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**COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ONLINE  
INSTRUCTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

by  
Danielle Brown Jubanyik

A Dissertation

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
at  
Rowan University  
July 29, 2013

Dissertation Chair: Robin Haskell McBee, Ph.D.

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Danielle Brown Jubanyik

## **Dedication**

Immeasurable thanks to my biggest cheerleader, my husband, and best friend, David Julian; there is no one else I would rather take this journey with! Many times over the course of my five years in the doctoral program I wanted to give up. You provided me with a sense of understanding about my journey that no one else could show me. As always, I am glad that I took your advice and looked at each snapshot in time as a fleeting moment to be revered. To my sister Christine Brown, your perseverance and light-hearted sense of humor has taught me more than you know! You have taught me how to be a better person. And to my mother, Patricia Brown, who has inspired me to achieve to my highest potential and beyond. I've learned no dream is too big to achieve! Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to those who are greatly missed: my father, Robert, and my sister, Michelle. Thanks for watching out for me!

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## **Abstract**

Danielle Brown Jubanyik  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ONLINE  
INSTRUCTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY  
2013

Robin Haskell McBee, Ph.D.  
Doctorate in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they have received for the implementation and teaching of online courses. The current body of literature is focused mainly on colleges and universities, and the researcher uncovered a gap in the literature, which often bypassed community colleges. I employed the research method of semi-structured interviews with 14 community college faculty members of varied backgrounds and experiences who shared their perceptions and experiences of the professional development they received to teach online. The main themes uncovered by this dissertation study were 1) Inconsistency in the professional development allotted to community college faculty members, 2) Perceived barriers by community college faculty members in preparing to teach online/hybrid courses, 3) Incentives for participating in professional development to teach online, 4) Online teaching requires a need for pedagogical knowledge and understanding, and 5) Faculty members require more support to teach online/hybrid courses. Study findings indicate faculty members require more training beyond technological mastery at the post-secondary level, and may benefit from training that involves a focus on pedagogy.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Since its inception, technology has filtered into nearly all segments of society. In education, the ways in which information is disseminated, gathered, and tested have all been impacted in some way by online technologies. Specifically, teaching and learning in education has started to change organizations and faculty members in the realm of higher education. A recent report declares traditional learning formats and online learning are quickly becoming equal and complementary ways of learning (Meyer, 2003). During the past few years, online education has become increasingly popular in higher education (Dunlap, Sobel, & Sands, 2007; Fish & Wickersham, 2009). In 2004, over 54,000 online courses were offered within institutions of higher education across the United States (Fish & Wickersham, 2009; Singh & Pan, 2004). Most recently, a national survey of online learning revealed that over 6.1 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2010 term; an increase of 560,000 students over the number reported the previous year (Allen & Seamen, 2011).

It appears that online learning is more than a trend and will continue to be a strong part of higher education (Appana, 2008). Many aspects related to college education, including staffing, curriculum, and professional development have been impacted in some way by the concepts presented through online teaching or learning (Summers, 2003). Using a fundamental qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007), I aim to uncover trends in community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online courses.

The mission of community colleges is to provide an education to all segments of society through a flexible and open admission policy (Vaughn, 1999). According to Allen and Seamen (2008), the expansion of online learning, at the community college level accounts for more than 50% of the total online student population. Furthermore, Allen and Seamen (2011), in their latest survey reveal 65 percent of all reporting institutions (out of 2,500 colleges and universities) said that online learning was a critical part of their long-term strategy, a small increase from 63 percent in 2010.

The popularity of online education courses requires college faculty to face new challenges and become more flexible in accommodating a diverse student body (Kosak et al., 2004). College administrators see online courses as a source of revenue and a recruitment tool (Kosak et al., 2004). The increase in the offering of online learning is requiring colleges to change the way information is distributed to students; hence, these unique features make community colleges a setting in which online courses can thrive (Kosak et al., 2004; Muse, 2003; Summers, 2003). While higher education has welcomed the addition of online courses, it is uncertain if colleges have fully addressed the impact upon their faculty (O'Quinn & Corry, 2002).

As the adoption of online education continues to grow, there is increased demand for faculty members to develop and teach online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Romano, 2006; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). The growth of online learning has changed the face of traditional education and the preparation needed to ensure faculty members are knowledgeable about how to teach students with essentially the same face-to-face material, but in an online format (Romano, 2006). The move toward online education requires an acceptance of technology in all areas but especially within the field of faculty

training in relation to teaching (Mitchell, 2009). In order to be successful as an online instructor, faculty need to have some awareness of pedagogy as it relates to online instruction (Kosak et al., 2004). Allen and Seaman (2011) found that the number of programs and courses online continue to grow, the acceptance of this “learning modality by faculty has been relatively constant since first measured in 2003” (p. 5). In addition, the researchers noted:

- Less than one-third of chief academic officers believe that their faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education. This percent has changed little over the last eight years.
- The proportion of chief academic officers that report their faculty accept online education varies widely by type of school.

Community colleges reported a 9 percent increase in online education enrollments from fall 2009 to fall 2010, according to a national survey of two-year institutions released in August 2011 by the Instructional Technology Council (ITC), an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges. This increase is higher than the seven percent increase in overall student enrollment in all of higher education and the eight percent increase at community colleges during the same period (ITC, 2010).

Consequently, administrators at community colleges ranked the need for support staff for training and technical assistance as their greatest challenge (2010).

Online courses have at least 80% of the course content delivered online and typically without face-to-face meetings (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Sloan, 2010). A U.S. Department of education report entitled, *Distance Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions: 2006- 2007* found that:

During the 2006-07 academic year, two-thirds (66 percent) of 2-year and 4-year title IV degree-granting postsecondary institutions reported offering online, hybrid/blended online, or other distance education courses for any level or audience. Sixty-five percent of the institutions reported college-level credit-granting distance education courses, and 23 percent of the institutions reported noncredit distance education courses. (p. 2)

The increasing numbers of students interested in online learning have helped post-secondary institutions around the nation realize the future survival and expansion of their educational programs will depend largely on their ability to provide online education. A growing number of post-secondary institutions utilize distance learning as a cost cutting measure (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

An illustration of the growth of online learning and its impact is evidenced in the 2009 U.S. Department of Education report that looked back over the previous 12 years and concluded that online learning has advantages over face-to-face instruction. A Sloan Foundation study entitled, *Staying the Course- Online Education in the United States* found a 13% increase from the prior year in students taking one or more online courses (Sloan, 2008). Finally, in a 2011 U.S. Department of Education study entitled *Learning at a Distance: Undergraduate Enrollment in Distance Education Courses and Degree Programs*, it was found that, “participation in a distance education course was the most common among undergraduates attending public 2-year colleges; 22 percent were enrolled” (p. 8). Both studies show a growth in the adoption of online education at the community college level, and a number of scholars have discussed the importance of support for faculty members transitioning to online teaching. These areas of support may include both technical and moral support (Covington, Petherbridge, & Warren, 2005; Lu, Todd, & Miller, 2011).



Lu et al. (2011) in their case study of a faculty learning community, found that faculty members learning to teach online described it as similar to “learning a new language” (p. 4) and concluded that a need to play or experiment with technology among faculty members was strong. To this end, Lu et al. discovered that institutional support and a placement on the value of online courses must be enacted in order to advocate for acceptance of online teaching and learning.

### **Background of the Study**

The growth of online learning has provided many opportunities to hold discussions about the quality of online course delivery and instructor development (Roman, Kelsey, & Lin, 2010). Institutions of higher education who expect instructors to teach online courses may offer various forms of professional development depending on the perceived needs of faculty or the institutional vision. The researchers Caffarella and Zinn (1999) found three areas or domains in which faculty professional development takes shape. Self-directed learning is faculty-centered and entails the preparing of class materials, teaching classes, designing new courses, revising curriculum, and conducting research. A second type of professional development is formal professional development, which is sponsored or offered by the campus either through an outside entity or internally. Most often, this type of professional development may include teaching strategies, implementing technology, or an emphasis on scholarship and research. A third type called organizational professional development involves systematic changes that affect organizational improvement and change rather than individual efforts.

Some types of professional development may be better suited towards preparing instructors to teach online. One such example is provided by Long, Janas, Kay, and

August (2009), who found that smaller institutions need to find creative ways to successfully introduce online learning to faculty. Faculty engagement and a shared vision were key aspects to successful professional development that was received by all. One way to this particular college's success was through the establishment of a Faculty Learning Community in which the college allowed faculty to build consensus on the design and use of online learning regardless of discipline.

Changing from a traditional to an online teaching environment can be a threatening experience filled with challenges (Grant & Thornton, 2007). Online teaching requires different skill sets from those used in traditional face-to-face teaching (Perreault, Walderman, Alexander, & Zhao, 2008). Faculty members must adjust to different student interaction models, create new assignments and assessments that fit the online delivery format, and use different technologies as teaching tools (Bower & Hardy, 2004). Smith (2005) posits that teaching in an online environment requires specific sets of skills and competencies. Among the new skill sets expected from online courses instructors is the notion that faculty must be open to change. I assert that although the principles of designing online and traditional courses may be similar with respect to the content, online instructors need additional training and support to be willing to implement new ways of teaching and need to understand how their course may look different in an online environment.

Another challenge faced by faculty members is related to the limited amount of support or respect they receive for their efforts. There often is a lack of administrative and technical support for online instructors, as well as a perception by colleagues and

administrators that online learning is inferior to traditional course delivery methods (Blakelock & Smith, 2006).

Faculty members should expect to receive additional support if they are developing and teaching online courses. Training on how to integrate best practices into online learning will result in more interactive and challenging courses (Grant & Thornton, 2007). Educational institutions vary in the amount of support or training provided to faculty members who develop and teach online courses. Wallace (2008) suggested that institutions of higher education support a team approach when creating online learning programs. In summary, faculty members need to participate actively in their own professional development and receive quality training that addresses the needs of all faculty members who are teaching online courses.

### **Problem Statement**

As more institutions of higher education move towards the adoption of online courses, it is pertinent to understand and utilize ways to improve professional development for faculty members who teach online. The problem underpinning this study is one faced by both two and four year colleges. As two-year colleges add more online courses, more instructors are needed to fill online teaching spots. Not all faculty members learn to use technology to teach online the same way. This variance in how faculty are trained to instruct in an online course necessitates more investigation into what is happening with current professional development methods to prepare faculty members, as well to uncover any other ways faculty can be best supported when they are learning to teach an online course.

Gaps in the research for the professional development associated with teaching online courses at the community college level have prompted some studies that conclude there are serious implications for faculty and postsecondary institutions unprepared to handle the growing demands for an online education.

The changing face of education, coupled with turbulent economic times has affected higher education models, specifically community colleges (Sandford, Belcher, & Frisbee, 2007). Reduced funding, increased emphasis on technology, and greater competition for students all affect the way education is delivered to a student body (Sandford et al., 2007). The number of online course offerings at the community college level grows each year and adds to the number of faculty members entering virtual classrooms for the first time, which adds more demands on the faculty members recruited to teach online courses (Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008).

With the age of new and constantly improving technology, faculty members need to be familiar and up to date with new demands put forth by technological adoption by two year and four year colleges. This is pertinent because historically, faculty members have been responsible for most of the teaching process: creation of the syllabus, location of materials, design and delivery of instruction, assessment, and quality control, all of which may now be out of the faculty member's control when teaching a course online (Threlkeld, 2006). A significant factor in faculty members' reluctance or keenness to engage in online teaching may be due to institutional strategies and commitment as perceived by instructors.

Lail (2005) posits that many of the community college faculty hired during the 1960s and 1970s had initially embarked on K-12 teaching. This changed, and faculty

moved into the community college context after discovering they preferred adult education and college schedules. The more familiar higher education model often consists of in person, lecture style formats. Most faculty members are better prepared for traditional face-to-face teaching, and they expect direct engagement with the students (Bower, 2001).

Lackey (2011) used a qualitative methodology to look at the effectiveness of training received by higher education faculty members to teach online. Lackey found that her results supported current literature in which a need for technical and pedagogical training of faculty members must occur. Additionally, the researcher found that faculty members shared a need for opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, support for developing courses as well as more pedagogical training opportunities.

The Instructional Technology Council (ITC) in their 2010 report entitled *Trends in ELearning: Tracking the Impact of ELearning at Community Colleges* examined predominately community colleges, also referred to as associate's colleges, and found that faculty members can be a barrier to successful online courses. Administrators at community colleges described their greatest challenges as being related to faculty. In the 2010 survey, faculty training replaced workload issues as the number one challenge for the first time. Similarly, another report by The Sloan National Commission on Online Learning (2009) entitled *National Survey of Faculty Perceptions Regarding Online Learning* found negative adoption attitudes within faculty members at colleges who offered online courses:

- “Fewer than half of the faculty members surveyed have taken (39%), taught (44%), converted (31%), or developed (32%) an online course.”

- “Most faculty members (68%) think the learning outcomes in online delivery are inferior to other methods of delivery” (p. 1).

There are two main differences between the Sloan report and the ITC Survey- the reports share information gathered from different academic years. While the Sloan report reviews the academic year 2008-09 and the ITC Survey focuses on the academic year 2009-10, it is worth mentioning that the Sloan survey includes public, private, and for-profit, as well as two- and four-year institutions. The ITC Survey looks primarily at public community colleges (ITC, 2010). Beyond these two studies there is a gap in the literature, which does not examine in depth why community college faculty members hold negative or unmotivated stances when faced with taking on developing online courses and the professional development needs associated with that. The further gaps in the literature do not examine in depth why faculty members hold negative or unmotivated stances when faced with the nuances of professional development in regards to teaching online courses.

Allen and Seamen (2011) suggest that college faculty who teach online receive training that varies according to their institution and department. The researchers note “there is no single approach being taken by institutions in providing training for their teaching faculty” (p. 6). Most institutions use a combination of mentoring and training options. The research concludes:

- Only six percent of institutions with online offerings report that they have no training or mentoring programs for their online teaching faculty.
- The most common training approaches for online faculty are internally run training courses (72 percent) and informal mentoring (58 percent).

- Smaller institutions are more likely to look outside the institution for their training than are larger institutions.

Community college faculty members who taught in traditional college classrooms can no longer rely on previous ways of teaching as new technology overtakes community college missions and objectives. Community college faculty at some point in their career may be expected to prepare for and teach at least one online course. Course development and instruction in an online format tends to require more time and effort on behalf of faculty members (Lenz, Jones, & Monaghan, 2005; Mitchell, 2009; Mupinga & Maughan, 2008; Tomei, 2004). Many factors including time, work load, and new community college teaching expectations for faculty that are teaching online suggest the increased need for more professional development that fits the needs of the learners.

Not much is known about community college faculty who use technology to teach in an online environment and whether or not they believe they are fully prepared to teach in this manner. As more community colleges turn to online courses, they have had to change the way information is distributed to students, thereby, adding more weight to faculty preparation (Bower, 2001). In turn, there are faculty members who are still reluctant to move to teaching in a cyberspace environment due to perceived workload increases (McLean, 2005). Gaps in current literature provide evidence that research is needed regarding how community college faculty members perceive their professional development for teaching online.

The development and teaching of online courses for instructors can be very different from traditional models of face-to-face teaching because it involves a different mode of thinking which takes time to master (Dunlop, Sobel, & Sands, 2007; Fish &

Wickersham, 2009; Gallien & Oomen-Early, 2008). The research of Owusu-Ansah, Neill, and Haralson (2011) found that the role of faculty shifts with teaching an online course. Instructors find that they may need to modify how the content is delivered through syllabus and assignment changes. Furthermore, faculty who teach an online course may also need to change their teaching style, which may mean more time and work in preparing and delivering an online course.

Moore and Kearsley (1996) suggest that the success of online learning courses is dependent upon certain factors including internal commitment by faculty and others within an organization. Many opportunities are available to advance the quality of online teaching and learning programs, and online instructors must be provided with the adequate knowledge and support to effectively teach online (Miller, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the education that online teachers engage in beyond their pre-service experiences. To that end, the results of this study will uncover the reported types and frequencies of professional development offered and the challenges and positive aspects associated with the adoption of online course format for community college faculty members.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and explain community college faculty members' perceptions of professional development practices associated with teaching online courses at the community college level. The main source of researcher data was from semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with 14 community college faculty members from a purposeful sampling of two community colleges' online faculty members. I anticipated uncovering possible trends or needs that



could lead to changes in professional development for online instructors. A deeper understanding about the faculty perceptions and experiences with involvement in online learning courses, and particularly with professional development to prepare for teaching such courses, should be helpful to community college administrators in deciding on appropriate professional development paths to develop within their institutions. To that end, I hoped to uncover faculty perspectives of their professional development for teaching an online course that may otherwise be unexplored through the existing research literature.

In the year 2000, a National Education Association survey found that 50 percent of the faculty suggested negative or uncertain feelings towards distance learning. Other research into faculty participation in online course development tends to discuss the subject in general terms. Since time has passed, I hoped to uncover a more current outlook of the perceptions of training to teach online by community college faculty.

### **Research Questions Addressed by the Study**

The four research questions addressed by this qualitative research study are aligned with faculty experiences and seek to discover or explore (Creswell, 2009, 2007):

1. What are community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses?
2. What is the perceived focus of the professional development they receive for online or hybrid teaching?
3. What are the areas in which faculty feel they need more professional development in order to be successful online teachers?

4. What are the pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction?

### **Overview of the Methodology and Design**

This study is qualitative in nature and seeks to explore the perceptions and experiences of the selected participants through a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007) in which participants share their professional development experiences with me in semi-structured interviews that allowed me to gain thick, rich data and make meaning. By utilizing and relying on this approach, my aim over the course of five months was to discover and describe community college faculty perceptions of the professional development they have received to teach online courses through their lived experiences. Participation in this research study will be voluntary and will present a snapshot of the professional development experiences of community college instructors who have taught online.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews of 14 community college faculty members were audio recorded, transcribed, coded, and thematically organized. Criterion sampling was the method used to select the faculty members who formed the initial larger list of potential volunteers for the research study (Patton, 1990). Criterion sampling involves selecting participants that meet a predetermined criterion of importance. In the terms of this study, faculty members must have been teaching or have taught an online course within the last two semesters. I utilized maximum variation sampling so that age, years of online teaching experience, and subject taught varied across the study. This sampling pattern reflects differences or different perspectives across these groups.

## **Significance of the Study**

I aimed to provide information from a qualitative inquiry to community colleges to help administrators better prepare faculty members to teach online courses as well as to gain more of an understanding of the professional development needs of those faculty members already teaching online courses. The need for instructor remediation for online courses has been established in the online education literature (Levy, 2003; Roman et al., 2010). With a more enhanced understanding of faculty perceptions of online instruction, administrators and others who provide training to faculty may be able to facilitate better professional development for faculty. This study will also raise awareness with instructional designers who work alongside of online course instructors regarding the needs and wants of those teaching within the online community.

Possible audiences for this study include those interested in advancing towards an administrator or dean position at a community college, those who are in charge of procuring professional development for community college faculty members, and community college administrators who are looking to expand or begin more enhanced and faculty-focused professional development programs. Those in charge of the professional development for faculty who teach online may also benefit from the findings of this study.

## **Delimitations**

1. Participants will currently teach an undergraduate course online (or will have taught an online or hybrid course within the previous two semesters).

2. Participants were faculty members from two local community colleges that represent a cross-section of community colleges in the southern region of the state.
3. Participant selection was designed, insofar as it is possible, to represent a range of gender, age, terminal degrees, general college teaching experience, online teaching experience, and disciplinary focus.
4. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 community college faculty members.
5. I am an actively employed member at a community college and has received professional development, which offered the potential for researcher bias.
6. The results of this study were dependent on interviews and material data collection that were coded and thematically organized from my perspective.

### **Limitations**

1. Participants in this study were innovators or early adopters (Rogers, 1995); and therefore may not be a representative sample of the current population of community college instructors receiving professional development to teach online.
2. All community college faculty participants represented the population determined to be significant to the study.
3. The study was limited to the discovery of faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they have received to teach online and hybrid courses.

4. Any conclusions as a result of this study represented those views of a subset of instructors who teach online courses in two community colleges surveyed. In conclusion, this study is not representative of the entire online teaching population.
5. The basic qualitative inquiry may have limited the results produced from the semi-structured interviews and data collection.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions intend to provide clarity to my intent when using the terms throughout this study:

Distance education/learning – Education or training delivered to remote (off-campus) locations via audio, video, or computer technologies (Moore & Kearsley, 1996).

Hybrid/blended course – Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings (Sloan, 2010).

Online learning – Utilizes the internet as the delivery method for learning, along with course materials, lectures, discussions, learning resources, and course administration.

Online teaching – Utilizes the internet as the delivery method for teaching, along with course materials, lectures, discussions, learning resources, and course administration.

Traditional courses – The majority of the course and coursework is delivered in a face-to-face meeting (Sloan, 2010).

