2), 38-58. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1260328.pdf ***Establishing Learning Objectives*** Campbell, A., Wick, D., Marcus, A., Doll, J., & Yunuba Hammack, A. (2021), ""I felt like I was not just a student:" examining graduate student learning at academic and professional conferences", *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 321-337. https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-08-2020-0061	Posting welcome message for new course. Post sample goals, activities, and assessments Post sample goals, activities, and assessments
September Month Two **Resources and Reading**	***Preparing Your Syllabus & Using Canvas*** Striker, R., Pearson, M., Swartz, E., L., & Vazquez, A. (2019). 21st century syllabus: Aggregating electronic resources for innovation-based learning. *IEEE Learning with MOOCS (LWMOOCS),* 75-78. doi: 10.1109/LWMOOCS47620.2019.8939640. UC Davis (2022). Organizing Syllabi for an online class. Retrieved on January 2022 from https://canvas.ucdavis.edu/courses/34528/pages/organizing-syllabi-for-online-courses?module_item_id=4985	Discussion about creating an online syllabus and using Canvas.
October Month Three **Resources**	**Instructor Presence** Martin, F., Wang, C., & Sadaf, A. (2018). Student perception of helpfulness of facilitation strategies that enhance instructor presence, connectedness, engagement and learning in online courses. *The Internet and Higher*	Discussion about online instructor and teaching presence

and Reading	*Education, 37,* 52-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2018.01.003. Martin, J. (2019). Building relationships and increasing engagement in the virtual classroom: Practical tools for the online instructor. Journal of Educators Online, 16(1). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1204379.pdf	
November Month Four **Resources and Reading**	***Online Discussion & Student Engagement*** Kwon, K., Park, S. J., Shin, S., & Chang, C. Y. (2019). Effects of different types of instructor comments in online discussions. *Distance Education, 40*(2), 226-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1602469 ***Various Models of Engagement*** Barth, D. (2020). Seven ways to engage the online learner to develop self-regulated learning skills. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology,* 9, *Special Issue*. 19-29. doi: 10.14434/jotlt.v9i1.2916 Kwon, K., Park, S. J., Shin, S., & Chang, C. Y. (2019). Effects of different types of instructor comments in online discussions. Distance Education, 40(2), 226-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1602469	Each Instructor poses a question and then share example of responses. Discuss ways to elicit, monitor, foster, and support student engagement, with the instructor, peers, and course materials.
January Month Five **Resources and Reading**	***Inclusion, Accommodations and Accessibility*** Protopsaltis, S., & Baum, S. (2019). Does online education live up to its promise? A look at the evidence and implications for federal policy. *Center for Educational Policy Evaluation.* 1-50. Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF). https://jesperbalslev.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OnlineEd.pdf Hsiao, F., Burgstahler, S., Johnson, T., Nuss, D., & Doherty, M. (2019). Promoting an accessible learning environment for students with disabilities via faculty development (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 32*(1), 91-99. University of the Pacific and University of Washington. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1217448.pdf	Share resources, and experiences with access, also legal issues for inclusion.

February Month Six **Resources and Reading**	***Asynchronous Classroom Sessions*** *** Instructor can choose which type of online sessions they wish to participate in Month Six Moorhouse, B.L., & Wong, K.M. (2021). Blending asynchronous and synchronous digital technologies and instructional approaches to facilitate remote learning. *Journal of Computers in Education.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-021-00195-8 ***Synchronous Sessions or Hybrid Classes*** *** Instructor can choose to participate in Month Five or Month Six Lin, X. & Gao, L. (2020). Student's sense f community and perspectives of taking synchronous and asynchronous online courses. *Asian Journal of Distance Education, 15* (1), 169-179. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3881614	Discussion boards, each instructor can either share an example or pose a question if less experienced. Discussion or share feedback about synchronous sessions and lesson plans or discuss hybrid courses.
March Month Seven **Resources and Reading**	***Assessments and Rubrics*** Alverson, J., Schwartz, J., & Shultz, S. (2019). Authentic assessment of student learning in an online class: Implications for embedded practice. *College & Research Libraries (C&RL) 80* (1), 32-43. https://eduq.info/xmlui/handle/11515/36558 McKinney, B.K. (2018). The impact of program-wide discussion board grading rubrics on students and faculty satisfaction. *Online Learning, 22*(2), 289-299. doi:10.24059/olj.v22i2.1386	Discuss various assessments, rubrics, and share resources and experience, ask questions.
April Month Eight **Resources and Reading**	***Providing Feedback to Students*** Jensen, L. X., Bearman, M., & Boud, D. (2021). Understanding feedback in online learning – A critical review and metaphor analysis. *Computers & Education, 173*. 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104271	Discussion about student feedback and benefits of early feedback, intervention, and educative feedback.