Professional development – Professional development for college faculty members aims to increase faculty knowledge on a particular practice, offering skills, resources, and experiences meant to be a support system (Floyd, 2003; Holmes, Signer, & MacLeod, 2010). Professional development is “change that allows professionals to bring new and diverse knowledge, skills, values, and professional orientation to their work” (O’Meara & Terosky, 2010, p. 45).

### **Overview of Study**

This chapter has presented information on online instruction as it affects institutions and faculty of higher education. Specifically, the need for more professional development for faculty members, as well as barriers and supports to professional development, has been discussed. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine community college faculty members’ perceptions regarding professional development for online teaching, their thoughts about the types of professional development they have received, and any changes in their roles and pedagogical strategies that have occurred as they moved from traditional classroom face-to-face teaching to online teaching.

Chapter II is a review of current literature, which begins with information on the history and growth of online instruction in higher education and continues with barriers and supports for faculty professional development, the conceptual framework and theoretical underpinnings for the study, and research on current professional development practices in regards to online courses. Chapter III covers the research questions guiding this study and describes the qualitative research methodology used, including the methods used for data collection and data analysis. Chapter IV contains a description of how the data were collected and analyzed with reports of the major findings in the

research. Lastly, Chapter V presents a summary, limitations, implications, and recommendations for further study based upon the data analysis from the research questions investigated.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of the current relevant literature, as well as theoretical frameworks, in order to explore the context of online education as it has affected the experiences of community college faculty who are currently teaching or have taught online courses. Since literature exclusively about community colleges, community college faculty members, and online learning at community colleges is scarce, I have chosen to include literature which includes both two and four-year colleges and universities. Unless otherwise noted, the literature works will include two-year colleges and four-year colleges and universities.

Online learning is a quickly evolving way to educate the masses at many post-secondary institutions in the United States (McQuiggan, 2007; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). Colleges and universities around the world are constantly searching for ways to increase adoption of online courses from both faculty and students as popularity increases (Mclean, 2005). Students may find the ease of online learning more intuitive and flexible, and colleges are finding it to be a means of widening their recruitment and generating more revenue (Kosak et al., 2004). Students who normally could not attend college due to employment, child-care demands, disability, or location can now gain access to higher education (Rintala, 1998; Singh & Pan, 2004).

An increasing number of faculty members within institutions of higher education are now teaching online courses (McQuiggan, 2007). New opportunities as well as barriers for faculty and students alike abound with the inclusion of technology on many



levels in the higher education setting. In the review of literature relevant to this study, I have included the following thematic categories addressed by the literature: a concise overview of the history of online education; faculty professional development, particularly as it is related to the work of community college faculty and to their online teaching; the conceptual framework and theoretical underpinnings that guide this study; and faculty lived experiences in regards to teaching online courses.

### **Brief Overview of the History of Distance Education**

Distance education has roots that can be traced back to nearly 150 years ago (Birnbaum, 2001; Chaney, 2006; Hanson et al., 1997; Mehrotra, Hollister, & McGahey, 2001; Meyer, 2002). Distance education, referred to in Moore's (1990) writing as correspondence study, began in the late 1800s. Correspondence study was developed in Germany by two researchers named Charles Toussaint and Gustav Langenscheidt, who were both language teachers in Berlin (Watkins, 1991). Globalization helped to spread a call for ways to educate the masses. In 1873, Anna Eliot Ticknor founded a Boston-based society called *The Society to Encourage Studies At Home* to engage female counterparts in correspondence education. As a desire to become educated spread, female teachers would travel to the homes of their students, often spending a week or more in the home educating the children who attended their schools. In 1862, Vermont reported that 68 percent of its teachers traveled to student homes, and similarly in 1846, Connecticut reported that 84 percent of its teachers also routinely traveled to the homes of students (Spring, 2001).

Since the early 1900s, distance education has been incorporated into the practices of many institutions, as has the traveling of faculty to meet students off campus to

conduct educational instruction (Moore, 1990). It is clear from the early stages of education's roots that meeting the needs of both teacher and student has varied. Meyer (2002) discusses this need and makes the connection that in order to help lessen the demands of travel for faculty and students, institutions began utilizing available technologies such as audio connections (i.e., telephones), videotapes, and television to conduct distance education efforts. These types of delivery methods and media continued to be used as the idea of distance education began to evolve into a readily accepted form of education.

Community colleges began as a bridge to higher education and have been supplemented by the passing of legislation (G.I. Bill in 1944, and the Truman Commission Report) which influenced growth (Philippe, 1997). An influx of students added to the multi-dimensional needs of colleges that were striving to meet the demands of new consumers. The 1980s brought forth the rise of satellite telecommunications used to broadcast lectures and instructions to off-campus locations. From the late 1980s to the 1990s microwave-based interactive video was utilized, and this method of educational delivery was used until land-based interactive video was developed and used in the late 1990s. When the internet and the World Wide Web became available, time-honored traditions of face-to-face instruction began to morph into online structures that supported various formats for teaching in the college setting (Chaney, 2006).

### **Transition to Technology Adoption by Faculty Members**

Successful online course development is dependent upon the commitment, enthusiasm, interest, and skills of dedicated faculty (Barker, 2003; Fish & Wickersham, 2009; Winkler-Prins, Weisenborn, Group, & Arbogast, 2007). It is only recently that

faculty development has been referred to as adult learning (King, 2002; McQuiggan, 2005). A shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction occurs when faculty members move online (Barker, 2003; Conceição, 2006; Conrad, 2004; Gallant, 2000; Hinston & La Prairie, 2005; Jaffee, 2003; McQuiggan, 2007; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). With the adult learner taking on a new role, one must consider the “diversity of life experiences, educational experiences, personalities, learning preferences, and uniqueness,” which then shapes their perspectives, influences how they will teach in the future as well as their motivation to participate in professional development activities (McQuiggan, 2007, p. 6).

A faculty member’s past experiences with professional development can influence their motivation for future participation (Conrad, 2004; McQuiggan, 2007). Faculty members may not enjoy the changes associated with teaching online, and at times, have reported feeling bewildered and overwhelmed (Alley, 1996), or disembodied and disempowered (Cowham & Duggleby, 2005, as cited by McQuiggan, 2007).

In addition, faculty members who move from the traditional face-to-face college classroom into the virtual world of online courses may become aware of altered roles (Ali et al., 2005; Barker, 2003; Conceição, 2006; Jaffee, 2003; Lawler, King, & Wilhite, 2004; Lowes, 2008) or have roles reawakened (Diekelmann, Schuster, & Nosek, 1998). Faculty can move away from their role as deliverers of content to constructivist-based facilitators (Barker; Conrad, 2004; Pedersen & Liu, 2003). The shift comes from the faculty member interested in the innovation, which can lead to the adoption of new technology, later discussed in this chapter (Rogers, 1995).

Frustration with technology is one of the main factors of resistance when it comes to teaching online courses (Zhen, Garthwait, & Pratt, 2008). Most faculty are trained in “hand to hand” teaching (Bower, 2001). Faculty members are faced with new and different situations when first teaching an online course. Some of the situations include: the administration or management of online courses; the course layout and design; the best delivery method for the content, such as text, graphics, audio or video; the various communication methods that the students will use such as email, discussion boards, and chats; ways to increase and maintain student involvement; appropriate student assessments for online learning; and, working knowledge of all the technologies being implemented in the online course (Levy, 2003, as cited by Kosak et al., 2004).

This leaves open the issue of quality when examining how well an online instructor can sustain quality in the virtual classroom. Often, community college faculty members are allotted professional development, which focuses only on the technical skills needed to teach an online course (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The perceived lack of technical support and training by faculty members is one of the reasons why faculty decide not to engage in technology initiatives (McLean, 2005; Olcott & Wright, 1995). Attention to how to teach with technology in their courses is often overlooked. Ray (2009) concludes that studies indicate that the majority of instructors utilize the same pedagogical tools in the online medium that they learned for face-to-face instruction (Conrad, 2004; Zemsky & Massey, 2004).

### **Gaps in Research Concerning Community College Online Courses**

As the growth in online teaching and learning continues, the demands on instructors increase, potentially leading to burnout. McCann and Holt (2009) define

burnout as a persistent and negative mental state that is characterized by the emotional exhaustion related to distress. Literature on online instructor burnout is limited. One of the significant studies that examined online instructor burnout found that online instructors possessed high degrees of depersonalization with teaching online courses and a low degree of personal accomplishment (Hogan & McKnight, 2007). Since online teaching represents a tremendous change in the role of instruction, administrators need to ensure that faculty members' needs surrounding the adoption of new technologies are being met. Gaps in recent literature often do not pertain to community colleges, or often relate more of the student concerns related with taking an online course. Without faculty demand or empirical evidence about the effects of training for online instruction, little will be done at the institutional level to change the current lack of professional development for online instructors (Ray, 2009).

Bates and Watson's (2008) study confirmed a need for pedagogical training for college faculty members in a way that allows specific skills to be attained in order to have a proficient online instructor. In the study, Bates and Watson cited the need expressed by faculty members to learn and utilize a new set of teaching skills and methods in order to successfully instruct online.

Additionally, Luck and McQuiggan (2006) surveyed the instructor's of Penn State University's World Campus and took in suggestions from participants that noted the perceived need for more instructor preparation, ability to view a course in online format, taking part in online learning as a student, and receiving hands-on experience with using the technology.

## **Barriers and Supports for Faculty Who Teach Online**

Increases in college adoption of online courses are requiring colleges to change the way information is distributed to both students and faculty members. Darabi, Sikorski, and Harvey (2006) share that unlike teaching in a traditional, face-to-face environment, online instructors must be knowledgeable in both the areas of technology and subject matter (as cited by Ray, 2009). Regardless, college administrators need to examine faculty perceptions of what works and does not work in online teaching in order to create professional development models that can be sustained and worthwhile to the institution and members it serves (LeBaron & McFadden, 2008). Meyer (2002) suggests that the survival of traditional college education and colleges and universities will depend on their ability to identify and provide high-quality educational service to a mainstream market that is constantly evolving. The research of Pankowski (2004) finds that many training programs focus mainly on technical aspects of online teaching, which then exclude the pedagogical aspects of online teaching that help faculty members feel more connected to the experience. If faculty feel personally disconnected from the experience, they are less likely to want to utilize the new training (McFadden, 2003). In contrast, Ascough (2002) argued that the pedagogical and technical aspects of online teaching should be given equal emphasis in professional development. For this reason, it is necessary to consider individual instructors' needs when planning training programs.

The role of instruction changes dramatically with online instruction (Clay, 1999). Allen and Seaman (2007) note that 69% of traditional and non-traditional colleges and universities in the United States believe that student demand for online courses and programs is continuing to grow, along with enrollments and the need for faculty well

versed in the demands of online learning. Miller (2008) acknowledges that the reality of online education is that it provides access for students who demand technological integration and accessibility to meet their needs, yet much work still needs to be accomplished in order to find ways in which to maintain the standards expected in higher education.

One way to increase standards for online instruction is to begin at the heart – with the faculty members who need to be on board with technology adoption. Roman et al. (2010) studied and evaluated online training programs intended to prepare university faculty and instructors to teach online courses. In their study, the researchers addressed the point that higher education institutions need to concede the needs of online instructors by not only incorporating adult learning principles and practices into training, but also to include various resources that help online instructors who want to learn about effective online teaching. Another relevant point from this study is that engaged and knowledgeable online instructors will often share that information to create rigorous training for other interested colleagues.

Professional development that is useful to faculty members will benefit the overall institution. An institution that does not give adequate professional development may face the issue of quality in online instruction (Bower, 2001; Mclean, 2005). Quality is achieved when faculty members feel comfortable and willing to attain the goals of college mission statements and curricular agendas in the way that best fits students in the online environment (Roman et al., 2010).

In institutions where support is not given to faculty through professional development training and college initiatives, instructors find themselves defending their

traditional teaching beliefs and practices rather than taking a risk associated with teaching in a new format (Levy, 2003). In a 2000 study, McKenzie, Mims, Bennett, and Waugh surveyed all of the instructors who taught at a state university, and found a number of barriers to delivering online instruction. Some of the frequently mentioned barriers were: decreased live, face-to-face interaction with students (Berge, 1998; Clay, 1999; Kirby, 1999); lack of time to plan and deliver an online course (Berge, 1998; Clay, 1999; Rockwell et al., 1999); and the lack of support and assistance in planning and delivering an on-line course (Berge, 1998; Clay, 1999; Rockwell et al.,1999).

Conversely, Barker (2003) found that faculty buy in occurs when the conditions and mission work to support a move forward with online teaching and learning. She cited the work of Clay (1999) who found in her review of the literature several factors that help outline faculty members' willingness to adopt online courses. These included:

- The opportunity to reach remote students
- Intellectual challenge and the opportunity to develop new ideas
- The opportunity to work with more motivated students
- Release time and other financial reward
- Opportunities for research
- Motivation to use technology
- The opportunity for recognition
- The opportunity to utilize support services
- Reduced travel
- Increased course quality
- Time flexibility



Lail (2009) shares that faculty members continue to rely on traditional teaching practices that leave us wondering if faculty members who teach online courses can reach a more diverse student population and their needs. McQuiggan (2007) shares, “Many teachers’ initial teaching model is born from that of their own teachers consisting of teacher-centered strategies in a traditional, on-site environment” (p. 5). Often, the needs of faculty who teach online are overlooked when it comes to professional development (McQuiggan, 2007; Ray, 2009). Lawler and King (2001) suggest that faculty development initiatives should address faculty as adult learners and provide them with opportunities to reflect on their practice (as cited by McQuiggan, 2007).

The theoretical frameworks discussed in the next section will further address the idea that faculty members’ transition to the teaching of online courses must allow for faculty members within higher education to be treated as adult learners who bring with them a unique set of perceptions, beliefs, and experiences to the online world.

### **Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings for the Study**

To ensure a strong research design researchers must develop a conceptual framework research model that is complimentary to their beliefs and underlying assumptions about the nature of reality. Constructivism emphasizes the interpretive relationship between the researcher and participant and involves the construction of meaning (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Researchers in a constructivist paradigm are a part of the process to develop meaning from the participants as they become immersed in the data. The outcome of the participants’ stories is a readable interpretation from carefully constructed research questions that engage participants, in this case, to examine their perceptions of professional development to

teach online courses. The researcher is then able to develop significant statements and themes to write a detailed narration of what the participants experienced. Moustakas (1994) also alludes to the need for researchers to write about their own experiences and the constructs that have influenced their experiences and interpretations.

Since the focus of this study centers on perceptions of professional development and the training for teaching in an online environment, this study used two main theoretical underpinnings to support the need for further examination of the phenomena: Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 1983) and the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973). Both are valuable to this study insofar as their relationship between the discussions centered on how to better understand the modes of learning for faculty when they encounter new training. Faculty professional development is important if the technology that colleges are relying on is to be utilized properly and to the fullest extent. The study seeks to add to the body of literature that investigates faculty participation in online teaching. Lastly, the review of literature explores human motivation, technology, and online learning in regards to adult learning theory and change.

**Diffusion of Innovation Theory.** Rogers (1995) defined an innovation as an idea perceived as new by an individual. Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory is a model used to explain how and why people learn a new innovation. The amount of time, or speed of an adoption is called the rate of adoption. The rate of adoption of technology can be linked to the spread of innovation. The process to come to the decision of a rate of adoption covers several stages discussed by Rogers and includes: (1) knowledge, (2) persuasion, (3) decision, (4) implementation, and (5) confirmation (as cited by Wright,

2005 in Rogers, 2003, p. 164). This is important, because faculty members may be hesitant to accept the new professional development being offered if it is out of their comfort zone.

To gain buy-in of individuals, the benefits of the innovation must be communicated to the adopter (Rogers, 2003; Wright, 2012). Diffusion is the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 10). This process consists of a series of actions and choices over time with varying stages. There are also influences on the process, such as the prior conditions, characteristics of the decision-making unit, the perceived characteristics of the innovation, and communication channels (Dooley, 1995). There are five adopter categories for diffusion of innovation: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. In regards to the study which asserts these five categories, community college faculty members often report themselves as falling into one of the aforesaid adopter categories when it comes to the acceptance and implementation of training for teaching online (Rogers, 1995).

In terms of providing professional development, an administrator looking to expand online teaching at his or her institution would want to identify and address the apprehension of faculty members who will be teaching online courses. Mclean (2005) cited the work of Rogers (1995) in her research, which identified features of technology that will ultimately determine its acceptance and diffusion by faculty members. The acronym STORC represents the following:

- S- Simplicity – How easy is it to use and learn?
- T- Trialability – Can it be tried on a limited basis?

- O-Observability – Can I see the results/benefits/consequences?
- R- Relative Advantage – Is the innovation better than the status quo?
- C- Compatibility – Is the innovation consistent with the values, motivations and experiences of the adopters?

As administrations move forward, this could help eliminate negative attitudes about the adoption of new technology. The success of program adoption within higher education is dependent on the innovation being supported and implemented by faculty of the institution (Hall & Hord, 2001). Additionally the researchers note that the most pressing way for adoption of practice is through the people. Knowles (1980) posited that adult learners are internally motivated (as cited by Wright, 2012).

Keller (1983) used the ARCS model to explore this internal motivation. The ARCS model is an acronym for attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (as cited by Wright, 2012). Keller believed that these four elements should be built into a new learning situation for the adult learner who is going to adopt online teaching (Wright, 2012).

**Concerns Based Adoption Model.** Hall, Wallace, and Dossett (1973) developed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) for the field of studying educators in educational settings. The Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 2001) measures the behavioral and affective aspects of a process-driven change model (McLean, 2005; Wright, 2012). The concept of concerns has been described as the full representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought, and consideration given to a particular issue or task (Dobbs, 2005). It depends on the individual and his or her experiences, concerns, and beliefs about any part of a change process, especially in the

context of new learning as is the case with professional development (Hall & Hord, 1987).

There are three basic Stages of Concern defined in CBAM: Concern for Self, Concern for Task, and Concern for Impact. Most organizations only address the concerns for Task (Roman et al., 2010). CBAM states that in order to have success and full adoption, faculty must move through each step. The lived experiences and raw emotions of faculty need to be further explored in order to understand their perceptions of professional development and training for online courses. This diffusion model attempts a holistic view to aid institutions with the change process. Hall and Hord (1987) state:

From a concerns-based point of view, it is insufficient simply to assess teachers' and other clients' concerns and use of a particular program or process; it is the responsibility of the concerns-based change facilitator to 'do something' on the basis of the assessment--to intervene. (p. 142)

The levels of concern are very similar to those presented by Rogers' (2003) characteristics of innovations, as CBAM also addresses the motivation and experience factors discussed by Knowles (1980).

### **Theories of Change**

Colleges also must make an organizational shift if online course acceptance is to move forward. Birnbaum (1988) posits that every college has unique characteristics. Furthermore, the expectations of the societies in which colleges are located can directly affect the structure and function of programs that administrators try to implement. Theories of motivation and technology adoption are vital components to understanding how and why college faculty members teach online (Wright, 2012). Yick, Patrick, and Costin (2005) have determined that in addition to faculty adjustments, online learning modules shift higher education from a "campus-centric model to a consumer-centric

model” which allows for both positive and negative pedagogical components. The authors determined through a review of literature that faculty perceptions toward distance education are mixed, and since the education now is learner focused, there are perceived barriers by faculty that may ultimately shape faculty behaviors. Change theory offers a model to examine the process of acceptance or rejection of new ideas, such as online learning (Wright, 2012).

Fullan (2007) uses the theory of personal motivation as a direct link to successful change. Wright (2012) cites a concrete example of seeing a colleague who is a successful online teachers as a catalyst for the motivation of a new faculty members to try the innovation. The idea of *learning in context* was explored by both Fullan (2007) and Bandura (1986) as an important part of the motivation process (Wright, 2012).

Kotter also explores change that is grown from a common core of understanding, or “mission and vision” for the organization. Buy in and gaining support and acceptance from all members is not an easy task, especially if the decisions flow from the top down (Wright, 2012). Resistance to top down directives could negatively affect the decision to teach online (Wright, 2012). Kotter’s (1996) theory found that faculty resistance was based on barriers at the organizational level, which may impede progress (McLean, 2005). These barriers were identified as:

- Lack of skills or knowledge (i.e., Individuals are not instructed on how to perform)
- Organizational structures within the institution make change difficult (i.e., Units fail to communicate or exchange information)

- Personnel and information systems make it difficult to act ( i.e., Systemic change is not implemented, support is inconsistent
- Actions related to innovation are discouraged or blocked (i.e., lack of ‘top-down’ administrative support)

The theories of Rogers (1995, 1983), Hall and Hord (1987, 2001), Fullan (2007) and Kotter (1996) offer a vast amount of research and literature to help inform college faculty members and administrators to help to better understand and develop online teaching and learning. All areas of research show that ultimately, many factors need to be considered when adopting technology, or changing technological adoption in institutions of higher education.

The examination of the perceptions and experiences of community college faculty members as pertaining to their preparation to teach an online course for the purpose of this study will elucidate meaningful information about the professional development received, and how it may be modified based on the continuing needs of community college faculty members. The Innovation Diffusion Theory is a useful way to help examine and understand the rationale for why or why not faculty members’ buy-in to professional development offered to teach online course. Likewise, the Concerns Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2001) makes apparent possible underlying reasons for the shared negative or positive perceptions of the professional development received to teach online courses. Perceptions of professional development often involve the faculty members thinking of themselves, the task of creating and teaching an online course, and the effect of the professional development in their online classroom development, and implementation.

## **Faculty Experiences in the Online Environment**

The shift from classroom practice to distance education is not always easy and can be influenced by the expectations and prior experiences of the instructor. Instructors are more willing to teach online courses due to positive past experiences or due to professional development (McQuiggan, 2007). When teaching online courses the instructors' roles often change because they must work with a team to produce their courses. This role shift, as discussed by many researchers, prevents faculty from being in control of all aspects of instruction (Beaudoin, 1990; Olcott, 1996; Owusu-Ansah et al., 2011). Demands are often placed on online instructors before it has been determined that they are fully prepared to teach online courses and have online teaching competency (Sims, 2002).

Administrators need to utilize faculty professional development to address concerns in contexts where online course are taught (Alexander, Perrault, Zhao, & Waldman, 2009). In their study, Alexander et al. identified and compared the learning experiences of faculty and students in online courses. They found that negative attitudes by faculty members were connected to access to quality technical support and training and the amount of time required for developing and delivering online courses. Many faculty development programs fail to make significant changes to teaching, itself, and they focus, instead, on the technical side of teaching online, with skill sets that focus on a specific skill within technology offered by the institution (Roman et al., 2010). In this reality, faculty may not shift roles, thereby continuing to teach as they would in a traditional face-to-face environment in an online course. Taylor and McQuiggan (2008) found that it is not only essential to develop instructor mastery of new technology but that



it is meaningful to find incentives for faculty to consider role changes which encourage a shift towards student-centered teaching and aim for fundamental changes in the assumption and values about teaching held by instructors. Wright's (2012) review of the literature found that Shulman (1986) developed a theory that teachers possess content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. As time progresses, teachers find ways to teach and integrate content skills and pedagogy. However, the perceived burden of teaching an online course cannot be the sole responsibility of faculty members.

### **Faculty Challenges in the Online Environment**

Research has highlighted that different roles and competencies are needed for online teaching than for traditional, on-campus instruction (Berge, 1995; Goodyear, Salmon, Spector, Steeples, & Tickner, 2001; Ragan, 2009; Shattuck, Dubins, & Zilberman, 2001; Smith, 2005; Varvel, 2007). Teaching in an online environment requires specific sets of skills (Smith, 2005). Professional development aims to increase faculty knowledge on a particular practice, offering skills, resources, and experiences meant to be a support system (Holmes, Signer, & MacLeod, 2010). Palloff and Pratt (2001) conclude that online teaching forces a need to move beyond traditional pedagogy to adopt new, more facilitative practices. They also assert, that "not all faculty are suited for the online environment" (p. 21). Weigel (2000) shares that we need to move beyond the internet as a way to deliver information to students, and thus need to focus on creating ways to use the internet to help instructor pedagogy.

One perceived barrier is the level of interaction between instructor and student in the online context. With the shift towards teaching online, the role of instructional faculty shifts from being the locus of control of all aspects of instruction to facilitator (Beaudoin,

1990; Owusu-Ansah et al., 2011). In a research study by Alexander et al. (2009) findings illustrate that keeping a high level of interaction in online courses can be troublesome to faculty members who feel that large course enrollments and time can prevent them from being engaged in the course. There is an added work component for instructors to find innovative ways to engage students in meaningful discourse online, and faculty members who teach online courses must often struggle in the early stages of teaching online to incorporate into online course work meaningful instructor to student and student-to-student interactions.

Often faculty feel they are teaching a course that leaves little room for maneuvering or change, and their limited contact with students shapes student feedback (Bower, 2001; Mitchell, 2009). Community college researchers concede that while the student body is evolving into a more diverse population, some faculty members may not be equipped to deal with new learner needs as posed in the demands of online courses (Lail, 2009). Wilson and Whitelock (1998) in their mixed-method study of 100 graduate students found that the frequency of online interactions needs to be kept relatively high in discussions. Piotrowski and Vidanovich (2000) presented information that supported the belief that most faculty resent the limited student-instructor interaction with online courses.

In a 2006 phenomenological study of faculty members' experiences while teaching online, Conceição found two significant themes of work intensity and reward. According to the author, work intensity involved the amount of time and effort in designing and delivering an online course by faculty members. Time was cited by study participants to be an issue because online courses took more time to (a) organize content,

(b) present information in a way that addressed different learning styles, and (c) provide lecture notes and other information as needed in advance. Ideas regarding basic teaching functions, such as class management, monitoring of student outcomes, success and course clarity, and continuity in regards to the online adoption of courses were also viewed as part of the work intensity.

When examining the specific professional development for instructors who teach online, Lail (2009) found that instructors at community colleges do not feel satisfied with the quality of their professional development for online teaching, and they believe the training received carries only minor impact regarding their teaching practices. In her study of 143 new instructors from 58 North Carolina community colleges, only half were satisfied with the quality of their professional development, and over two-thirds of the respondents showed little to no interest in acquiring diverse-learner strategies. This can become problematic when faculty members and administrators feel as though online education sacrifices quality or is not as effective as the traditional learning formats on which institutions of higher education heavily rely. These attitudes can interfere with online course adoption and the development of a common vision for online education.

Another influence that affects faculty adoption of new online teaching practices is the perception of technical support and training. Faculty members who teach online courses need training and support on the technical features associated with their institution's online environment in order to be willing to adopt new ways of teaching. Lewis (2007) interviewed faculty members who shared opinions that denoted a lack of training. One participant in Lewis' study described her first experience with online instruction as being "thrust into online courses without any preparation" (p. 56).

Similarly, instructors need to be aware of how the details of their online course will be implemented in the new environment (Levy, 2003). Training instructors about the new technology needed to teach an online course is essential to help them adapt to new changes. If institutional support for the training for teaching online courses appears to be low, then faculty may elect not to participate in teaching an online course (McClean, 2005). Further, campus wide and individual acceptance of varied technologies in face-to-face teaching is also important in order to successfully move towards online education (Alexander et al., 2009; Garza, 2009).

Instructors teaching online courses face other issues regarding online course design, including content, assessment, interactivity, the teaching approaches to be used in the course, and how to best support students in the online learning process (Siedlaczek, 2004). Sims (2002) found that the interface between learner and computer is one of the most neglected aspects of online learning. Further research has emphasized that teaching online calls on instructors to take on both social and intellectual roles in order to create a community of learners (Arbaugh, 2000).

Lick (2001) and Levy (2003) recommend training faculty about the new technology and how to teach with the new technology, which are essential for adoption. Keeton's (2000) research suggests that institutions of higher education do not convey the importance of technology at the institution, do not allow faculty time to become acquainted with the technology, and do not allow time for faculty to properly develop and maintain distance courses. Sims et al. (2002) suggest that many online projects have simply focused on the conversion of existing paper-based resources into their digital equivalent, which cannot be the absolute when planning online courses. Sims et al.

further explain that online learning must also integrate collaboration, communication, and engaging content with specific group and independent learning activities and tasks. Better understanding of how to incorporate these concepts will aid administrators and those looking to improve the professional development and training for online course facilitators.

Motivated faculty members may be more inclined to teach online due to rewards or incentives, whether personal or externally perceived. Faculty members may be motivated to instruct online courses due to scheduling, opportunities to develop new materials and courses, the ease of technology and comfort level already with technology in place, and possible career advancement due to incentives and policies put in place by institutions of higher education (Andersen, 2004; Hilz, Kim, & Shea, 2006; Moore & Anderson, 2003). Moore and Anderson found three major types of incentives for faculty who teach online courses: (1) situational aspects or characteristics of the work environment that foster participation, which may include strong professional development programs, additional training, and a core mission; (2) strong incentives offered by the institution to those who participate, including monetary rewards, promotions, or release time; and (3) the intrinsic rewards felt by faculty who participate, including goal setting, personal satisfaction, and connection with students in the course.

Some faculty members find the benefits of teaching online courses to be both personal and institutionally related. One noted benefit by online instructors is that the online courses they teach help them become better teachers with a connection to a global community of educators (Green et al., 2009; Ko & Rossen, 2003). This is important as most faculty members are trying to establish connections or collaborations with other

colleagues in different environments as scholarly researchers. Institutional rewards also draw some faculty members to teach online. Researchers find that for some faculty members teaching online is more flexible with time and therefore may be more appealing to adjunct or part-time faculty members looking for opportunities to teach in higher education. Finally, some faculty members realize that today's internet-infused generation of students simply feel more comfortable in front of a computer for learning, and they enjoy the fact that students may be more personally invested in their own desire to learn (McKenzie et al., 2000; Shea, 2007).

As with many new endeavors once a faculty member tries teaching online and reports a positive experience, he or she becomes more apt to continue in this format if supported. Research finds that the number of times instructors have taught online has an impact on their interest in continuing to do so (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). Instructors who are less experienced feel underprepared, have fewer opportunities with professional development or observations of experienced instructors, and often negate their online teaching experiences and do not fully embrace online teaching. Other factors such as compensation for time in developing and implementing online courses, release time, materials, and equipment affect faculty participation with distance education courses. (Bower, 2001; Shea, 2007). Faculty professional development programs should be based on the changing needs of faculty. As revealed through the research of Gautreau (2011), it is paramount to take measures to increase faculty technology proficiencies by fostering measures that allow for compensation, collaboration, and access to resources.

## What the Literature Says: Faculty Professional Development for Online Teaching

Institutions of higher education should begin to ask themselves how they could best meet the needs of faculty and staff who teach online courses. Professional development for teaching an online course may look different according to the needs and organizational demands of the institution for faculty members. The next area of the literature review will examine faculty professional development for the adoption and teaching of online courses.

If community colleges and institutions of higher education want faculty to accept online courses as a viable means of instruction, they need to listen to faculty concerns and make improvements based upon those concerns (Rockwell et al., 1999). This will aid colleges as they look to improve factors that contribute to hesitation in adopting online education model. To help illustrate how pertinent it is to reach faculty members, it is worth mentioning the research of Knowles (1990). In his research about adult learning, he referred to the adult learner as a "neglected species." When observing adult development and professional development Knowles listed five key assumptions about adult learners: (1) adults were motivated to learn as they experienced needs and interests that the learning would satisfy; (2) learning for adults was lifelong; (3) experience was the main resource for adult learning; (4) adults had a need to be self-directed in their learning; and (5) individual differences among people increased with age. If administrators keep these points in mind, professional development may entice more faculty members to get on board to adopt new ways of teaching expected in online courses. Faculty members may be more apt to adopt new technology and teach online if they help to determine their own professional development needs.

Many researchers have reported the importance of faculty training (Levy, 2003; McKenzie et al., 2000). The question is what training instructors should receive to qualify them to deliver online courses. The instructor must be trained in using the designated software, managing online course, integrating web sources, and interacting with students through the web (Ko & Rossen, 1998). Some online facilitation skills, such as giving negative feedback, encouraging students to become actively involved in online learning, and dealing with disruptive students, could be offered in training programs to prepare qualified online instructors (Hitch & Hirsch, 2001).

As community colleges in particular open the doors for more online learning opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse study body, faculty are faced with rising workloads and increasing amounts of top-down accountability and oversight, as well as other constraints that come with organizational changes. Colleges frequently demand the implementation of online instruction despite some faculty members not always having the competency to teach courses online (Sims, 2002). Furthermore, Hinson and LaPrairie (2005) found through their research that only a few faculty members were confident in their ability to integrate technology into instruction. A complete and overarching framework needs to be developed and adopted to ensure sufficient professional development for instructors.

Furthermore, the types of professional development available to educators can vary. Professional development can be categorized by the delivery methods, design, and participant activities (Sparks & Loucks-Horsely, 1989). The researchers divided professional development into 5 models:

1. Individually guided staff development,



2. Observations and assessments,
3. Involvement in a development/improvement process,
4. Training, and
5. Inquiry (p. 2).

After examining constraints facing instructors who teach online courses, O'Meara and Terosky (2010) go on to share a holistic framework for faculty professional development. In their work, they have identified four aspects that are key to faculty professional growth: learning, agency, professional relationships, and commitments. This framework also builds on Blackburn and Lawrence's (1995) theory that faculty are driven by intrinsic commitments and a sense of personal agency that helps facilitate self-knowledge, which comes from construction of social knowledge and the kinds of learning and contributions the institution and their colleagues most value. New skills for online teaching may vary quite a bit from the familiar, more traditional ways used to reach students. For an instructor well versed in the more traditional ways of teaching, the online teaching format may even seem like a new discipline that challenges and frustrates:

The difference between conventional classroom instruction and Web-based distance education is as great as the difference between driving a car and flying a helicopter. While some of the skills one acquires from driving may be applicable to flying, they are not by themselves adequate; thus, transitioning from one to the other requires the acquisition of additional skills. Similarly transitioning from conventional class instruction to Web-based, distance education requires the acquisition of skills specific to this new teaching mode. (Turgeon, Di Biase, & Miller, 2000, p. 6)

An in-depth review of online teaching versus the traditional face-to-face teaching by Yick, Patrick, and Costin (2005) utilized their findings from a qualitative study of university faculty members to help reveal faculty experiences. In their study, the

researchers found that “the pedagogy of online learning is in contrast with that in brick-and-mortar institutions” (p. 3). Additionally, the researchers found that online teaching involves a shift in which teaching is learner-centered, as opposed to teacher centric.

In a qualitative study, Ellis (2000) explored the challenges of faculty who were teaching online courses at Pennsylvania State University World Campus. His findings show that the majority of administrators and faculty believe that release time is the major barrier to faculty participation in distance education and that release time is needed so that faculty can replace teaching on-campus courses with developing and teaching distance education courses (Yick et al., 2005). This idea supports a qualitative study of 32 faculty members who describe the hidden work associated with online teaching and question whether online teaching should be considered part of a normal faculty teaching load or an overload (Wolcott & Betts, 1999). In their study, the researchers found that faculty shared their beliefs that teaching online took a large amount of work. Faculty members included additional time and planning as part of the hidden work. Often they cited distance learning teaching responsibilities as ‘above and beyond’ what was normally required for face-to-face instructors (Wolcott & Betts, 1999).

When the opportunity to teach an online course becomes available to faculty members, they are likely to consider several issues before determining the advantages and disadvantages to teaching online. In their analysis of the literature regarding faculty concerns related to distance learning, Singleton, Carmen, and Session (2011) found information to support motivators and inhibitors when it comes to teaching online. In the area of motivators, Singleton et al. in their review cited the work of Cook, Ley, Crawford, and Warner (2009) and listed the top five intrinsic motivators:

1. Ability to reach new audiences that could not attend classes on campus
2. Opportunity to develop new ideas
3. Personal motivation to use technology
4. Intellectual challenge
5. Overall job satisfaction

Olcott (1996) stressed the importance of faculty adopting distance learning and revealed factors thought to be related to a lack of faculty support to teach online. A few of the factors were lack of faculty support, time demand, and incentives. Additionally, Cook et al. (2009) as cited by Singleton et al. (2011), list five inhibitors to distance education from faculty views:

1. Lack of technical support
2. Concern about faculty workload
3. Lack of release time
4. Lack of grants for materials/expenses
5. Concern about quality of the course

In contrast, a 2010 study by Chaney, Chaney, and Eddy yielded a literature review in which the indicators of quality distance learning programs were viable when woven into the culture of the institution. The indicators of quality included:

- Student-teacher interaction in distance learning courses
- Prompt feedback which allows instructors to appear “present” among their students
- Student support services should be equally available to students who take courses online as compared to those on campus

- Program evaluation and assessment which allows for continuous review and support for standards and objectives
- Clear analysis of audience – “The needs of the audience, along with characteristics, geographic location, available technologies, and learner goals, should be identified.”
- Documented technology plan to ensure quality
- Institutional support and institutional resources
- Course structure guidelines
- Active learning techniques
- Respect diverse ways of learning
- Faculty support services
- Strong rationale for distance learning that correlates to the mission of the institution
- Appropriate tools and media
- Reliability of technology
- Implementation of guidelines for course development and review of instructional materials

Professional development for online learning does not always adequately reflect the needs of the faculty members, and their teaching needs may vary across the online spectrum of teaching and learning (Lail, 2005). Levy (2003) notes six areas of consideration for institutions of higher education when it comes to faculty support and professional development:

(1) Vision and Plans – It is important to pass along to staff that changes within each organization will occur and that physical, organizational, and programmatic changes will occur.

(2) Curriculum – Make clear that new delivery methods and focus will be an important part of the pedagogical philosophy.

(3) Staff Training and Support – Instructors need training and support, as well as more flexibility in learning about and implementing new technology standards.

(4) Student Services – As technology will change the teaching process, more attention must be given to the overall organizational structure needed to support new changes.

(5) Student training and support – Students who are immersed in online learning courses need support, as well as understanding, as to how this shift in technology will help them succeed.

(6) Copyright and intellectual property – Institutions need to protect their interests as well as maintain academic freedom of instructors. These support systems can be a framework that community colleges can consider when looking to implement proper professional development for online teaching.

## **Conclusion**

In fulfilling their missions and in the generation of knowledge, colleges rely on their faculty. The acceptance of online education by faculty members is critical if community colleges intend to reach varied student bodies (Shea, 2007). Faculty members construct meaning from professional development experiences and in turn use the constructed meanings to discern whether they support online education (Knowles, 1995).

Administrators need to consider the dimensions of faculty learning as well as the voices of their faculty when planning for or providing professional development to teach online courses.

The literature provides a strong basis for continued research in the areas of faculty learning (both intrinsically and socially), technology adoption, and professional development awareness. The characteristics of faculty as adult learners is one to be examined through the unique voices of faculty members which include the perceptions, concerns, and issues faced with preparing to teach a course online. These significant statements of experience will be examined as a viable and meaningful way to add to the current body of literature in terms of community college faculty who teach online courses.

This study proposed to further expand the body of knowledge pertaining to how community college faculty were prepared to teach online, including their perceptions of the types of formal and informal training that were used to enhance the instructional and technical skills of faculty. The theories of Diffusion of Innovations and CBAM both provide a framework that granted me the ability to better understand the perceptions and experiences of faculty members who received training to teach online. Similarly, my recommendations for colleges will exhibit areas of professional development enhancement, which will utilize the ways in which people learn new innovations, such as the task to teach online courses.

The next chapter outlines the methodology that was used to complete this dissertation study. The research design, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures for this study are addressed at length.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

Professional development programs that prepare faculty to teach online vary across institutions and disciplines. Faculty members bring forth their own sets of values, beliefs and experiences, which when coupled with professional development to teach online courses can often hinder online acceptance or project faculty members to move forward and embrace online teaching and learning. The purpose of this qualitative study is to uncover community college faculty members' perceptions of training and professional development in regards to the teaching of one or more online courses, as well as to reveal the impact of professional development received to teach online courses through the voices of study participants. This study is guided by the following four research questions:

1. What are community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses?
2. What is the perceived focus of the professional development they receive for online or hybrid teaching?
3. What are the areas in which faculty feel they need more professional development in order to be successful online teachers?
4. What are the pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction?

In my examination of the professional development received by community college faculty members to teach online courses I found that faculty members relied on their own perceptions and experiences which were unique to their own employing

institutions. I approached this qualitative study from the stance of a novice researcher utilizing the social constructivist paradigm when conducting, gathering, and analyzing data for this dissertation study. According to Creswell (2007), social constructivists rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation, and often the researcher's subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically formed through interaction with others to generate a pattern of meaning developed by the researcher. Qualitative research provides the methodology to study issues in depth and detail (Patton, 2002).

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. Qualitative research is embedded in social sciences because researchers in this field attempt to understand the social life that has been experienced by participants in various studies (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2005). Researchers typically use qualitative research to make some type of interpretation of the meanings that are gathered from participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Meaning, which is described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) as the sense people make of their lives, is important in helping researchers determine what people are experiencing and how they interpret these experiences. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Qualitative research is research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). A qualitative approach was utilized to frame this particular study because it allowed me to investigate the interpretations and meanings of participants in their natural settings (Seidman, 1998). This is crucial in providing participants with a feeling of ownership and safety in regards to what they choose to share.



Gathering participant perspectives and understandings in a more natural and conversational environment allowed me to better understand faculty members' perceptions and understandings as participants often spoke freely (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The goal of this form of interaction was to gain participants' insight about their experiences with learning to teach online courses. Since faculty members varied in age, years of experience teaching, and academic areas in which they were teaching, it was a way to gain broad perspectives on the types of professional development being offered at the community college level, as well as a way to delve into perceptions of the professional development and preparing to teach online.