	Jurs, P., & Špehte, E. The Role of Feedback I the Distance Learning Process. Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability, 23(2), 91-105.	

May Month Nine **Resources and Reading**	***Resources, Opportunities, Further Training*** Online Learning Consortium (OLC) https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/ OLC Innovate Conference https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/attend-2022/innovate/ Community College Center for Student Engagement (CCCSE). https://cccse.org/	Faculty developer and elearning staff post here. End of academic year and faculty workload is high therefore, they are not required to post, but are encouraged to stay engaged, to ask questions, share news and respond to posts.

Syllabus Faculty Development Program

Western Washing Community College Faculty Development Program (FDP) is a stand-alone training course; delivered online through Canvas the college's learning management system. The program is offered online over a nine-month period of time, with 9 monthly leaning modules beginning in August and concluding in May; there is no module for December. Participation in the program is required, however because the program is online and the topics are broad, faculty members have great flexibility in terms of when and how they will participate.

The goal of this faculty development program is to support our online faculty members' professional growth while offering a supportive community of learning environment. This online FDP is a place to learn and engage with their faulty peers and it is a place for faculty members to ask questions, share their experiences, find resources, collaborate, and network.

Faculty members are already familiar with Canvas, the campus wide learning management system for faculty news and training resources and the online classroom format for our students. The monthly modules will remain posted throughout the year of the program for easy reference to past discussion topics, resources, and retrieval of shared teaching techniques or strategies (U.S. Aid. Gov., 2022).

Promote a learning atmosphere that respects, understands, and values differences. Challenge faculty members to determine and question their assumptions and consider how their viewpoints affect their perspectives. The curriculum for this program will include sources authored by historically underrepresented groups.
Program advocates for cultural competence in the classroom and address accessibility issues in course delivery for learners of differing abilities.

Engage in a learning community with faculty peers through the academic year. Contribute to the college, to department or discipline and to remain current in their academic field and with online technology related to teaching. Collaborate with peers both in and outside of their own discipline or academic field. Discover problems, solutions, and insight through reflective thinking, writing, and discussions among peers. Engage in a learning community in expanding institutional and personal connections to the community (Tulsa Community College, 2022).

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheets

August Month One: *Student learning in the Online Space*

Welcome to WWCC Faculty Development Program and our first monthly topic about student learning online. The goal is to examine student's perceptions of learning online and gain a broader understanding of student readiness and learning experiences. We will read two articles for this monthly module and discuss the readings. The discussion prompt for this month is:

Please share your direct experience or scholarly research about how student's perception and readiness learning online. You may also ask questions if you are new to online teaching and do not have experiences to share.

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Campbell, A., Wick, D., Marcus, A., Doll, J. & Yunuba Hammack, A. (2021), "I felt like I was not just a student:" examining graduate student learning at academic and professional conferences", *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education, 12*(3), 321-337. https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-08-2020-0061

Martin, F., Stamper, B., & Flowers, C. (2020). Examining student perception of their readiness for online learning: Importance and confidence. *Online Learning Journal, 24*(2), 38-58. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1260328.pdf

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

September Month Two: *Preparing Your Syllabus & Using Canvas*

Welcome to month two of WWCC Faculty Development Program and an opportunity to share in a discussion about preparing and or revising your online syllabus for your courses. Please review the article about using electronic resources and share your experience creating your course syllabus. Did your syllabus change when you moved your course from on-campus to online or do you have a hybrid course? Please share any extra resources or suggestions that might be helpful. You are welcome to post your course syllabus and discuss it, please remove course's identifying numbers.

An additional and optional topic for this month is using Canvas the campus learning management system. In this module the College computer network staff is here to answer any specific questions about using Canvas and they will describe extra features

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Davis, U. C. (2022). Organizing Syllabi for an online class.

https://canvas.ucdavis.edu/courses/34528/pages/organizing-syllabi-for-online-courses?module_item_id=4985

Striker, R., Pearson, M., Swartz, E., L., & Vazquez, A. (2019). 21st century syllabus: Aggregating electronic resources for innovation-based learning. *IEEE Learning with MOOCS (LWMOOCS),* 75-78. doi: 10.1109/LWMOOCS47620.2019.8939640.

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

October Month Three: *Instructor Presence*

In month three we will explore online teaching presences and its relationship to student engagement and learning. Online instructors must be intentional about their presence to ensure their students are not feeling isolated and disconnected. Please describe various measures you take or could take to increase your teaching presence.

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

At the end of month three there will be a confidential evaluation survey for this faculty development program.

References

Martin, F., Wang, C., & Sadaf, A. (2018). Student perception of helpfulness of facilitation strategies that enhance instructor presence, connectedness, engagement and learning in online courses. *The Internet and Higher Education, 37,* 52-65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2018.01.003

Martin, J. (2019). Building relationships and increasing engagement in the virtual classroom: Practical tools for the online instructor. *Journal of Educators Online*, *16*(1). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1204379.pdf

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

November Month Four: *Online discussion & Student Engagement*

Welcome to month four and our topics of online discussions and student engagement. After reviewing the following resources please share your perception of online student engagement and the online classroom discussions. Some points to consider covering: do you find the classroom discussions to be useful learning experiences? Are students truly engaged in the classroom discussions, constructing knowledge, developing critical thinking skills? Do you ever find students ignoring discussions or merely doing the work for attendance purposes? Please share any strategies you use to foster engagement and promote intellectually stimulating and meaningful discourse in the classroom.

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Barth, D. (2020). Seven ways to engage the online learner to develop self-regulated learning skills. *Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology,* 9, *Special Issue*. 19-29. doi: 10.14434/jotlt.v9i1.29165

Kwon, K., Park, S. J., Shin, S., & Chang, C. Y. (2019). Effects of different types of instructor comments in online discussions. *Distance Education, 40*(2), 226-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1602469

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

January Month Five: *Inclusion, Accommodations, and Accessibility*

Welcome back after winter break and our monthly learning module's topics about inclusion, accommodations, and accessibility. After reviewing the resources for this month please discuss ways we can better serve online students with disabilities, be sure to share any experiences you have had that were successful. You may also consider posting information about campus resources and programs for faculty and students with different abilities. Be sure to ask questions about programs, topics, and legal issues relevant to programs and services. Does online education have the potential to better serve students with disabilities or other challenges to obtaining an education such as family or work obligations?

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Hsiao, F., Burgstahler, S., Johnson, T., Nuss, D., & Doherty, M. (2019). Promoting an accessible learning environment for students with disabilities via faculty development (Practice Brief). *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 32*(1), 91-99. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1217448.pdf

Protopsaltis, S., & Baum, S. (2019). Does online education live up to its promise? A look at the evidence and implications for federal policy. *Center for Educational Policy Evaluation.* 1-50. Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF). https://jesperbalslev.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OnlineEd.p

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

February Month Six: *Asynchronous Classroom Sessions*
or
Synchronous Sessions or Hybrid Classes
Please select at least one of the topics for discussions

Asynchronous Discussion Prompt: Discuss some of the benefits to weekly discussion topics and assessments that are presented in an asynchronous online course. Can you describe or share strategies you use or have discovered that facilitate engagement between students and student learning? Any tips or suggestions that get students excited about learning and opening up to discuss the topics and engage with material?

Synchronous Sessions or Hybrid Discussion Prompt: Please describe some of the challenges faced when teaching synchronous or hybrid courses? Can you share one strategy you found effective to ensuring your students are engaged? For example, do you sue Zoom, or present recorded lectures, facilitate in class and online discussions?

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Lin, X., & Gao, L. (2020). Student's sense of community and perspectives of taking synchronous and asynchronous online courses. *Asian Journal of Distance Education, 15* (1), 169-179. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3881614 Moorhouse, B. L., & Wong, K. M. (2021). Blending asynchronous and synchronous digital technologies and instructional approaches to facilitate remote learning. *Journal of Computers in Education.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-021-00195-

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

March Month Seven: *Assessments and Rubrics*

Please address any of the following comments or questions for this month's discussion topic. Discuss your use of assessments and rubrics in your online course and if you do not use rubrics please explain how you set grading criteria? Can you describe assessment criteria that you use in the creation of rubrics for grading? Do you believe posting and following rubrics helps your online learners understand course expectations and standards for grading?

Your discussion replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the month's duration. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Alverson, J., Schwartz, J., & Shultz, S. (2019). Authentic assessment of student learning in an online class: Implications for embedded practice. *College & Research Libraries (C&RL), 80* (1), 32-43. https://eduq.info/xmlui/handle/11515/36558

McKinney, B.K. (2018). The impact of program-wide discussion board grading rubrics on students and faculty satisfaction. *Online Learning, 22*(2), 289-299. doi:10.24059/olj.v22i2.1386

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

April Month Eight: *Providing Feedback to Students*

Welcome to month eight of the WWCC faculty development program in which we will be discussing the importance of providing meaningful feedback to our students. Please share your professional experience or informed opinions about any aspect of the following prompt. What are the characteristics of effective feedback? How important is timing in giving feedback or being sensitive to the needs of students? Please also feel free to share an example of educative feedback that you have given (no names or identities).