This study was designed to use semi-structured interviews as the primary qualitative method of inquiry. The interview protocol utilized much of what I had read in my review of the literature concerning the Diffusion of Innovations Theory and CBAM theories, which purport that learners often adopt new innovations based on their comfort level and the process utilized to move forward. I used semi-structured interviews because they allowed for the collection of rich responses with the depth that helped me better understand the perceptions and actual experiences of the participants in the study (Vockell & Asher, 1995). By using interviews, I was able to hear specific experiences of faculty members and their perceptions or thoughts of the professional development to learn to teach online. This helped me to glean a cogent picture of how faculty members were prepared to teach online courses.

For the purposes of this dissertation study, I aimed to study and report the perceptions and experiences of participants in the study. The social constructivist stance (Creswell, 2007), which I assumed for my research, aims to help researchers understand

the world in which they live and work. In terms of this dissertation study, I believe that my experience as a part time community college instructor was a gateway to address professional development to teach online courses from the view of other faculty members. My interaction with participants then allowed me to construct new knowledge and meaning of the professional development experience provided to community college faculty members.

### **Research Sites**

Qualitative research often takes place in natural settings where the researcher uses participants to help make meaning of the world. According to Creswell (2007), researchers often collect data at the site where participants experience the issue or problem (p. 37). In this case, I met with faculty members on their community college campuses in order to detect any nuances or other environmental conditions worth noting in the study.

I chose participants from two community colleges for this study because the community colleges were a sample of convenience, with my location placing me within 30 miles of each campus. I visited each college's webpage, and found that each college had a large number of online and hybrid course offerings taught across discipline areas. Before undertaking the study, some basic demographic information was collected on each college. To accomplish this, I emailed an individual from each college IT department to inquire about the number of online/hybrid courses in relation to traditional courses and the number of full time and part faculty teaching both online/hybrid and traditional courses. More demographic information was also collected from the college websites in relation to the study.

The first community college in this study, referred to as “Alpha County College,” is located in a semi-rural community in a mid-Atlantic state. This college is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Furthermore, this community college serves a diverse student body in regards to socio-economic standards and race or ethnicity. As found on their webpage,

Accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, [Alpha] County College offers over 100 programs of study leading to Associate Degrees, Academic Certificates, Career Certificates, and Short-Term Training Certificates. As of Fall 2010, over 4,200 students were enrolled in these programs. An additional 1,000 students were enrolled in Professional and Continuing Education courses.

As of the 2010-2011 academic school year at Alpha Community College, the total number of online courses offered was 253, out of 1,958 total courses offered. Sixty-four hybrid courses were also offered. Fifty-nine full time faculty members taught online or hybrid courses, and 126 adjuncts also taught online or hybrid courses in this academic year.

The second community college included in this study is located within 30 miles of Alpha County College. According to its website, “Beta County College” is one of the region’s largest post-secondary schools. In the 2010 school year, over 23,000 credit students were serviced. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accredits this college. Furthermore, Beta County College shares on their website their mission:

[Beta] County College enhances the quality of life by preparing students to live and work in a global economy. The College further fulfills its responsibility to the citizens of the County by creating a skilled and stable local workforce; by encouraging enlightened civic engagement; by providing an avenue of social mobility; and by serving as a destination for cultural and recreational activities. Efforts continue to ensure that all who study, visit, or work at our three campus locations will find comfortable, safe, and attractive settings that are designed to sustain a vibrant academic community characterized by imaginative teaching, caring student services, energetic management, and collegial discussion of diverse ideas and opinions.

As of the 2010- 2011 academic year, the total online courses offered at Beta County College were 98 individual subjects. There were multiple sections of each offered for a total of 482 online courses. The total hybrid courses offered were 59 individual courses. There were multiple courses of each offered for a total of 142 hybrid courses. Total online and hybrid courses were 157, out of a total of 624 courses being taught. Approximately 70 full time faculty members taught online or hybrid courses at Beta County College, while approximately 25 adjunct faculty members taught online or hybrid courses there also.

### **Participants and Selection Process**

I first followed all procedures to gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from NIH Office of Extramural Research (see Appendix A), as well as IRB approval from each of the two community colleges (Appendix B) and my own university. Once the IRB approval letters were obtained, I contacted a member of each community college's IRB committee in mid-December 2011 to inquire about the name of an administrator with whom I could make contact in order to gain names of prospective participants. This contact was made by email and personal phone calls. This was a lengthy process, in which I had to learn to navigate various gatekeepers at each college. Multiple contacts were made to an individual at each college willing to help move the study forward. I obtained the names of an administrator at each college who had access to those teaching online by mid-December of 2011 and contacted them by telephone right away.

The administrators at the two participating community colleges each supplied 20 to 25 potential participant names, telephone numbers, and email addresses to me via email. All 45 potential participants for this study were contacted through email with a

letter explaining the study and asking for study volunteers (Appendix C). This initial email contact with potential participants occurred in late December 2011, and again in mid- January 2012 once classes resumed after the college winter break ended.

**Criteria for selection.** According to Neumann (2009), “faculty members are expected to be ‘master learners.’ They learn in various ways based on their identities, work roles, the groups they interact with, and organizational contexts” (as cited by O’Meara & Terosky, 2010). The 14 participants in this study included both experienced faculty, who had been teaching online for three or more years, and nonexperienced faculty, who had been teaching online for less than two years. Together, the participants in this study had been teaching an average of 12 years in the traditional setting and had taught online for an average of seven years.

According to Penner and McClement (2008), purposive sampling is a useful way to select participants for a study based on their particular knowledge of a phenomenon. In this case, the study participants varied in age, gender, degree attainment, and years of teaching both traditional face-to-face courses and online or hybrid courses. The final sampling utilized for this study was criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) so that I could ensure participants had recently taught online or hybrid courses in a community college setting. I was able to gain this information via an email explaining my study, which was sent to a list of possible interested participants that had been furnished to me from each of the two colleges (Appendix C).

**Actual participants.** The participants in the study represented a cross-section of community college faculty members who teach online and/or hybrid courses full time at their respective colleges. I contacted the Dean of Instruction at both colleges to obtain the

names of potential participants who had varying degrees of online teaching experiences. Through email contact, I learned that often many faculty members taught both online and hybrid courses. This included across subject areas and time teaching traditional courses, hybrid courses, and online courses. Faculty members responded to an email invite (Appendix C) which fully explained the rationale and purpose of the study, as well as time commitments and expectations should they voluntarily participate. Patton (1990) stresses that the importance of purposive sampling is to obtain information that will enlighten the research questions and will add richness to information discovered in the study. Criterion sampling (Patton, 1990) allowed me to specifically request community college faculty members who had recently taught an online or hybrid class as a requirement for study participation. Participants represented multiple subject areas, terminal degrees, and both genders. A demographic form was completed by each participant prior to their scheduled interview (Appendix D). Table 1 following illustrates the demographics of study participants.

Table 1.

*Participant Demographics Table*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Degree	General Subject	Years teaching	Years teaching
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				Area	traditional/ face to face	online/hybrid courses
Brad Stine	M	51-60	MS (2)	Humanities	14	7
Steve Jones	M	51-60	MS	Technology and Sciences	12	5
Laura Lane	F	51-60	MS	Healthcare	25	15
Amy Lord	F	51-60	MA	Humanities	18	12
Henry Potts	M	31-40	Ph.D.	Humanities	14	6
Lisa Stein	F	61-70	MS	Humanities	18	10
Sarah Brown	F	41-50	Ph.D.	Math & Sciences	8	5
Jane White	F	41-50	ABD	Social Sciences	22	10
Bob Long	M	41-50	MS	Humanities	10	3
Bill Hoover	M	51-60	Ph.D.	Math & Sciences	21	4
Ed Fay	M	41-50	MA	Humanities	8	1.5
Sue Jacobs	F	31-41	MA	Humanities	5	3
John Robins	M	51-60	MA (2)	Humanities	25	15
Dave Grim	M	41-50	BS	Technology & Sciences	9	6

Seven participants from each of the two community colleges were selected to participate in the study. Scheduling of interviews began in early January, 2012. In an effort to form a mutual relationship with participants, I was flexible in the scheduling,

time, and place for each interview. Participant interviews often occurred in the participant's office on campus unless the faculty member chose a different location. Interviews were held in off campus locations mutually agreeable to both the participant and me on three occasions. All 14 interviews were scheduled by the end of January 2012, and all participant interviews were concluded by February 20, 2012.

For the purposes of this study, I relied mainly on semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each participant. Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended questions that do not limit the range of answers provided by participants (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). I believed that the time spent with participants would lead to detailed accounts of their perception and experiences. Each interview question (Appendix E) was connected to the four overarching research questions. In addition to interviews, data were gathered in the form of demographic information and field notes taken during each interview. I maintained a research journal, which I also utilized after each interview to collect my own thoughts and feelings. I believed multiple areas of data collection would add depth to the study.

Prior to conducting interviews with participants, I conducted one pilot interview in early December 2011 with a faculty member at another community college who also teaches online courses. This interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with a digital recorder with the consent of the participant. The raw data obtained from the pilot interview allowed me to refine some of my interview questions and revise my research questions for clarity. The main research question and the first research question were combined into one uniform question that was concise. From the interview protocol, one question was deleted since it was repetitive in nature. Three other questions



were rephrased to add clarity for participants. I also practiced the pacing of the interview since I was a novice researcher and wanted to be comfortable with the participants.

### **Data Collection**

In order to understand the experiences of the participants and to have them reconstruct their professional development experiences, I developed in-depth interview questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) which allowed me as a qualitative researcher to “objectively study the subjective states of [my] subjects” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 33). I designed the interviews in a semi-structured format that would allow participants to offer information outside of the responses that I expected. The semi-structured format was used because I had a planned set of topics that would be addressed, but in an informal manner. This design allowed participants to offer additional information on their own terms without feeling restricted (Vockell & Asher, 1995).

I met participants at an agreed upon location, date, and time. Prior to the interview, participants were notified that the interview might take up to one hour. The first few minutes were spent with the participant completing the informed consent letter (Appendix F) and a brief demographic sheet (Appendix D), and I asked if they had any additional questions on the interview process itself. The digital audio recorder was in sight of the participant and was switched to record when the questions commenced.

**Interview protocol.** The interview protocol was developed by me and guided me in my questioning (Appendix E). I followed my interview protocol, but probed and asked for deeper opinions when necessary. Patton (1990) posits, “Interview questions will transform over time, and each new interview builds on those already done, expanding

information that was picked up previously, moving in new directions and seeking elucidations and elaborations from various participants” (p. 342). One example is question #4 from the protocol, which allowed me to ask participants to clarify answers and share experiences. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix E.

Interview questions addressed both formal and informal preparation activities. The interview protocol also addressed courses faculty taught in the online environment, their experiences in the traditional setting, and their transition from the traditional to online environment. The interview protocol consisted of 14 main questions and a number of areas for sub-questions and probes. Among the interview protocol questions there was: (a) a separate sheet for demographic information to be completed by participants which included name, age range, highest degree attained, number of years teaching a traditional course, and number of years teaching an online course (Appendix D); (b) a section on current experiences with teaching online courses; (c) a section on the professional development provided to teach online (including format, satisfaction, and frequency); (d) a section of questions pertaining to technical issues and challenges in creating and teaching an online course; (e) questions regarding the pedagogical impacts on instruction when teaching online; (f) questions on the transition and implications for faculty members moving to online teaching; and (g) types of professional development needed or wanted.

As the researcher, I wanted to delve as deeply as I could into the experiences of my study participants with online learning. I understood that professional development allotted to faculty members, experiences utilizing that professional development to teach online, and a faculty member’s prior knowledge, current experience, and use of training

all come together to form the perception of the participant. I was further informed by Hall and Hord's (2001) Concerns-Based Adoption Model, which discusses the concerns online instructors have experienced and the coping strategies have they adopted to address the concerns not met by professional development at their employing institution.

**Actual interviews.** I provided participants with a copy of the interview protocol to use as a guide during the interview. The length of interviews varied from 40 minutes to over an hour. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) conclude that in qualitative research, it is the goal of the researcher to situate themselves in a way that allows participants to feel relaxed and willing to speak about the subject matter in a meaningful way. I did not rush participants and allowed for probes to further elucidate information where appropriate. One example of this is with question #3 from the interview protocol (Appendix E) in which participants would be prompted to share a story about a time when they could discuss the most helpful or least helpful professional development received. During each interview, I recorded notes and comments based on the participants' responses to each interview question in order to create a log trail (Richards, 2005). These memos and field notes also added to the document collection and subsequent analysis.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to initial the copy of the protocol used and return it to me for my records. The digital recorder was switched off, and participants were thanked for their time. I also informed participants that they would be receiving a copy of their transcript via email within two weeks for their perusal and to make changes or clarification if needed. This technique allowed participants to provide feedback on the transcribed interview in order check validity of the information being collected, but not necessarily providing validation to the study (Richards, 2005).

After each interview was completed, each interview was securely saved to my own personal computer. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I was the only person with access to the files.

At the conclusion of each interview, I would take samples of material culture in the form of photographs, official and internal documents, external communication, or agendas provided by participants in relation to professional development to teach online courses (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Patton (1990) notes that in this way triangulation of collected data can occur. Not all participants added to the material culture collected. Some examples of the material culture that were collected included screen shots of the online courses and modules, professional development workshop and agenda paperwork, and email exchanges from college administrators to instructors regarding professional development opportunities for online courses. In addition, my reflective journal became a tool in which jotted notes, observations, and researcher reflections also added to the collection of data in the ongoing research process.

Other documents such as professional development agendas, discussion board transcripts, and screen shots of instructor website “shells” were collected or photographed during the course of the study and included in my analysis to validate findings. These documents helped provide a more robust understanding of the online teachers’ professional development experiences and perceptions of teaching online courses.

A detailed research journal was also kept, which included all of the events related to this study as they occurred. I used this journal to record incidental memos and off-the-record conversations and, in a separate sense, to bracket out my own ideas regarding professional development. Rossman and Rallis (1998) call these components the *running*

*record* and the *observer comments*, and posit that both can be made part of the data gathered from research. Ultimately, I utilized this journal as a way to help recognize and bracket out some of my own biases, since I am a teacher who has received professional development and also teach part time at a local community college. After each interview, observation, or collection of data, researcher journal entries were analyzed and recorded for research purposes.

### **Data Analysis**

Within hours after each interview concluded, raw data from the audio-recorded interview were immediately placed into a password-protected file on my home computer and backed up onto a USB flash drive. Audio files were copied onto a disk, so that the transcription service could have easy access to them. A professional transcription service located within a law firm was used to transcribe all of the interviews verbatim. I sent an email within 24 hours thanking the participants for their time and willingness to participate. I also told participants that I would email the transcribed copy of the interview for their verification and to make changes if necessary. I transcribed any notes that were taken during the course of the interview and reviewed digital photographs and any supporting documents collected during the interview. These notes were not shared with participants.

I utilized the process of naturalized transcription, which is extremely detailed verbatim data, and may include “breaks in speech, laughter, mumbling...” as cited in the research of Mero-Jaffe (2011). The choice of naturalized transcription allowed for a complete and detailed picture of study participants.

As each transcribed interview was received from the transcription service, I read and re-read each word document for accuracy and detail. Creswell (2007) surmises that data analysis begins when the preparation of and organizing of data occurs. In this study, text data from transcribed interviews were the focus of analysis. I managed the quantity of the data through color-coding techniques, which allowed me to go back to each transcript and continue to find initial themes or codes unnoticed in the initial readings.

After multiple, careful readings I emailed a copy of the transcribed interview as a word document to each participant for the purposes of member checking. Member checking is primarily used in qualitative inquiry methodology and is defined as a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Page, Samson, and Crockett (2000) surmise that there are three reasons for sharing the information with participants: politeness to those who volunteered for research, validation of the data, and supplying of information and recommendations that could improve conditions by empowering people. By allowing participants to make changes or clarify their words, I believed that the transcripts would be more accurate and representative of the participants' stories and voices. Table 2 expresses the range of comments and changes from the participants.

Table 2.

*Participant Email Feedback from Shared Transcribed Interview Data*

Pseudonym	Comment	Change
Jane White	“Amazing to read.”	No

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Bob Long	“Approved. Good luck to you.”	No
Ed Fay	“Looks good. Surreal to read a verbatim transcript.”	No
John Robbins	“This is going to be kept confidential, right?” “I said this, not that.”	Yes
Sue Jacobs	“I fixed a few minor grammatical errors.” “Good luck with your research and defense.”	Yes
Dave Grim	“I must have been mumbling. I said this_____. Please spell his name this way_____.”	Yes
Brad Stine	“Approved. Good luck to you.”	No
Sarah Brown	“Just some minor edits/clarifications to the transcript, which is attached. Please consider this email my approval/verification.”	Yes
Laura Lane	“I am so glad I could review this!” “Please see attachment with what I feel are corrections.”	Yes
Henry Potts	“Looks fine – one minor change to my 8th response – I clarify this later, but it may be important to change it here in the beginning.”	Yes

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Participants were instructed via email (Appendix G) to read over, approve, add details, or make changes to the transcript if warranted. A period of approximately 14 days was allotted for each participant response. Participants were told that choosing not to respond to approve or make changes would mean that the interview was considered approved. Of the 14 transcribed interviews emailed, 10 participants requested small changes or made general comments back to me through email. Often participants made changes based on clarification on a name or a point of reference. Overall, the responses from participants who chose to look over their interviews were positive in nature as noted in Table 2.

**Data management.** Bogden and Biklen (1998) state that data analysis is a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials accumulated to help the researcher better understand them and present their discovery to others (p. 157). One way to simplify qualitative analysis is to reduce a large amount of textual data to meaningful concepts while indentifying themes and categories in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis of the data relied on the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glaser, 1978) which allowed for line and paragraph segments of the transcribed interviews and field notes to occur. The interview data were given more weight in the analysis than the researcher journal and material culture.

The data were analyzed using a qualitative software program called NVivo, and I was able to download the newest version 9.0 for use in February, 2012. This program had been developed for qualitative social science research as a means for data coding and theory building (Ozkan, 2004). The transcribed interview data and field notes were word documents, which were easily uploaded to the NVivo software program.

**Coding of data.** Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) posit the idea that coding data can begin as soon as data are collected. “Analysis usually begins with looking for descriptive codes within one’s data” (p. 351). Richards (1998) shares that coding refers to data reduction by a system of symbols or by numbers. In doing this, the goal of the researcher is to keep revisiting the data until patterns and explanations are fully understood. Through the process of coding, descriptive codes were assigned to the data that would potentially generate key concepts or categories.



Once participants approved the use of their transcripts for the study, I re-read the hard copies of the approved transcripts to build codes and distinguish emerging themes. These codes and themes were generated from a review of the literature, the research questions underpinning the study, and researcher observations and impressions. This idea of descriptive coding and topic coding is discussed by Richards (1998) as a way to label text. For this research, data were transcribed and sorted into analyzable segments through the software program NVivo version 9.0 by QSR International. I felt comfortable after using this product on a trial basis at the start of my data collection and believed this software program would help me organize my data to begin a strong inductive coding process. I studied many software programs and chose this particular software based on the price and ease of use.

As participant transcripts were imported into the NVivo software program, line by line coding of each transcribed interview took place. This reading and re-reading was an iterative process that helped me continually return for more details to include in my findings section. As I began to import data (interviews) into NVivo, I also created initial nodes. Nodes function as a category of themes that help illuminate and identify information. The nodes were created with some ease due to my prior hand coding of each verbatim interview.

The iterative process of reading each verbatim interview in the software program was an invaluable experience. According to Bazeley (2007) there are five main ways in which NVivo supports qualitative data analysis. Using the NVivo software program allows users to “manage data, manage ideas, query data, graphically model, and report from the data” (p. 2). For the purposes of this study, I used NVivo to manage data chunks

and manage ideas, which led to the iterative process of reporting from my collected data. Colors were assigned to the node hierarchy so that I could easily discern the node being assigned, and move from coding to sorting nodes in my analysis. Likewise, as I became more immersed in the interview data, sub-nodes were formed. As Creswell (2007) notes, this process of generating and organizing codes is important to a qualitative study because the codes can represent information that was not expected, is unusually interesting, or is representative of something I expected to find.

During the actual coding process, words, phrases, and at times entire paragraphs were highlighted around color-coded schemas inserted by me. These schemas related back to the research questions associated with the study, and helped me to better manage the hefty amount of data provided by 14 interviews, various field notes, and artifacts collected. Nodes were developed and taken from the codes in order to show patterns and relationships across the data. I was able to determine major categories and sub-categories at his point of analysis. Table 3 shows the initial nodes created.

Table 3.