Your replies should be thoughtful and grounded in your practice or the literature and faculty members are encouraged to cite and share resources to support their experiences. We encourage an active discussion on this topic for the duration of the month. Faculty members should post at least one original response to the prompt, answer replies to your post as well as at least one reply or question posted to another faculty members' original post. Academic resources and citations are encouraged, but please refrain from posting personally, identifying names of courses, faculty members, or students of WWCC.

References

Jensen, L. X., Bearman, M., Boud, D. (2021). Understanding feedback in online learning – A critical review and metaphor analysis. *Computers & Education, 173*. 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104271

Jurs, P., & Špehte, E. The Role of Feedback in the Distance Learning Process. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, *23*(2), 91-105.

Monthly Module Planning and Activity Sheet

May Month Nine: *Resources, Opportunities, Further Training*

This is our final module for the WWCC faculty development program for this academic year. We understand that end of term is a busy time, and therefore, do not require extensive reading or responses to a detailed discussion prompt. We encourage faculty members to share their experiences and goals for future faculty development and further professional growth.

During month, nine participants will have an opportunity to discuss openly and provide feedback on the faculty development program.

Faculty members, faculty developer, and assistants, as well as IT will have an opportunity to evaluate the overall year-long program and will receive a link to a confidential survey.

References

Community College Center for Student Engagement (CCCSE). https://cccse.org/

Online Learning Consortium (OLC). https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/

OLC Innovate Conference. https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/attend-2022/innovate/

Evaluation Schedule and Timeline
And
Faculty Development Program Surveys

Timeline	Responsible Evaluators	Type of Evaluation
At the end of the 1st month	Faculty Developer and IT	Formative update
At the end of the 3rd month	Faculty Members	Formative Survey Month 3
At the end of the 6th month	Faculty members	Discussion posts
At the end of the 9th month	Faculty members	Discussion posts
At the end of the 9th month	Faculty Members, Faculty	Summative Confidential Survey

Faculty Development Program Survey Month Three

1. Were the objectives of the Faculty Development program clearly defined? Please give one example.2. Have the topics covered to date been helpful or relevant? Please give one example.
3. Has the content been well-organized? Please give one example

4. Do you spend more or less time on monthly modules than you expected? Explain.

5. Are you gaining new skills or information that will support your teaching practice? Please give one example6. Do you have a regular time for logging in to engage with the material and colleagues? Please give one example
7. Are peers and colleagues sharing experiences or sources that are helpful to you? Please give one example
8. Has participation and engagement been a positive experience? Please give one example

Faculty Development Program Survey 9th Month

1. Has the WWCC Faculty Development Program met your expectations? How?

2. Can you list the main benefits or important aspects of the program for you?

3. What is your opinion of the quality, accessibility, and intensity of the content?

4. Did you like the evaluations, such as interactive assignments, discussions, or networking? Explain.

5. Did you like the format, techniques, and teaching methods used to deliver the material online? Explain.

6. Do you find the Content Management System (CMS) Canvas user friendly? How?

7. Did you benefit from program reading materials? How?

8. When adapting materials for your own teaching practice, can you describe any topic you would revise or leave out, and anything you would add?

9. Did you have a positive experience with the Program in the CMS?

10. Did you feel there was a high level of interaction and engagement between faculty peers?

Conclusion

The FDP plan is the culmination of my research into the problem of poor online student engagement and high dropout rates of online students at WWCC and Washington state community colleges. I used the qualitative research tradition and my research was grounded by the Community of Inquiry framework. I collected data from online instructors to learn about their perceptions of student engagement and what they did to foster student engagement. The data reveled that instructors believed engagement was critical to online learning; however, their strategies to foster engagement were not specific or consistent. It was clear that faculty members did not receive ongoing training and support from their department or college, and the survey data collected help inform the creation of the proposed development program.

This proposed Faculty Development Plan is aligned with the mission and goals of WWCC, which affirm that the program planners of the college will be innovative, while placing students first with a focus on retention and completion. Moreover, the FDP could be a critical academic investment and a significant investment of time and resources that would support teaching, learning, and campus leadership, to provide the best educational opportunities for WWCC and its students.