*Initial Node Hierarchy*

Node	Sources	References
Age of faculty members	5	10
Barriers to technology adoption	14	58
Beliefs and attitude	14	217
Changes in instructional practices	14	49
Collaboration	12	72
External mandates or expectations	13	32
Faculty adapting	5	7
Freedom	10	21
High satisfaction with online teaching	7	12
Incentives	14	53
Individualized instruction of faculty	9	15
Low satisfaction with online teaching	7	32
Online provides diversity	5	7
Pedagogy training to teach online	11	33
Overall perception	14	125
Perceptions of colleagues	13	53
Teaches hybrid course in addition	7	7
Teaching presence	9	20
Technology training	13	51
Work intensity	2	4

I used the codes generated in order to understand study participants' understanding, views, and experiences with the professional development to teach online. The examination of the data was an iterative three-stage process during collection, coding, and analysis of gathered data. This approach allowed the naming of variations or variables in the patterns to emerge and provided for further development of dimensions within the themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes (referred to by QSR as "Nodes") emerged from an inductive approach by me. This process allowed for the voices of the participants to be heard through the inclusion of direct quotations from within the findings and the collection and analysis of documents. I was able to interrogate my data and validate some of my initial interpretations of the professional development perceptions shared with me (Welsh, 2002).

Bazeley (2007) acknowledges that organizational use of nodes occurs most often prior to theoretical. In this case, I took similar ideas and organized them into hierarchies, noting the number of times referenced by participants. Next, Bazeley also notes the patterns of associations. In the case of my research, I was able to utilize these patterns to help establish broader themes within my data. The interpretation of the data prompted me to look for answers and descriptions of how the professional development was perceived and why. This process by way of more abstract codes helped me to write a composite description of the professional development for teaching online courses and to discuss what the participants experienced and how they experienced it.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Patton (2001) posits that validity and reliability are two areas in which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about when designing a qualitative study. For

the purposes of this study, I utilized multiple validation strategies, as outlined by Creswell (2007). Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) cited the work of Creswell and Miller (2000) in which validity can be confirmed through at least two of eight verification procedures: (a) prolonged engagement and persistent observation, (b) triangulation, (c) peer observation, (d) negative case analysis, (e) clarifying researcher bias, (f) member checks, (g) thick description, and (h) external audits (p. 30).

First, I employed data triangulation as a means for adding rigor to my study. I relied mainly on semi-structured interviews, but also included artifacts, such as photographs, screen shots, email communication between administrators and faculty members, and professional development agendas and materials. Notes, in the form of short memos in a researcher journal, completed the triangulation for the study. My prolonged engagement in the field culminated when I began to sense I had reached a state of saturation. I interviewed 14 community college faculty members and believed that I had a fair sampling for my study.

In addition, to further triangulate my data as described above, I performed member checking as a way to add validity to the study. In this case, I completed member checking with each participant through email. Participants were asked to read the verbatim transcript from their interview and make changes or add any additional comments before approving. Not all participants chose to make changes or clarify their responses. Table 2 is representative of the responses received from participants.

As a researcher, employing a qualitative approach, I believed it was very important to maintain dependability and confirmability within my study by an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To that end, this study presents findings with thick, rich,

descriptions of the phenomena of the training and professional development to teach online courses for instructors at a community college. Raw data, field notes, and analytical notes provided quality data that helped to explain perceptions and experiences with professional development to teach online.

### **Ethical Considerations**

I understand that certain specific ethical considerations must be observed to ensure that both institutions and people are not harmed in this study. I have completed the National Institute of Health training course “Protecting Human Research Participants” which is required for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. I followed the IRB requirements for both community colleges in the study and obtained approval letters to conduct my study at each location. I also gained IRB approval from my own university, in which my research was considered “exempt” since my research fell within certain university guidelines.

I utilized a code of ethics to uphold the standards of the profession and to protect persons and places involved in the dissertation study (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2009, p. 27). I worked to the utmost degree to maintain confidentiality and act in an honest, professional, fair manner throughout the study. This included using pseudonyms for colleges and participants throughout my data analysis and final written study. Study participants were required to sign-off by way of an informed consent letter as an acknowledgement of this before the interviews commenced. In addition, I strove to keep all information in a secure environment. I will follow the IRB standard that all information pertaining to this dissertation be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study. Finally, the reflective journal is an on-going summary of my own opinions,

thoughts, and observations during the course of the study, and is meant to help diminish any researcher bias.

### **Limitations of this Study**

I recognize that results of this study may be limited due to the convenience of the sampling, the voluntary nature of the participants within the period specified, and the relatively small number of participants in the study. This study was not designed to find the perceptions of all community college faculty members who received professional development to teach online courses. The purpose was to address a specific set of perceptions in regards to preparing to teach online.

This qualitative study encompassed two community college located in one Mid-Atlantic state. The homogeneous nature of the study population, since both community colleges are located relatively close to one another, may be perceived as a measure of shared cultures, attitudes, and beliefs, which may transfer in the responses provided by participants.

Another limitation of this research is that it was based purely on the experiences and perceptions of online instructors at two community colleges. Some of the instructors also included information regarding their hybrid courses, and so this altered the nature of the study early in the data gathering process. Although I believe this breadth of experience added to the study, some may argue that hybrid courses are their own entity, and those perceptions of the development related to teaching a hybrid course should not have been factored into the study.

It is important to note that participant perceptions may have been influenced by previous professional development experiences resulting from employment at other

colleges not associated with this study. Due to this outside influence, the data gathered may not be closely aligned with trends or practices happening in other locations.

Additionally, all study participants were found to be innovators or early adopters (Rogers, 1995) based on my understanding of the literature reviewed. Due to this limitation, the professional development needed by participants falling into this category may vary from the professional development needs of other faculty members who fall into a different area or rate of technological adoption.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to provide in-depth understandings of the perceptions of the professional development to teach online courses from the perspectives of community college faculty members. This study was an attempt to identify the professional development currently received, how it impacted instruction, and any other areas where community college faculty members still felt a need for professional development. The goal of this study was to provide insight through the voices of participants who teach online courses. Against a constructivist framework, I provided meaning making through research questions that related to participant experiences, needs, and feelings toward the professional development they have received. It is the hope of this researcher that the detailed perceptions of their professional development experience described by these community college faculty members will inform those who want to implement stronger, more effective professional development for faculty members who teach online courses in the community college setting.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **Introduction**

During this research, 14 community college online instructors were interviewed to identify their perceptions of the professional development to teach online courses. The following chapter consists of a report detailing the findings of this study. By utilizing a qualitative approach to this study, I aimed to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants. In the first part of the following chapter, I provide a detailed description of my time spent with participants, including references to collected documents and material culture. The second half of this chapter contains the emerging themes associated with this study. The research questions used to direct the data collection were:

1. What are community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses?
2. What is the perceived focus of the professional development they receive for online or hybrid teaching?
3. What are the areas in which faculty feel they need more professional development in order to be successful online teachers?
4. What are the pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction?

The themes that emerged from the data were pertinent to the faculty participants as they consistently resurfaced throughout the interviews and analysis of raw data, documents, and material culture. The data presented from the four research questions were then interpreted and analyzed to establish the summary, conclusions, and

recommendations discussed in Chapter V of this study.

### **Participants' Perceptions of Professional Development for Online Teaching**

The following community college instructors shared their experiences with me for this study: Brad Stine, Steve Jones, Laura Lane, Amy Lord, Henry Potts, Lisa Stein, Sarah Brown, Jane White, Bob Long, Bill Hoover, Ed Fay, Sue Jacobs, John Robbins, and David Grim. In the following pages, I detail each of the participants' perceptions and experiences with the professional development and training provided to them to teach online. Following their voices are the emerging themes that I uncovered after careful analysis and interpretation.

**Brad Stine.** Brad is a full time community college faculty member with 14 years of teaching experience, 7 of those years spent teaching online. When discussing how he ended up teaching online courses, Brad remarked that his role as a program coordinator had a bit to do with his schedule. He also mentioned feeling very comfortable with technology, especially since one of the degrees he obtained was entirely online. When further discussing his role as an online educator, Brad mentioned that administrators noticed his comfort with technology. "You know what, I offered my services, but I think I was being eyeballed at the time, so it was a mutual agreement." Brad enjoys teaching online and enjoys sharing his abilities as an educator to reach out and reach more people because of the capabilities of online teaching. For him the incentive was not monetary, but more intrinsically based; his feeling or belief that reaching out to students, who may not normally make it to an on-campus class via online instruction, reassured him that he was doing a good thing. To Brad, teaching online leads to ways in which he can communicate with students more often. He enjoys sharing dialogue with students whom

he may not normally see in traditional face-to-face courses due to their own constraints that may prevent them from enrolling in college classes.

His satisfaction teaching online courses is extremely high. Since his start teaching at the college, teaching online courses has been something he has known he wanted to do. Technology was something that has always interested him. He shared that he often thought about his face-to-face course in terms of how he would teach it if it were online. His interests lie not only in expanding online education at his college through departments and other instructors, but also in taking in aspects from other colleges and universities that have “good programs going.”

The data presented indicate that Brad believes that some standardization and rigor could be added to the college online program to help increase faculty productivity and benefits to students. Brad volunteers to be on a distance learning committee that often oversees online teaching and learning. When discussing the formats and ways professional development had been provided, Brad shared that it had mostly been through subject matter experts who were colleagues.

Brad believes that most educators within his college do share a vision of the online learning component, but he remarks that more support seems to come from newer faculty who are coming in and are willing to give it a try.

They understand that, you know, that’s the future. It’s the future as we see it right now as far as education goes. I still think you have that old fashioned kind of professor that believes that you need face to face contact. (Brad Stine, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

Furthermore, Brad believes that dialogue about online learning needs to continue. He adds that it is happening at his college, but on a more personalized level, which allows for more collegiality amongst fellow instructors, as a show of support and a way to dialogue

about what is working – or not. “I think people have shared—professors have shared a ton of information with other people. And even someone who is new to online education, they’re not afraid to ask another professor for assistance in learning...”

In his discussion of challenges he has encountered with preparing to teach online, Brad remarked that there is much upfront work that needs to be done. His perception is that a face-to-face teacher might have more flexibility in what he or she chooses to cover in a class period. With students logging in online, there is a structure that professors must create so that students can benefit from the class. He said that, “When you set parameters as far as what the learning objectives are, that can be achieved in a face-to-face environment equally as—equally as much than say in a virtual learning environment.”

Brad considers himself someone who is open to change and adapts easily. He has found that his colleagues often come to him for help since they are aware of his comfort levels with utilizing technology to teach. He shares information with other faculty members who know he is comfortable with the technology and seek him out. Brad enjoys applying his knowledge and abilities as an educator with colleagues and the students enrolled in his online courses. To me, this outpouring of ideas and help in regards to teaching online demonstrates he is intrinsically motivated to succeed in teaching online.

**Steve Jones.** Steve teaches courses online and serves as an administrator for a liberal arts program. He has been teaching for 12 years and online for the past 5 years. Steve discussed how he reached out to his Dean for the job to teach an online course when he saw it was open. He indicated that he already felt comfortable with technology and was pleased to be able to teach an online course he was excited about.

Steve is a self-starter, who mentioned he built his entire course on his own since it just came naturally to him. In addition to his motivation to start up a course, Steve mentioned he had personally requested to teach online courses due to his own interest, and stated that he had not been asked by an administrator to teach online.

His incentive was that he could be flexible with his time and did not need to be on campus as much. Interestingly, Steve noted that although he volunteered to teach an online course, he actually prefers the format of face-to-face teaching noting, “I enjoy the face-to-face more than the online class. If I was denied a traditional face-to-face course, I would give up the online class.” He stated that it is the interaction with students and real-time conversation that he prefers.

In his role as an academic administrator, Steve also has opportunities to share information and train colleagues. He meets with faculty members often to help them develop the basic site for their online courses, called a shell. He noted that most faculty members gain the basic technology-training piece, rather than the pedagogical piece of how to interact with students and help them learn best. He often will ask them what their goals are, and he helps faculty members become more comfortable with using the basics of the technology. Faculty members must receive some training before their online courses are activated, and Steve is instrumental in helping move faculty members forward.

Since he often oversees some of the professional development workshops, Steve mentioned that faculty members are asked to provide feedback, and that often the feedback is positive, “My experience has been...they’ve been very positive. I think more faculty want to do online training.”

When looking back to when Steve converted his classes, which were face-to-face, to entirely online he suggested that the transition was smooth due to his own knowledge and skills. Since faculty members realize he is comfortable with the technology to teach online, faculty members often seek him out for help.

In his role as an administrator at the college, Steve noted a push internally within departments, which affects standardization for those teaching online. This push draws from the fact that many more instructors seem willing to teach online. The training for those interested is always available on an as-needed basis. As Steve discusses, “The training entails all the nuts and bolts of how to use the LMS, Learning Management System, and not too much -- not too much content.” This theme of ability to teach online and gain basic instruction on how to do it came up often in discussions with other faculty members as well. I noted this as a support in place for faculty members interested in teaching an additional course.

Steve also talked about a professional development day at the college, focused on technology. This appears to be the main way this information was disseminated to interested staff members. The exception was that the main presenter was an outsider who made the topic more interesting by reaching a larger population of faculty members, many of whom do not teach online. Colleague dialogue and presentations were also a part of the day so that best practices could be shared.

Finally, Steve admitted that he indeed adapts easily to change and actually looks forward to the new challenges technology may bring to his role as a community college online instructor. His personal knowledge of the technology in place helps him to gain recognition in aiding his colleagues.

Everything, from how do I convert a picture to a JPEG to how do I, you know, how do I do a flyer, how I convert this document that I can put it on -- you know, everything. How do I do a video, I do I do this, how do I -- they see me as a resource. (Steve Jones, personal communication, Feb. 16, 2012)

**Laura Lane.** Laura teaches in the healthcare division of her college and has been teaching mainly hybrid courses in her field for over 10 years. Laura is a motivated person who developed one of the hybrid courses after team teaching a course with a colleague. In her words, “I figured out a way, because I was a little bit computer literate at the time, to figure out a way to do it online.” Laura believes in online learning and also earned one of her degrees entirely online, which has helped her to understand all aspects of the teaching and learning pedagogy. She has even shared with colleagues and included in her own courses some of the things she learned while earning her degree online at another college.

Laura notes that teaching hybrid courses has been challenging, but it is something she enjoys since it encourages students to think and research their answers.

They need to, instead of me standing there asking them questions, they have to think about what I am asking. They have more time to think about what I am asking, and they are more apt to go and search out resources to find the answers rather than just pool what the teachers says. (Laura Lane, personal communication, Feb. 15, 2012)

Still, Laura enjoys the hybrid format since she is still able to connect with her students and touch base with a variety of learners. She feels this personal interaction helps build her students’ confidence.

The personal technology attention faculty members receive on her campus is what helped Laura make the move to teach online and hybrid courses. The college has recognized her willingness to adapt and take on new challenges, so that has resulted in

her being sent to various conferences and workshops where she then came back to her campus and shared information with colleagues.

Another way in which Laura is able to share her experience is through her own involvement with a distance learning committee on campus. Here, colleagues who teach online can dialogue about their interests, what other campuses are doing, and so forth. Laura voluntarily devotes time to the committee. “I’m there because I’m constantly wanting to learn more...I love it. I’ve been the one in the department willing to try anything.”

Again, according to Laura, colleagues find her to be knowledgeable, and they also come to her for technology help often. She notes that if she cannot help them, then she usually can point them to someone on campus who can. Since her college does not mandate training, she or her colleagues have not participated in professional development to teach online for some time. Laura attributes this to no recent changes happening with online courses at her college, but she notes that a move to another version of the online teaching tool Blackboard will be available this year and anticipates more workshops to help folks.

As far as her satisfaction with teaching online, Laura enjoys it but definitely has some reservations about her students and the rigor of online programs. “My dilemma, my big point that I brought up here is that there—it should be mandatory that students have to go through an orientation. And I’m not the only one in the group that feels this way.” Laura requires her hybrid course students to go through an orientation, which the college does not officially administer or require. She developed it with the help of the IT Coordinator at the college because of her own beliefs and perceptions about student



learning and the responsibilities of instructors. She adds that since she knows it is extra work for students, she does provide an incentive in the form of extra points that can be earned. This makes more work for her in the end, but she believes this is necessary to get students to where they need to be to learn online.

When discussing the workload and time to teach online, Laura remarked that grading seems to be her largest obstacle, since she still ends up hand grading much of her material. Another challenge is in deciphering the type of student you have. Laura feels that in a face-to-face class an instructor has a good handle on where students are, if they are remedial or advanced. In order to help her students learn more and to be a better teacher, Laura went out of her way to develop a discussion board for her classes. It is again, more work for Laura, but her perception is that since she cannot meet them face-to-face she can at least learn something about their learning style and aptitude based off of what they say in their discussion board chats.

Teaching online has been a satisfactory experience for Laura. She finds that she has learned to break things down more quickly and in non-technical language for students to promote understanding. Since she is not a traditionalist and does not lecture, online teaching helps her find other creative outlets to reach her students.

Laura believes that although online teaching and learning is growing at her college, faculty members do not have a shared vision. She cites issues other faculty members have with change, and she attributed this to their age and ability or willingness to adapt.

Part of it is age. Some people, note that being old matters; although it does, I just think because of age, some are not as motivated to go out and try and learn new technology, new innovations. They just feel like they are counting the days for retirement, which is sad. They're good teachers. They're excellent teachers, but

things are changing, and they have to change with the times, and their motivation is not as great as some of us, I guess.

Laura believes that an initiative to “go green” at their college, in which more documents are being placed online and technology use is encouraged, is one way to get more faculty members to buy-in to use of technology for teaching. Laura notes that although she is a part of the Distance Learning Committee, they “take the information they learn and try to utilize it, but it would be nice to make it for the whole college family.” Further, Laura noted that each division has people who buy-in or who are “old school” and will not utilize the technology. She’d like to have more dialogue between colleagues to promote teamwork.

**Amy Lord.** Professor Lord teaches in the Liberal Arts division of her college and has been teaching traditional courses for 18 years and online/hybrid courses a little over 12 years. Her role as a hybrid instructor has since changed to a fully online instructor. She was approached to teach online she believes because she was up for tenure at the time and had some computer experience. She was willing to try and worked with the college to get her courses online.

When we discussed her satisfaction level with teaching online, Amy remarked that she loves face-to-face the best because of student interaction. She expressed her concerns and reservations with students in the virtual world.

Here (online) with the students, they don’t know you. They seem to like- you’re just a number for them. They can actually be mean sometimes, too, when they talk back to you because, you know- and then maybe it’s also the way that they write. It’s different than in the classroom asking a question or, you know, somebody writes back to you and says, this is not fair. But it is in big letters and not really knowing the etiquette and all that. Amy goes on to remark that online teaching is work. So there’s a lot more involved with online teaching than just teaching. You also need to prep them, you know. I have, like, an orientation before I teach them, you know, the etiquette of a course, on how to be successful.

Since she has implemented routines that have been successful, other colleagues have noticed and have come to her for help and for her to show them how her orientation works. Again this is not mandated, but Amy perceives this to be in best practice. For her own best practice, she tries to keep up with new trends, “I learned also from going to workshops. That’s been my goal the last 12 years. I try to get to any workshop or a course on how to teach online.”

Since her college does not mandate any particular training on a regular basis, Amy has joined a Distance Learning Committee. She joined out of frustration with her administration and the feeling that she could make a difference.

The distance learning here is very frustrating because there was no connection. There was no outreach of the administration of getting workshops. I had to do everything out. Then there was a big turnaround about two years ago, and my vice president asked if I would be willing to start up a committee. And ever since then, we are, like slowly putting thing back in. (Amy Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

This committee had been focusing on the standardization of online courses at the college out of perceived need by faculty members.

But the college has been much more open to whatever we, as faculty need. Because we always got the technology, but teaching an online course is not just technology. You know, there’s so much, the educational and pedagogical part, that is actually important, and that we were missing. (Amy Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

The line of dialogue between faculty members and administration is accessible through this committee. The committee is starting to acknowledge the fact that lines blur between teaching a fully online class, a hybrid class, and a face-to-face class.

We are actually discussing what really is an online course? What is a hybrid course? And what really is a face-to-face course, which I never thought we’d be discussing that. But now there’s a difference between face-to-face enhanced and face-to-face not enhanced. And now, you know, we are discussing is online

totally online or is online just teaching online? And can you make your students come and take the test in a testing center, you know? So it's interesting. People have different ideas about that. (Amy Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

When we discussed incentives, time and flexibility came up. Amy enjoys not having to be in her office as much, but did note that the administration disagrees and that she perceives they expect online instructors to be in their offices the same amount of time as their face-to-face instructors.

When discussing the professional development offered by her college to teach online, Amy reflected that up until recently not much was required of online instructors, and instructors made the decision as to whether to teach online or not and seek assistance to do that or not. The college offers a center where faculty members are invited to go for help, and Amy does attend, but noted, "If I go, there might be six or seven people there out of the whole college." She is not sure why this is but finds that slowly the college is changing their requirements for online teaching. In her opinion, the new views of the administration have focused on technology, and to buffer this, an entire day of professional development was granted this school year for faculty members to meet with one another, as well as to experience the views of someone teaching online from outside of the college.

Amy is not very satisfied with the help she has been offered to teach online until very recently. She noted that a closed attitude among faculty members has not helped the college move towards technology adoption.

I have never seen somebody else's online course and I've been teaching here for 12 years. Up to like last semester when somebody opened up their course and showed what they are doing, and I'm like, oh my God, you know, it's like-it was like- it was taboo at the time. You couldn't see somebody else's courses. (Amy Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

When Amy discusses her counterparts, who also teach online courses, she expressed a lack of communication and understanding amongst colleagues. She shared that she is aware faculty members' attendance for online courses may vary. There is not a system in place to see how often faculty report online. Since there are no obvious expectations, faculty members within the same discipline who teach online may have very different standards and rules for their online courses. Two faculty members in the same discipline may have very different information regarding course policies and structure for the online class format. In addition, Amy noted that the college does not mandate regular checks of faculty websites, so faculty members often do not know they are missing information, or overloading their pages. The college administration hopes other faculty members can lend their advice in order to enact change for those who are teaching online.

Amy's outlook on her online students was mixed as well when it comes to rigor and attrition.

I feel like in the summer, the attrition- I mean- students stay a lot more in the course- and I have a better result, I think, because they don't take as many classes. I think during the semester, students take too many classes, and then they add another online, and they're full-time working, and then they realize how much work it is. (Amy Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

As far as having a shared vision of the technology in her college, Amy states that there is a division and wishes for more standardization noting, "I think it would be great to have. I think everybody should have their syllabus on there. Everybody should have their office hours posted." Since Amy easily adapts to change, she embraces any professional development to teach online that comes her way.

**Henry Potts.** Henry Potts has been teaching traditional courses for 14 years, and 6 years online in the Liberal Arts division of his college. His courses are strictly online and hybrid due to the fact that only full time instructors are offered these types of courses to teach in his department, which is small. One member of his department is not comfortable with technology, and so that leaves only three full-time instructors to teach the online and hybrid courses. Professor Potts stated that he specifically was the only one to teach a hybrid section, which he perceived as age related, “because the other people in my department are a little bit older. They’ve been here for years, probably close to retirement.” Henry added, “When I first started doing this in 2006, I was an adjunct hoping- you know, my goal was to get here full-time so they- they got me started with doing some online pieces...” Henry stated the chair of his department was the one who approached him initially.

When I asked about incentives to teach online, Henry added that there was not much of an incentive other than convenience. He can spend more time in his office instead of a classroom. I asked if this brought him a low or high satisfaction rate for teaching online. Henry responded,

But me, personally, and even talking to our department here, we all agree that we end up spending more time hour-wise with online courses than we do live courses. Just the amount of time logging on to computers and grading papers, and if you add it up, we all agree that we probably spend more time there.

When we discussed how often and in what format professional development was given at his college, Henry stated that this year is the first year that he has noticed more of an emphasis on professional development. He does admit that if a faculty member wants a one-on-one session, he or she can go to the department that sets up the shell to get the basic technology training. Training received in the past was more through

dialogue and sharing between colleagues who felt comfortable with a certain aspect of technology.

Professors who have- either really good with technology or found this really works if you do this, you know, just sharing of ideas. And then the college really supports that and allows you to turn it into a professional development class and offer it to the rest of the community.

Henry stated that often non-tenured instructors will present to colleagues so that they can add to their portfolio to get tenured, so this could be another incentive for some faculty members.

When asked about barriers to the adoption of online teaching by faculty members, Henry had a very defined response that indicated issues with academic freedom.

Academic freedom has come up...When you teach, you have academic freedom to bring in to the classroom what you think is relevant. And when you start coming up with- even online, developing shells that everyone's going to use, people start to get scared that they're limiting their academic freedom.

Henry was adamant about his stance on rigor and standardization in regards to the topic of academic freedom online. "I think there should be a basic requirement. You know, I understand the whole academic freedom and being able to do that, but I think there needs to be a minimum, here's what everyone needs to do."

Henry's opinion on the need for standardization continues with his shared opinion on his own satisfaction with teaching hybrid courses in his specific discipline, which can be very hands-on.

All right. I'll be completely honest. I don't like them. Here's the problem with the hybrids. The way we run the hybrids here is they meet once a week for 50 minutes. You can do absolutely nothing in 50 minutes. By the time we get in class – I got one today, by the time we get in there and we just troubleshoot anything that happened, you know, in the past week from the online pieces, go over a few things there, 10-15 minutes have gone by. (Henry Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Other barriers to teaching online for Henry include the trustworthiness of students and rigor of the program.

I have a student now that I'm waiting for the next set – the first three exams he got a 98, 100, and 100. Okay, so maybe he's a really good student but here's the piece – and the nice thing about being online, it gives you all the – when they log on and how long they – that's nice. He spent five minutes on one exam and got a 100 on it. He spent seven minutes on another exam and got a 100. So something's going on. So what we have decided to do, when we see that, we halt them online and we tell them they need to come in and have a meeting with us, and they need to take their next exam in the office and then we move forward from there. (Henry Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Another barrier to success for online teachers involves pedagogy. Henry states,

It's very different every time you do the online stuff. So I think we need to learn not only how to set these things up, but what's the most effective way to engage the students. And I haven't seen too many of those development classes or ideas out there yet. (Henry Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Henry does not believe his college faculty has a shared vision of the online environment. He again cited age as part of the reason,

But you see—as departments are hiring, you're seeing younger people come in, and I think that's going to help. But a shared vision, no, I don't think it's – and it's a break down all the way across the board.

Henry concluded by sharing that he believes there needs to be some basic training across the board, not just on the technology side, but also how to motivate the types of students taking online courses.

**Lisa Stein.** Professor Stein met me in a bustling section of campus, at her request. She has been teaching traditional courses for 18 years full time, 7 years part time, and online courses in the Liberal Arts division of her college for 10 years. Lisa noted that she believes she was approached to teach courses online because she had previously worked for a computer company and had experience as one of their manual writers. She also noted that she was an adjunct at the time, so when her Dean approached her, she felt as



though her computer experience gave her an opportunity to be at the forefront on a new online initiative.

When we discussed incentives to teach online, the only incentive for Lisa was that you can “design a schedule that allows you to work from home a day or two.” When I asked further about professional development to teach online, Lisa noted that two technical advisors supplied the bulk of the training. When these two advisors were assigned another duty, Lisa and a colleague formed a distance learning committee. I asked about the need or driving force behind this formation, and Lisa discussed some personnel changes that impacted the college.

The driving force was that there was – there was some changes being made that where the two – the two people who helped us the most were being asked to diversify their responsibility so they weren't as available to us as they had been in the past. So we thought, well, we could at least help each other. Since then the two people who were so-called diversified have come back. One of them has come back, and so they're – he is now very available to us. But since we formed this committee, and we found that this was like an added help, we stayed with it, and it's really worked out beautifully. (Lisa Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

I asked about Lisa's satisfaction level with teaching online, and she remarked that she was satisfied with the help she had been given stating, in particular, her technical assistance. She noted that teaching online certainly is not any easier than face-to-face.

No question it is more work. I continue to do it because I think that I'm providing a service to a particular- a particular population. For example, I have a number of paraplegics...I have students who-mothers especially, I should say, excuse me, mothers who just had children, and they don't have babysitters, so they can't get out, that type of population. (Lisa Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Some of the challenges Lisa faces in teaching online courses actually fall into student technical difficulties. Some students miss her lectures because they are not using

or do not have the right program. As a result, they may be missing material or the lesson.

On the other hand, Lisa finds a benefit to online instruction.

I found that by having the students send me their essays electronically and my commenting and sending it back to them electronically, there are many advantages. One of which is that they can read my – read – they don't have to deal with my handwriting. The turnover is almost faster because I can do it more quickly surprisingly so – and I find that the students seem to – the student seems to grasp more understanding of the comments I do make. And I can look back at the previous essay when – let's say, they send in their second essay, I can say look at – look at essay number one, we were talking about this in essay one. You've got to take the time to read that and adjust or adapt – you know, transfer whatever you've learned here, and then there's the forms. So as a result, I have a shell for my face-to-face classes. (Lisa Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

When I inquired about the low adoption rate of technology, Lisa touched on the themes of age and comfort level as a barrier.

Well, there are a good number of professors who resist teaching online. They don't – they're not comfortable doing it. I have a feeling they know how much work it is, and maybe that's it. I'm not sure about that. That's just my guess. They resist change, and that's a big change. They weren't necessarily brought up with computers, so they shy away from it. It takes a lot of training. It takes a lot of time. And they prefer to meet their students face-to-face, and I can understand that. I mean, I appreciate that feeling and not everybody has to teach online. (Lisa Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

This comment echoed much of what I have been hearing from other professors: that age and comfort level are perceived to be barriers to teaching online.

Lisa had a positive outlook about the growth of technology at her school and attributed the growth in part to changes in staff.

Oh, I see it growing and I think as we hire new people – you know, as people retire and newer younger people come in who grew up with computers who feel comfortable with them and who want to teach online and they – they can be part of that committee and know that it's wonderful to feel that you have support not only from the technical advisor or advisors, but from your own colleagues. And there is – what else is nice about that is there is a tremendous, tremendous feeling of camaraderie with people who teach online just because we are a small group and we lean on each other. (Lisa Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

**Sarah Brown.** My interview with Sarah brown took place in her office on campus. I found out from Sarah that she teaches in the liberal arts division of her college and teaches courses in the hybrid format. She was present when her college first adopted online technology, as part of a grant. She volunteered since the administration wanted a number of people from across divisions to participate. She received an initial training that covered technology and some pedagogy.

Sort of two-fold training. One of which was the technical part. How do you use the platform that was chosen, upload things, those sorts of things. Then there was also the pedagogy side of things that we talked about as well. And based on that, we developed a number of courses...(Sarah Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

Sarah could not think of any incentives to teach online or hybrid courses at her college. She believes it has more to do simply with faculty interest levels. If faculty are interested and a course is available, then the professional development is given on an as-needed basis. From her own experiences, Sarah remarked that she thought the professional development she received was quite good and offered much to those with varying experience levels.

I mean, it was quite good. I would say that people have different abilities going into the training. Some people are very technically savvy, so the training may have been overkill on how you upload things, and you can do that more quickly. Certainly, the aspect of what should go in and how you create that requires a lot of thought, and that is an ongoing process. So, I would say, the training for uploading things is sufficient. I think that there's many, many tools that are available that are under-used, and so we're actually having on our opening day, which is in about a week. The school has organized the vendors to come in and talk about some of the things that online can do. I think that will be great. But, the technology side; it's fine; it just really depends on where you are coming from. I think what to put and how to put and how to improve is an ongoing conversation. (Sarah Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

I asked Sarah about who was in charge of the professional development activities for instructors who taught online, and she mentioned the campus distance learning

organization brings in outside vendors and is “constantly striving to find things that would be of use for us.” She also mentioned The Teaching Learning Center, which helps faculty development across the board in all areas. Often they solicit faculty for the topics they want to hear or even present to colleagues. Since Sarah started teaching hybrid courses early on, she can recall more dialogue across divisions, which helped with development of her teaching style.

I would say that it’s one of the things that has happened over time...I would say that my interactions with people from other divisions on how or what they are doing is less, unless I am doing some type of personal development...I mean over so many years you have to sort of, reinvent yourself. When I was initially in my training, there were people from across the divisions, so we had a lot of input and a lot of insight as to well, maybe I could get some ideas from someone in psychology who is doing their topic on something in their area. I’d say there’s less of that now. (Sarah Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

One concern shared by Sarah is a reoccurring theme that deals with the pedagogical side of teaching and how instructors can help one another.

I think it is really just the opportunity to think about how best to reach students. We’ve had a number of opportunities to share or cross ideas, and how do you retain students; that’s a constant question. A lot of people sign up for these usually because they think it is easier online, and there are some things that are not as easy about it So the opportunity to share I think is the key thing. You know- what have you learned? How did you keep people? How did you reach out? Those sorts of things...Sometimes are more beneficial than the technology part. (Sarah Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

The amount of time to get a course up and running and the course adjustments that may follow was another area Sarah touched on.

Now that I’ve taught the same course multiple times, it is more tweaking. You know when you first are trying to create something out of absolutely nothing that’s the most work. And then a semester will go by and you will realize this worked and that didn’t work, and I’ll change things. (Sarah Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

**Jane White.** My interview with Jane White took place in an off campus location, suggested by Jane. Jane has taught traditional courses for 22 years, and both online and hybrid courses for 10 years. Initially, Jane wanted to discuss her opposition or barriers to teaching hybrid courses. One barrier she noted was the preparation of her students.

Much to my surprise, found hybrid to be sort of the worst of both instead of the best of both. I had -- now, this was about five or six years ago, and the difference in terms of the students' technical savvy, even in the last five or six years, is really tremendous. So, at this point, it might be better but what I found is students signed up for the hybrid because it was one that had openings, and they didn't have the skills to utilize the online component very comfortably. And so I actually found it not as good an experience as teaching purely online, where those students -- it's sort of like boot camp. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

When I inquired with Jane as to how she ended up teaching online, it sounded as if her position in the department determined who would teach online.

Each department was encouraged to put somebody forward, and I was the new person in the department. It was my first year there. I was also, at the time, by far the youngest person in our department, so they assumed I had computer skills, which was a real error on their part. I tried to disabuse them of that." Jane remarks that she is still a bit uncomfortable with the technology, but that the tech people the college had in the beginning were very helpful to her. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

As we discussed incentives, Jane mentioned that flexibility of time was one incentive, and initially she was given a free laptop and a grant. This turned out to be less of an incentive, and more as a reward since she did not choose to teach the hybrid and online courses.

So I got a free laptop. That's not why I did it. I did it because the department said you have to do it, but that was a nice bonus, because I didn't own a laptop at the time, and that makes it very convenient to stay in touch with your students wherever you are. It also, for me, as a parent, was nice in terms of flexibility because our teaching load is five courses each semester. And with the online courses then, I would only teach three, which meant I could do lunch duty one day a week and do the online stuff at home at night. So it worked very well with our family also. But really it was that each department was asked to put somebody forward. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

As Jane discussed the types of professional development offered, she mentioned a few different models. Initially, due to grant money, faculty members could meet once a month to discuss how they were developing their courses. Faculty members had a binder of information. Jane noted, “to be frank, I didn’t find those general sessions all that helpful.” As time progressed, more one-on-one training was offered through the tech department, which Jane took advantage of.

But the two people that they hired to help full-time, one was supposed to be the director of the technical helpdesk for the students, and the other was the person who was hired to help faculty develop actually the physical components of the course. He was phenomenal. It came from WHYY. And so he came to my office, sat down with me, helped me hands-on put the thing together, and then I could just replicate that process whenever I wanted to add a new assignment, add a new lecture. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

Jane did state that although the dialogue about teaching online has grown, she would still appreciate more of an overview of the different resources out there to make her teaching more interesting.

When we discussed rigor, Jane stated that she holds both faculty and student concerns. In the realm of faculty members, she stated a need for more directives.

The other thing that I really wish they had done is be much more directive about what had to be included, because I feel like the range of quality of the courses is tremendous. We have some faculty who, basically, have no interaction with their students at all. They use packaged materials. The computer grades things for them. The computer has rubrics that spit back different comments to the students. The faculty literally might never have any interaction at all. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

She went on to note with disappointment, “We have some faculty who don’t answer emails. Boom. Done. Whereas, I promise my students every semester, I will get back to you within 24 hours max.” I found that Jane does believe the college is making some progress in moving online faculty instructors forward. Jane also mentioned a

professional development day held recently that was devoted to the topic of technology, which to her signaled some progress and moving forward.

Jane touched more on the professional development she has received, and rates it as below satisfactory. Part of the reason is the relevancy of what is usually shared at these workshops. For example, she notes that just recently the college held mandatory professional development to all faculty members regardless of if they taught on line. On the other hand, she shared that she enjoyed an outside guest speaker who discussed “Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants” as a topical area for all faculty, which was really interesting and helped her reconsider how she best reaches her students.

Although Jane finds some issues with the professional development offered, she does enjoy teaching online. She finds that for the types of students taking her course, they often are more motivated and willing to put in the time. But, Jane does note that she has encountered areas of dissatisfaction with student rigor.

The other thing that’s tough is, because I teach at a community college, and I’m sure you’ve seen this to, I have a wide range of academic preparation. I have some students who are incredibly capable and some students who are really struggling to be able to put thoughts on paper in a way that’s coherent and clear. So, in class, if we’re having a discussion, I can -- if somebody sort of offered something garbled, I can pick out the kernel of that that really works, affirm that person, and kind of repeat it for everybody else. Online, that’s much harder because I don’t like to do a whole lot of discussion boards because I feel like I’m asking the stronger students to spend a lot of time reading stuff that’s not very well done. And I don’t think that’s fair to them, and I think it can be embarrassing for students who don’t have those abilities. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

**Bob Long.** I met with Bob Long at an off campus location. Bob has been teaching traditional courses for 10 years, and online courses for 3 years. He has a range of experience teaching for various other colleges in a part time capacity, but is a full time faculty member at his primary college. He is teaching a mixture of online and hybrid

courses. When I asked Bob how he came to be selected to teach online, he noted that his abilities and capabilities were recognized by the college administration and those in the technology department, who noted that he was more than capable to teach online based on the technology he was already using in his face-to-face courses.

When we began to discuss the incentives to teach courses online and his perceptions, Bob made it clear that there are incentives for him to teach online regarding time and flexibility.

They don't pay more, but when you build your modules, as you know, as you're building your modules, and once you build your modules, the front end load work, like a mutual fund, once to do it, you're just going to go in and refresh the information that's in there. So I like that advantage. I like the extra income, but I also, I am a real strong believer that online education is an incredible tool if you have the right faculty person. (Bob Long, personal communication, Jan. 28, 2012)

Time management is an important piece to online teaching for Bob. He commented often about the perceived duties of the instructor as a large part of online success. Bob shared his perceptions and expectations of online instructors.

First of all, they have to have a great understanding of time management and responsibilities. Like when I teach instructors, I tell them, you need to log on every morning in your pajamas and your coffee before you go to work, if you can throughout your day, and definitely at night. Minimum, two times, three times per day without a doubt. And you have to let them know that you're visible to them, and then again motivation, a psychological twist on it that you always have to be inspiring and positive.

Bob made some admissions that he believes are driving forces in why faculty members adopt online education. For one reason, Bob noted a financial need, a way to make quick cash with less (perceived) effort. Bob shared,

And it's just they don't have the time and they're not self-motivated to learn more other than, I have a Masters Degree; I have an understanding; I can teach; I can make this amount of money. And it's not necessarily -- some of them, they don't want to drive it and steer it and inspire the student. Sometimes it's due to financial



responsibilities. They are looking for money. Some of them are doing a great job as far as doing it because they want to do it, but it's a strange boundary.

Since the inception of his technology practices at his school, Bob has been pleased with the help and training he has received. He shared that extra, personalized attention is often given to faculty members who seek it out and that the IT administrators are more than willing to help. Bob discussed that he has a positive working relationship with the IT department. He knows that the IT professionals will help whenever they can; even if it is only something small in between courses.

When we discussed barriers and supports to teaching online, Bob shared his views that more standardization in the training of faculty members needs to occur. He discussed the need to have the basic understanding of the pedagogy of education and where to go from there. Another barrier to online teaching is related to the students. When asked about his stance, Bob noted that if he could he “would change the rules pertaining to students.” The reasons he offered indicate that students are not prepared or motivated enough to learn online.

I feel that some of the students that are taking online courses, they don't have enough education about understanding the boundaries of online. And I disagree where the student center learning that the professor needs to be flexible to hand feed everybody. I think generally they should come into this knowing how to turn a computer on. They should come into this knowing how to make a Word document to a PDF. They should understand how to open up a PowerPoint, press F5 to make it a presentation. They should have the basic understanding, and that's what they are in the process of working on. (Jane White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

This view is one that was often shared as a point of frustration by faculty members who taught online or hybrid courses.

To compensate for unprepared online students, Bob ends up performing more work in his online courses, often going out of his way to do things his college does not

necessarily require. One example Bob shared involves the economic status of some of his students, which can be barrier to online teaching and learning.

You have to take into consideration some students, and even under the American Disabilities Act, you have to accommodate them with a PDF because some students can't afford Microsoft Office. So they can go to Adobe and download Acrobat Reader for free. You can also do that, as you know, with Microsoft, but it doesn't function properly. So Adobe is just exact. It will always work. So everything, my power points and my Word documents and outlines, everything in my Start Here page, I do Start Here pages; everything is Word converted to PDF for the student, and then it is double casted in Word format, so two files go up for each one. (Bob Long, personal communication, Jan. 28, 2012)

Bob struck me as very intrinsically motivated, and I was not surprised when he told me he was on his college's distance learning committee. Areas of focus, as shared by Bob include dialogue regarding changes to standardize teaching online and peer coaching and/or dialogue.

Faculty instructors started to go in and look at a course overview of each other's class, and then it came down to, you know, this did not meet our expectations. This exceeded our expectations, and there really wasn't a medium. So across the board, they said, this is what we need to do, we have identified this process and now we need to do something about it. So they put together an E- committee, basically, a distance learning committee, to structure this process. (Bob Long, personal communication, Jan. 28, 2012)

When we discussed whether faculty members have a shared vision of online teaching at the college, Bob commented that he believes most of the full time faculty are on board. He hopes they will aid other full time faculty members, adjuncts, and part time instructors in becoming better teachers.

**Bill Hoover.** Bill is a full time faculty member, who has taught traditional courses over 20 years, and has 4 years of online teaching experience. He started out teaching hybrid courses, then moved to fully online. He originally, on his own, began to add components of online instruction into his traditional face-to-face courses. This came

naturally to him, as technology was something he always just appreciated. As he began to add more to his courses, his college began a push to increase online course offerings, and it was an easy choice for him to make.

Therefore, actually the college was encouraging that, but, you know, on my own part, you know, the decision was mostly mine, and, thus, based on the fact that, as I said, I had developed so many online components that, you know, I could easily transfer the course online.

When I mentioned incentives, Bill did state that he felt incentives varied from individual to individual. His perceptions are that some instructors do the upfront work, then do not change their presentations or web pages for some time. He differs in that, “what I do is I constantly try to change my presentations. I constantly try to actually put new questions in. I constantly try to interact with the students.”

Bill expressed concerns with the student population taking online courses, since he perceives this to be an online weakness. Bill is concerned with the preparedness of students taking online courses. The specific barriers Bill mentions are perceived to be the way the college lays (or does not lay out) expectations for faculty teaching online courses and the students registering for them. He spoke of needing a “culture change” at his school in which students and faculty are held more accountable.

A lot of stuff they have to learn on their own. And actually not to have expectation that, -- I just, you know, sign up for the course and I get a grade for it and I'm done. Unfortunately, that, I think, is still there. And that is why I think we have a lot of growing to do for online courses. I think things has to -- you know, have some kind of like -- there should be people who overlook the whole process. (Bill Hoover, personal communication, Feb. 1, 2012)

The theme of a need for standardization in the training to teach online and promote rigor was continued by Bill.

I mean, there should be some kind of standard. I mean, like, for example, if I teach a course online and somebody else teaches the same course online, it's, you

know, obviously is going to be meaningless. If my average grade that I have for my students is C, and the average grade for the other person is all A, it means something is not quite right there. (Bill Hoover, personal communication, Feb. 1, 2012)

When I asked Bill what his thoughts were for a solution to a lack of standardization for online courses, he noted that he wished for more dialogue among his colleagues so that everyone is following the same rules and has the same expectations for their courses and students. He shared that a way to voice concerns and collaboration would be a good way to hear about what is working and not working.

I have suggested to our Dean that, you know, courses should be advertised without a professor's name -- just, this course is being online, and somebody is going to teach it. And of course, the argument was that our president and our college wants to have transparency, and, therefore, they want everything to be transparent. Of course, there is a lot of room for argument there, but I mean, the whole point is that these are kind of things that I would assume that you would expect to see everywhere. (Bill Hoover, personal communication, Feb. 1, 2012)

When we discussed ways in which he was satisfied with teaching online, Bill shared that teaching online actually keeps him more organized, as he is able to keep more of his work in folders on his website. He attributes his comfort level more with his intrinsic beliefs that technology is a very good thing, and so he has kept up on all of the latest trends. He shared that he would enjoy more dialogue with colleagues about teaching online. One issue for him is that the training in his college is not mandated, so numbers of participants are small; it is very informal, and it does not occur very often. He feels that a shared vision of online learning is not present and that faculty members are “pretty much on their own.”

**Ed Fay.** Ed has been teaching traditional courses for 8 years and online in a full time capacity for one and a half years in the liberal arts division of his college. Ed was an outlier in this study, in that the current course he is teaching online is not the college’s

traditional course; it is actually from an outside group located within another college that had partnered with his college. Everything for his course, including the website and textbooks come “packaged” from a publisher also affiliated with his outside provider.

Being that this class is still online, Ed noted that he did have to take time to supplement material and adjust material. One of his largest issues is that many of the links inside the online component were not worthwhile or applicable to students in course. He noted that due to this and other factors, faculty buy-in at his college for this online initiative has been low.

One of the problems with standardization is, you have to go to them with the lowest common denominator to standardize something. So a lack of rigor most of us were finding. It wasn't the course layout or design or the approach to the assignments but rather really the idea of the academic rigor in the courses. Even I, myself, wasn't thrilled with the 101 textbook and its approach, but I could make it work. And when we have our policies, you know, they are separate. (Ed Fay, personal communication, Feb. 7, 2012)

I did inquire about incentives, and Ed told me that really from his own employing college there was no real incentive. Early on, Ed did mention that he had been asked to participate in this new online program by his Dean, and had been already scheduled to teach an online course for his college that term, so making the switch was not a big effort per se. Incentives from the outside source are nominal. He receives a stipend for this extra online course through this outside college and also participates in an out-of-state conference as well.

When I asked about how online teaching and learning training was provided to faculty, Ed commented that he was part of a distance learning committee that was looking into proficiency training for staff. The committee is examining what other colleges are doing to better prepare their instructors. Ed feels this is a need since the

online program is growing at his college. Ed also noted that the college had provided him with some external professional development.

The college came to me the first time, three or four years ago and said, and this is before I was teaching online, we think you should go to this. Okay. It was in Nashville. The college paid for everything. College paid for everything. And then two years I went and -- it was in Orlando; it was in Epcot. It was really fascinating. It is a -- it was a conference on Information Technology. It's big. A lot of attendees. Lots of training and seminars, everything from, you know, the newest trends and clickers, and now they can use their cell phones instead of a clicker, to instructional pedagogy to small table discussion, reaching the students in a rural -- ones of the ones I attended -- rural or poor districts with online instruction. It's a really, really great conference. I learned a lot from that. But the college came to me and said, hey, this is something, you know, we think you'd be a good candidate to go to. There were several of us. I wasn't the only one who went. (Ed Fay, personal communication, Feb. 7, 2012)

Ed went to say that he was only required to briefly present something new he had learned to his colleagues.

When asked about his satisfaction teaching online, Ed shared that he was not very satisfied. He stated a few brief reasons why.

To be completely honest, I'm not thrilled with online instruction. I thrive off of dynamic in the classroom. I feed off that energy, and I enjoy that very, very much. So, I frankly don't find the online as enjoyable and fulfilling in that respect. (Ed Fay, personal communication, Feb. 7, 2012)

The idea of a shared vision was one that Ed feels does exist; however, he feels the college can do more to encourage more.

And it's okay. We need more of this, and we need to do more of this, and we got to hire one of these people. We recognize that and again, we're moving in that direction, trying to provide more and more resources and training for our instructors as well as standards of online courses and requirements of our online instructors. And, again, the college is always very focused on its rigor and standards and hasn't moved on that. So it's melding the two. I think that's it. I can't think of anything else. (Ed Fay, personal communication, Feb. 7, 2012)

**Sue Jacobs.** I met with Sue Jacobs on campus, and learned that she had been teaching traditional courses 5 years, and taught hybrid courses for the past 3 years in the

liberal arts division of her school. In our meeting, Sue asked me to first define hybrid for her; then we both agreed that was the type of course she had been teaching.

She finds that hybrid courses offer a challenge in that she had to “figure out” how to introduce the online component. What made the transition from teaching a traditional, face-to-face course to hybrid is that Sue already had chosen to include online components in her face-to-face course as a supplement.

When I inquired as to how Sue was asked to teach online, she remarked that she was approached by administration and wanted a challenge.

I was teaching speech traditionally for two years, so four semesters, and given the trend of courses to be shifted from traditional to online, I was approached by the Dean and he asked if I would be interested, and I said, sure, I'll take this challenge. So it was just something that I thought I could make work, and that's how it all got started. (Sue Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Sue buys into the idea of her college moving forward in the online world. She noted that not too long ago, her Dean approached her again, to see if she could take this hybrid class “to the next level – entirely online.” Since offering this course will be a new venture for her college, Sue agreed and has been using her own time and resources to develop this hybrid course into a fully online course. “Right now I have to do research. I've started researching what other schools are doing.”

When I inquired about incentives, Sue mentioned that when she moved her traditional course to the hybrid course, there was a monetary incentive. Sue perceives that with so many classes moving to fully online that there will not be an incentive offered.

When I asked Sue about the training she received to teach online, she did remember some training, which included a one-on-one component.

We were offered assistance in setting up and using Blackboard, the interface. There was a -- there still is a tech person here whose primary job is to help

faculty. And he -- I met with him for probably two to three hours, a one-time session, and he walked me through Blackboard, showed me how to upload assignments, how to use the grade book. (Sue Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Sue commented that she did not see much training as of late and remarked that she has perceived there to be consistency issues with both faculty and students teaching or learning online. When I specifically asked about her colleagues, Sue commented that faculty members should receive more training, “for consistency’s sake and assessment issues and accreditation with Middle States, yes, just to be able to continue teaching and have a job, yes.” When asked about specific colleague issues, regarding online, Sue shared the differences she has noticed in helping students log into various faculty webpages.

Just the structures are different. I mean, when you go when in, you're not sure what the home page is going to look like. You're not sure where you're going to find the syllabus or even if it's in there. You don't know if the PowerPoint slides are going to be uploaded as PDF files or if it's going to be a PowerPoint that the student can download and then choose six slides per page to print versus one page per slide, which is a hindrance for students. (Sue Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Sue uses extra time to help her students in her hybrid courses with the technology components.

I mean, many students, they don't know how to do attachments, so I'm not sure that's readily explained in courses. You just assume to some extent that they can do attachments.... And because I see my students in class, that first class, I do a whole Blackboard demo. Whereas if I was doing it 100 percent online, I'd have to rethink that. But, yes, I have videos on there that I've put in different formats because I realized on our library computers; you can't open the MP4, the iPod, because it doesn't have iTunes... So I understand the challenges with the technology, and I've tried to make it easier, a little more seamless in my own class for my students. (Sue Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)



When I inquired about more online training, Sue commented that she would appreciate more dialogue and more workshops. She offered that she was not aware of everyone that teaches online or hybrid, and so they do not collaborate.

Sue commented that teaching hybrid courses takes time and often requires a change in teaching behaviors. She has learned to perform her own research and tries to figure out what other schools do when they teach a course like hers online. Sue regarded the fact again that rigor is one of her largest concerns, “I’m concerned, I kind of mentioned earlier about the students who are take the courses, and if there should be any protocols or –prereqs, and that is whole other debate.”

Finally, Sue tied her perspective on the perceived training as something that has been a great experience, but that faculty members on campus do hold various viewpoints. She noted that although she is someone who does not adapt easily to change, she has been successful with her hybrid courses due to her prior knowledge and experiences, one of which was obtaining a second master’s degree completely online.

**John Robbins.** I met with John Robbins in his office for our interview. Prior to our meeting, John emailed me various links to parts of his online course and discussion chat rooms. So, I entered the meeting knowing a little bit about John’s teaching style. I was surprised to learn he had over 20 years in at his college, had 15 years of experience teaching online courses, and is one of the so-called “pioneers” on online education there. He was an early adopter, who incorporated his own knowledge into his online courses. In fact, John believes that the reason he was hired was due to the fact he had computer knowledge, and he was the only one in the department using a computer.

John recalls the time when he heard the college was moving forward with online classes. Through his own motivation, he developed his first online courses.

And I came back one day, I think it was in 1999 and said, 'Hey, let's do online classes.' It's the thing of the future. Nobody here has heard of them, and they said, sure, do it. So that's when I got my son involved and we just came up with this -- you know, this skeleton, and it worked well. And I had good retention. I have 20 students in the class at the beginning and I had 19 or 20 at the end, and I liked it, you know. And then what happened was, about two years later, maybe 2002, 2003, the college started using Blackboard, and I didn't want to use Blackboard. (John Robbins, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

John stated that the platform his college was using was impersonal and unfriendly. He did not like the graphics and was able to not use the platform until last year when he received a mandate from the administration that he had to use it. He cited the Middle States accreditation process and the need for everyone to be "on the same page" and seemed to express annoyance at this.

John spoke often and openly about the polarization on campus due to age and experience. John shared that he often feels that some professors are set in their ways, and unwilling to change, while other, most often, younger professors seem to jump at any opportunity that involves technology. Overall, he did not appear to be satisfied with the rate of progress with online adoption, and he feels that it causes perhaps more time or effort for other faculty, who need to pick up the "overflow." Again, age and preparation was a factor, and is included in the two interview segments below:

At this school, we have such polarization with age; everybody is either 75 or in their 30s. And I'm in the middle; I'm 52, okay. And the young ones, Ed Fay, that you met last night, that you said, and a guy named John Lore, and one or two others, we want to teach online classes. We still have people in this division who don't know how to use a computer, don't turn them on, don't -- they have them. They don't use e-mail. They're literally 75. They literally are, you know -- they don't even have voice mail...

We have some old guys here that are so old and cranky and cantankerous that they go in the first day and say to the class, you know the schedule where it says,

TBA -- this one guy's name is XX -- he says, that means tough bastard XX. Nobody gets better than a C in my class. And the students say, oh, you know, and they freak out and they run out. And he ends up having three students in each class each semester, and the rest of us have 30 and 35. And they can do nothing about it. And the guy's been around since 1635 (laughs at his own joke). (John Robbins, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

When I asked about his satisfaction rate with teaching online, John was undaunted by the actions or opinions of his counterparts. He thoroughly enjoys online due to the flexibility and convenience of schedule. He is even able to pick up an extra course or two with the extra time, which equals more money as well.

I was very clear in discerning that John claims to never have had any professional development to teach online. All that he knows is due to his own research and knowledge base. He simply noted that his college has not required it. John took me through a “walking” tour of his “stuff” online. He showed me each of the courses and let me snap a few photos. I read his discussion boards, and he showed me some of the links he had posted to help his students listen to lectures and comment on each other's essays. Kevin accounts for a tremendous amount of freedom for faculty as a reason he has up until recently not even had to use a standard web platform. He still has gone “rogue” and admits he now uses the platform, but students are then instructed to follow a link that actually takes them to another site, which John runs/supports.

John's perception of teaching online classes is that they are indeed different for both instructors and students. John shared his overall perceptions:

It's interesting. The politically correct thing to say is that absolutely online classes are the equivalent of on-campus classes. That's total ridiculous nonsense, horseshit, it's ridiculous. At the same time, I work my online students harder in some respects. My 102 classes have a 1000 word essay due each week, you know, with outside sources. My 102s on campus, you know, they have three papers a semester basically. And then they just have to sit and listen to me the rest of the time. So, I really work them hard, but if you want to just do the bare minimum

and get a passing grade, you can do that. If you are a really dedicated student, and you want to commit to it and do well, you can do that, too. But, I guess, you can do that in the classroom as well so...(John Robbins, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Another experience with teaching online courses relates to John's students. He recognizes that although online courses are growing, not all students who take online courses are fully prepared. "I would estimate that one quarter of my students that take online classes don't have an Internet connection. I don't know if they have a computer or not, but they don't have Internet connection."

When I asked about a shared vision among colleagues concerning online education, John shared the "vision" is somewhat apparent, but still developing. "It's fermenting and we're all doing things differently. But I guess in the long run, we're all coming together and we're all kind of, you know -- I think there's a shared vision."

**Dave Grim.** Dave teaches hybrid courses in his college division and has been doing it for 6 years. He was very interested in speaking about what he enjoys with teaching online. We often jumped around on the interview protocol as needed. The first area associated with Dave's satisfaction is the amount of time he saves teaching a hybrid course. He added, "Because we're able to get to a lot more things done much faster since I don't have to stop, pull out a paper quiz, pass it out, take it all back, wait, grade it, hand it back, all of that is done online now." This also leads into the issue of time and flexibility. Dave noted that he often has students with different schedules who are up at 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock at night taking his exams.

When I inquired as to how Dave was selected to teach hybrid or online courses, he told me that he volunteered. He added that there was a lot of work upfront, and the transition was not very easy.

And I was really struggling with how am I going to do this at all? So I really went back and forth on this and then realized what can and cannot be taught, obvious things. And so I just kind of -- it took time.

Since Dave is satisfied with teaching online, I asked him about incentives.

Initially, he mentioned a grant for the college and reduction in course load, which has since passed. Now, Dave sees the benefits as more of a benefit to the student population, which in turn, affects instructors. This was seen as more work.

And so the instructor, the person who's learning how to do this, has to put forth all the effort. And they don't get to run the class until it's all done, so there's no, oh, I'll get to it. No, you have to have it there.

One other incentive is faculty freedom; faculty members can do more and quickly make changes with their courses. In his case, Dave often changes the materials he uses in each class.

Dave discussed the formats in which he has received training to teach online or hybrid courses and shared that the college has a distance learning committee. He recounted learning much about how to teach online in a one-on-one fashion with a technical support person. In turn, Dave has helped fellow colleagues by sharing what he knows.

The most recent professional development offered was very recently on a professional development day. Dave saw this as a way for the college to get more “buy-in” of teaching online courses. This was achieved through a mixture of presentations from fellow colleagues, and some outside sources, all of which Dave found interesting and beneficial. One thing Dave mentioned was that faculty members had their interest piqued and had specific questions about how to do certain things.

One area that Dave found challenging was transferring what was a traditional course to a hybrid course. He noted that time was a part of his frustrations.

Yes, the scheduling is the first hurdle. How am I going to package this so that it works because I think that's the biggest hurdle. Most instructors are saying, 'Well, okay, I've got this 15-week package and 300 page textbook that I'm using, and I don't know where Week 1 ends and Week 2 begins and Week 3, 4, 5, and 6. How do I divide this up so that it's bite-sized and then it fits? And at the end, I'll be in the last chapter.' That's the scary part is how to divide it all up. So if you haven't taught it before, that would be impossible. But after I've taught it a few years, I knew where the cut points were, so that really helped. (Dave Grim, personal communication, Jan. 31, 2012)

Another challenge Dave currently faces is with copyright issues. He wants to keep his information current, but investigating takes time and effort.

We do talk about the copyright issues, and so you've got to be careful about how you're doing things and what you're doing. And for education, usually they give you a lot of leeway but at the same time, there are limits to this so I want to make sure I'm not going to get in trouble. I don't want to do anything that's not right. But at the same time, I'm going to maximize the learning for my students. I don't want to take someone's material. I know that's wrong. But I'm starting to use video content, finding ways to use that, so instead of actually going out and talking about it with the students, they actually can watch the video and ask a question. (Dave Grim, personal communication, Jan. 31, 2012)

Because Dave's class used to be more hands on, he struggles with how to engage students now that it is a hybrid. In recognition of this, Dave admits that teaching online creates work for him, but he is happy to do it.

It's made me think about changing the way I approach things and media that I'm using. You know, the old way of just me standing up talking and them listening, doesn't always play out. So there is still a lot of that happening, but I think that's still going to change. I think there's still a lot of change to come. I'm still working on that one. (Dave Grim, personal communication, Jan. 31, 2012)

I noticed that Dave feels comfortable online and believes teaching hybrid courses to be worthwhile. He is intrinsically motivated and tries to reach as many students as

possible through his own rigor and involvement, which he refers to as “constant learning.”

We really have to keep learning how to expand this. I don't want to just, oh, that's it, done. I spent the last two years getting it ready, it's done. I'm never going to change it again, no. I mean, I want to keep changing it. I want to keep improving it, and come up with new ways of improving it.

Dave then took time to walk me through his hybrid courses. I was able to take photographs of the platform and also read his introduction page. He pointed out to me the specific areas and links he learned to add this semester, and the remainder of our time was my observation of Dave navigating the online component of his course.

In summary, the time spent with these 14 participants yielded an immense amount of candid experiences and perceptions. From each interview, common themes emerged and were further developed as subsets that provided a snapshot into the experience community college faculty members' report regarding their professional development to teach online courses. In the following section, those identifying themes and subsets are formally presented and analyzed qualitatively to further reduce themes to a more round and robust view of participants.

### **Emerging Themes**

Qualitative data collection and subsequent analysis helped to identify five distinct themes, and varying sub-themes that captured the perceptions and experiences in regards to the professional development of community college online/hybrid instructors.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews, document collection, and researcher notes and observations revealed five emerging themes common to participants when they spoke of their perceptions and experiences related to the training to teach online or hybrid courses. The five themes are: 1) The types of professional development to teach online

varied; 2) Perceived obstacles with the preparation for online/hybrid teaching; 3) Incentives for learning to teach online/hybrid courses; 4) Online teaching requires pedagogical knowledge and understanding; 5) Wants and needs for teaching online. The following pages further explain each emerging theme and area supported by actual participant responses.

**Theme 1: The professional development given to participants varied in terms of delivery mode.** Participants shared delivery of professional development was sometimes on a one-on-one basis without any specific set goal. Other times, the training was prearranged in a group setting, on a specified professional development day. A third informal aspect of professional development was through peer-to-peer interaction, where some instructors in my study opted to seek out help from those in their department, or learned more by helping other instructors new to online teaching.

Most of the context for the one-on-one training involved the participant taking on the teaching of an online course, seeking out the IT professional on campus, and planning a time to sit down. In one college, it was a mandatory session that virtually “unlocked” the access to the website shell in order to add material. On the other campus, the sit-down was not required, but recommended. Most participants expressed that the types of training received most often were on their own time, with an individual from the college IT department who focused on getting them the technology training they desired.

A number of participants expressed a belief that more time devoted by the college in the form of professional development days or seminars in order to dialogue with colleagues already teaching online courses would be a helpful way to learn more of the technological aspects of teaching online, as well as gaining more pedagogical strategies



to reach online learners. To further this, the idea of committees of institutional support often came up as ways participants wished to learn more about teaching online.

*Training was one-on-one.* Of the 14 participants, five deeply discussed their one-on-one training. The first area to be discussed was the idea of colleague support, where a participant in the study openly admitted to turnkey training colleagues who were new and were seeking his help.

I meet with them. Initially I talk with them about, you know, what they want to do, what their goals are. And then we set up a little schedule where they need to -- they, you know, get all their materials together, and then what I do is I create a development shell. And then, I help them with the -- with the technology in terms of, you know, how do I convert this document? How do I put it in the shell? But we spend a little bit of time talking about the architecture of it and how they need to get everything together prior to actually putting it into the shell. (S. Jones, personal communication, Feb. 16, 2012)

Some participants discussed the fact that their college offered training on an as-needed basis, and at times, faculty members would need to seek out training on their own, or turn to colleagues for guidance.

And I sat with the tech support. They set the shell up for me. They actually gave me suggestions on how to set it up because of how they knew it worked, and then I went home and put in whatever I wanted to put in. I mean, there was no do this, do that. So there's very little instruction there, which is a little concerning for me. (H. Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Successful support for online teaching is dependent on the ability of the colleges to offer both personalized as well as broad-based ways to engage and support faculty who are teaching online courses. The willingness of institutions to invest in technical support and equipment is necessary to implement successful online programs (Magnussen, 2008).

We were offered assistance in setting up and using Blackboard, the interface. There was a -- there still is a tech person here who's primary job is to help faculty. And he -- I met with him for probably two to three hours, a one-time session, and he walked me through Blackboard, showed me how to upload assignments, how to use the grade book. (S. Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

But the two people that they hired to help full-time, one was supposed to be the director of the technical helpdesk for the students, and the other was the person who was hired to help faculty develop actually the physical components of the course. He was phenomenal. And so he came to my office, sat down with me, helped me hands-on put the thing together and then I could just replicate that process whenever I wanted to add a new assignment, add a new lecture. (J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

We have a gentleman on campus so I sort of got one-on-one instruction from him. I knew what I wanted to do and, you know, basically laid it out. I laid it out on hardcopy and said, this is what I need to do and I know that, you know, we have access to certain things -- at that time we had access to certain things for students to reach out online for, but he was pretty much the guru to set up a Blackboard. (L. Lane, Feb. 15, 2012)

The theme of one-on-one training as a commonality among some faculty members provided insight into the characteristics of faculty members as adult learners who utilized initiatives to seek out ways to improve their online teaching experience. Faculty members critically reflected and shared that the training they received in the one-on-one context was beneficial since faculty could choose the time for the training, as well as gain assistance in any specific area in which they are concerned.

The positive response from faculty members in regards to one-on-one time for training allowed me to believe that one-on-one training should be a dedicated part of the training of any faculty members who are going to teach online. Faculty members as adult learners are able to focus on areas they need help with or are interested in learning about in order to become proficient at teaching online and reaching those enrolled in their courses.

***Training was offered in a group setting.*** One of the community colleges with participants in the study seemed to offer more training in a group setting, such as in-service days, or through a committee of instructors from the college who had taken an interest in designing professional development for online instructors. Of my study

participants, 36% percent noted that each respective community college had a small group of faculty members dedicated to the growth of online teaching and learning. The participants shared that faculty members who were currently teaching online would utilize their time to work on curriculum and training initiatives for the college implementation of online courses. One college had a group that was growing, and the other college seemed to be in a struggle to gain more support for the growth of technology-based initiatives on campus.

And I think -- I think the college is making progress. One of the things that I brought you is we, each January, have a professional development day. In the fall, we always have a professional day and it's sort of -- you know, what's new at the school? Welcome back, etc. etc. But this Fall, this January, it actually was developed around the idea of online teaching. (J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

We actually have a distance learning organization on campus, and so they are constantly striving to find things that would be of use for us. (S. Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

...I think as we hire new people -- you know, as people retire and newer younger people come in who grew up with computers who feel comfortable with them and who want to teach online and they -- they can be part of that Committee and know that it's wonderful to feel that you have support not only from the technical advisor or advisors but from your own colleagues. And there is -- what else is nice about that is there is a tremendous, tremendous feeling of camaraderie with people who teach online... (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Those who received professional development in a group setting, or are part of their college committee to help develop and organize ways to provide professional development to online teachers, suggested that more was needed from the college to prepare online teachers. There was a perceived need for a more formalized approach to how instructors learned to teach online. Faculty members in this sub-group shared that they were encouraged by the college to work together to develop ways to help instructors

meet increased numbers of students taking online courses, student needs, and consistency when teaching an online course.

The faculty members who participated in the study most often shared some satisfaction with the way their respective colleges had offered training to teach online. Most instructors seem to value the training they received regardless of how it was offered. Some faculty members did feel that more professional development was needed so that more faculty members would see the value of teaching online. The differences between the two groups were that those who received the training in a group setting often felt many colleagues were disconnected, and that the value of teaching online had been diminished by the way training was quickly covered in a group setting. The one-on-one training seemed to provide more value to the instructors because of the emphasis on the adult learner. Often there were not restraints on what could or had to be offered as training. Many of the faculty members reported that some aspect of training for which they requested assistance in their individualized training impacted their instructional delivery.

**Theme 2: Perceived obstacles with preparation to teach online courses.** Many participants shared perceived obstacles they experienced with the preparation to teach online courses. The areas discussed by participants included the increased workload due to growth of online courses both in number of online courses offered and numbers of students attending virtual courses, lack of standardization, which affects the quality of courses, and the need for more professional development to better prepare instructors all were discussed. The limitations shared by faculty members did not stop participants from teaching online or participating in the training offered to teach online, but instead caused

frustration or questioning of current practices. This is consistent with the research literature read in conjunction with this study. Faculty members' experiences with professional development at their employing institutions can influence their desire to participate in future college mandates. The perceived lack of technical support and training is a prime reason faculty elect not to engage in technology initiatives (Olcott & Wright, 1995, as cited by McLean, 2005).

Within my research, I noted that faculty members from both colleges discussed an increase in student body online population, which then produced a need for more course offerings and competent online instructors. Faculty members expressed concerns regarding the training and support for faculty members who teach online as their numbers grow. McLean (2005) posits, "regardless of how innovative the faculty may be, and regardless of what concerns they bring, all faculty development must begin with and end with emphasis upon the enhancement of teaching effectiveness" (p. 2). Faculty members also cited a number of ways in which they felt technology training was not growing or becoming more helpful or pertinent to their teaching.

*Students who are unprepared to take online courses add to the preparation time needed by instructors to prepare to teach an online course.* Study participants shared how they attained competency through their college to teach online, but no participants shared any professional development related to the pedagogy of teaching online. Instructors found themselves coming up with ways to help online students in their courses navigate and learn. This takes time and upfront preparation and planning.

Rigor was also a recurring part of our discussions of the online experience. Faculty members noted that their professional development often did not discuss how to

increase the learning from the student body population in an online environment. Faculty members shared they did not know ways in which to check for understanding, or how to offer additional help, if needed, to online students. Faculty members often dealt with a lack of professional development in this area by way of a system of trial and error, in which as each semester would change, they too, would then make changes to online courses, including syllabus, expectations, and rate of assignments, based on prior semesters.

Most often, study participants associated a negative connotation with rigor in terms of colleagues and students in online courses. Both negative areas were often attributed to the college administration as not following through with the type of professional development or checking in that is needed with online courses in order to sustain the online environment. After looking at the data from study participants, I found that 50% of study participants discussed the impact on students when rigor or faculty expectations for online teaching and learning were absent. While some faculty members included extra ways to help their students, some expressed the belief that the ultimate responsibility for the learning in an online course falls on the shoulders of the students.

Instructors as well as administrators have expressed a concern that academic dishonesty rises in online courses. The issues of self-discipline and time-management are frequently discussed as barriers in the online teaching and learning environment (Gayton, 2009). Participants in this research study shared similar experiences and perceptions.

The problem is – that we run into it at a lot of our meetings is setting up the exams in a way that keeps them as honest as you can. You know, we say, you're on your own. You're not supposed to use your book or your notes, but obviously we can't monitor that. So – for me, I make 25 questions and I give them 20 minutes to do it, so it's really impossible to look up every question in the

textbook. So that's one way to do it but, you know, you don't know who's taking the exams – (H. Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

The testing – the other challenge that I really don't like with developing online courses, it's just around testing. So with the hybrids, my preference is to test in person partly for security reasons, not security reasons, but people saying that some other people are logging in, that sort of thing. So that I know if my students are there, that they are there taking the test. And I get feedback watching them. Like if everyone is stuck on page three, then that's information for me (S. Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

Students not prepared for the online environment can affect the instructor and other students in a negative way (Fink, 2002; Levy, 2003). Instructors in my research shared that they have spent added time finding ways to deal with unprepared students. For example, instructors did not indicate that any of the professional development to teach online courses addressed areas of academic honesty or rigor in courses. Participants shared the perception that online instructors need to do more to help enable students, when their beliefs are that students should be prepared more to take online courses.

Some study participants noted that students were not ready for online courses and lacked the technology, the technological skills needed to be successful in an online course, or the fortitude that comes with added responsibilities and time management required in taking an online course. The notion that the college should set prerequisite technological training to take online courses was raised as an issue as well in a few of my conversations with participants.

I would say -- I would estimate that one quarter of my students that take online classes don't have an Internet connection. I don't know they have a computer or not, but they don't have Internet connection. (J. Robbins, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Because now, we're talking about undergraduates; were talking about 18, 19-year-olds, not professionals who have been out for a while and understand how to juggle all these pieces and parts...from their perspective, and they think, oh, well, I can just log on once a week. They have no idea that it's actually harder. It really

is, because you have to wade through all of that material on your own instead of being in a group setting to digest it. You aren't learning from your peers in the same way. You aren't getting the same immediate feedback from me. I mean, you get feedback within 24 hours but it's not quite the same. So I think it's actually harder, and I'm impressed with the students who take the online classes. I will say, I think, somehow the quality must have improved, and I think the student expectations has improved over the last decade also, because when we first started teaching the online classes, the attrition rate for most of the courses was tremendously high. (J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

...they may be missing the previously recorded voice lectures and not letting me know that they are missing it and as a result, they may be missing the lesson. (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

I'm concerned, I kind of mentioned earlier about the students who take online courses, and if there should be any protocols or -- if these courses should be open to any type of student or if it should be more --prereqs... (S. Jacobs, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

The need for a more cohesive college-wide approach to standardization for teaching and learning online ultimately emerged as a recurring concern..

*College policies and institutional vision can affect how much or how little professional development is given.* Thirty-six percent of study participants expressed frustration with the top-down mandates for teaching online courses. Participants discussed accreditation compliance and administrative expectations as obstacles to preparing for and teaching online. Participants shared perceptions that reflected a sense of not being validated by their administration. This relates to other similar points expressed in the research literature read in conjunction with this study. Faculty and student perceptions of online instruction have been well-documented (Alexander, Zhao, Perreault, & Waldman, 2003; Gaytan, 2004), but little has been written about perceptions held by deans, vice presidents for academic affairs, and those in charge of procuring information in regards to online teaching and learning (McCombs & Vakili, 2005). This



is problematic, as instructors question the validity of the online programs in their employing institutions:

The conflict between academic administrator's rhetoric and actual faculty practices is derived from the institutional contexts that guide colleges' online education practices. While colleges have embraced online education to respond to pressures from the external environment, the adoption of online instruction has been guided by a vision that is based upon unsubstantiated beliefs and assumptions and has taken the status of myth. (Gaytan, 2009, p. 67)

Similar ideas resonated with some participants in my study.

What I don't understand is this. We do what Middle States tells us to do, obviously, and we have other organizations that, you know, we belong to and, you know -- but it seems like some of the people in the college, the president and XX and some other people, they want to be affiliated with all these other organizations as well. And each one of them has its own set of guidelines and its own set of criteria they have to follow... You know, so you've got 12 different organizations that have 12 sets of criteria and you have to meet them all. That just takes away flexibility – (J. Robbins, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2012)

Gaytan (2009) remarks faculty have been left behind in professional development growth. He posited this in his study on the perceptions of deans, vice presidents, and academic coordinators' perceptions regarding online instruction. Gaytan shared that while online education coordinators and faculty in his study were thinking about ways to improve the quality of online education, academic administrators had other priorities such as being able to remain competitive (p. 69). This dichotomy between improving quality and being financially competitive is echoed in the sentiments of some participants in this research study, who could feel the push towards online teaching at their colleges.

So administration, wants money and says, "Oh, you've got to open up another one. You go open up another one." And I fought that for a long time, and now ultimately, you know, like colleges are in trouble with, you know, with enrollments and, you know, enrollments have gone down in the last couple of semesters, so I sort of give in, and so now we have like six XX classes online. (A. Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

We do look at necessity. And because the XX Program has grown exponentially, we really need a -- we just really need -- we really need a lot of people to teach both face-to-face courses and online. So, to find those people, it's challenging to have to find someone that has talent. (B. Stine, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

This comes back from the college -- from the top down, you know, saying we need to do more of this because, again, it's what the students want. They want more of this. (E. Fay, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

The sentiments shared by faculty members in this study were not overwhelmingly negative; many noted college policies that affected the amount of kinds of professional development as being adequate, and just the accepted way things were. None of the faculty members in the study shared that a lack of support from their college in terms of professional development prevented them from seeking out professional development to teach online or to continue teaching online. These were recognized by faculty members as hindrances that could be addressed if college administrations had a viable and cohesive policy of institutional support for online instruction and more ways to engage staff members who teach online.

**Theme 3: Perceptions of incentives to gain the professional development to teach online.** Many participants also shared their perceptions of incentives to gain the professional development to teach online or their willingness to teach online courses. The willingness of faculty members to “buy in” and embrace online learning is a well-documented area of the research for professional development to teach online. Clay (1999) found that there were a number of factors that helped faculty agree to online education. These included: the ability to reach remote students, the challenge of teaching in a new way; the opportunity to work with motivated students; release time or financial gains; opportunities for research; intrinsic motivation to use technology; opportunity for

recognition; opportunities for more training; reduced travel; increased course quality; and time flexibility.

Faculty members in my research study embraced online teaching, and seemed to focus more on the rewards than shortcomings of learning to teach online and actually teaching an online course. The extrinsic motivators, such as release time and stipend were mentioned by some in my research interviews. In addition, participants shared a prior comfort level with technology, which enabled them to move forward and learn any new technology to teach online. Moving forward to teach online was not a huge leap as expressed in the sentiments of participants, as many participants shared their own personal motivation to teach online having stemmed from their own views and experiences with technology.

In my research, I found that 64% of participants mentioned flexibility as the overarching reason for teaching online. Forty-three percent of participants touched on convenience as well. Collegiality and diversity attained from the professional development experience by participants at each college were also emerging sub-themes, 21% and 29% respectively, and showed that participants had various reasons for moving forward with the training to teach online.

*Teaching online offers flexibility.* During the course of my discussion with participants, time and flexibility presented themselves as incentives for those teaching online. Sixty-four percent of faculty members interviewed during my study most often cited time and flexibility as the most appreciated or valuable incentive. Although not offered by college officials as an incentive, it was clear faculty members intrinsically believed this.

For me, the best incentive is that you get to teach the class that -- you don't have to be here certain time. It's asynchronous, so you get to -- I get to interact with students at night, on weekends. (S. Jones, personal communication, Feb. 16, 2012)

Convenience to probably spend more time here in the office, you know, not have to go in and out of the classroom. (H. Potts, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

I like that I have -- that I can do this at night, that I can do it on the weekends that I don't have to be physically in my office. It's really -- it's really convenient. And, like, the other professor still has young children so she likes the fact that she can do this --you know, when her daughter gets off the bus, she can be on her computer working, doesn't have to be here. (A. Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

The only incentive is that you can design a schedule that's -- that allows you to, you know, work from home a day or two. I would say that's the incentive, if there's any. (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

An important aspect of this study was to examine the faculty members' perceptions of the professional development received to teach online. The data from this study revealed that flexibility provided more than the benefit of teaching from the comforts of home. Quite often, the preparation, planning, and implementation times were under more control by the participants. As a whole, participants shared that being able to complete training on their own time, and on a flexible time schedule, allowed them to learn at their own pace and become more comfortable with the technology. It makes sense that future professional development initiatives should have components that allow for flexibility for participants to choose phases of development according to their own needs, time, and own stage or comfort level of learning.

***Learning to teach online offers expanded opportunities for collegiality and collaboration.*** All of the participants seemed eager to share their knowledge with others. Many commented on the various technology committees they were on, or provided

examples where they helped colleagues or received help from colleagues. Faculty members shared that learning to teach online changed the way they interacted with colleagues and their students. Participants shared that they have developed new relationships with staff members and colleagues as a form of institutional support. One college has created a group of faculty members who use their online teaching and learning to help facilitate more professional development programs. Most faculty members did not share any specific institutionalized opportunities presented to them that fostered relationships with colleagues who taught online. Rather, these faculty members seem to create their own professional support and push for collegiality and shared ways in which they have reached out to others for help and, in turn, have become helpers or mentors to colleagues new to teaching online.

I'm very open about approaching somebody and saying, I have no idea what I'm doing. How'd you handle this problem or this situation? And I openly engage all of them on it, so they by now, I think, feel comfortable doing so with me. (E. Fay, personal communication, Feb. 7, 2012)

I learned that from a colleague who teaches online in History. He showed me his welcome letter. And we laughed because I've added to it every semester. So my welcome letter is now 3 1/2 pages long, but since I want them to have all that information...(J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

I think that people have shared -- professors have shared a ton of information with other people. And even someone who is new to online education, they're not afraid to ask another professor for assistance in learning something or how to -- how to set up something or maybe what's the best practice or what's worked for them or not worked for them. (B. Stine, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

There is a tremendous, tremendous feeling of camaraderie with people who teach online just because we are a small group and we lean on each other. (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Participants who shared their experiences working with colleagues as they planned or learned new technologies valued professional collaboration. Foulger,

Williams, and Wetzel (2008) put forward that as opportunities expand for more individualized training as a whole- it is clear from the shared views of participants that more emphasis on group work which creates collaboration and collegiality for instructors, “there are sound educational advantages in group learning that mark this type of professional development as superior. Groups can become a powerful way of encouraging individuals to feats they could never manage on their own” (as cited in Rogers, 2001, p. 54). Small, self-directed groups have been known to provide (a) a more supportive environment, (b) the creation of challenges unavailable in isolated learning situations, (c) the construction of a more complex cognitive structures due to the due to the representation of a variety of experiences, and (d) a dynamic force that can lead to the creation of a community of practice as it draws its members in (as cited in Rogers, 2002).

*Teaching online diversifies teaching experiences.* Something 29% of the participants touched on was the ability to teach online in varied ways they normally would use not in a face-to-face setting, and this was seen as an added benefit. Many participants also appreciated the diverse populations reached via online learning, and the diversity of learning taking place for both teacher and student.

A number of researchers were cited in the work of Clay (1999) as having shown that once distance learning (also called online learning) staff development programs were put into place, faculty members felt more confident and hopeful of the experiences in teaching and learning ahead of them. Among the work cited in Clay’s study was the intellectual challenge and the opportunity to develop new ideas (Betts, 1998). This is reflected in Stein’s comments that follow.

In addition to the fact that I like the diversity. I like the diversity of the face-to-face, and even though online is more work, especially because you have to deal with the technical issues as well, I like diversity. That's why – even when I teach, I have at least four different courses... (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Another incentive that faculty members discussed was the opportunity to reach remote students or nontraditional students. The participants were pleased to see that teaching online afforded an opportunity for them to connect with and teach motivated students.

So people that might be, you know, afraid to go into a college setting or a classroom setting at an institution of higher learning, well, they feel very comfortable in their home or at a library where they can be themselves. And I just think that it just brings in a whole bunch of new people out there that otherwise wouldn't be able to subject themselves to higher education. (B. Stine, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

Faculty in this study were also concerned about their student populations. They recognized that teaching online affords new opportunities to reach a broader range of students outside the traditional classroom. Faculty members felt more valuable when they could reach a varied student population due to technology.

The two populations to whom I teach, for whom I think it's really a great thing and that's the reason I continue to do it, is women who have just had babies. I have a lot of amazing mothers in my classes. And I just can't imagine, because after each of our two sons, I was brain dead for a while, and these people are doing Philosophy. (J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

In discussing pacing and course management decisions, instructors used their prior experiences as reference points in order to rethink or redesign the way a face-to-face course is taught in an online format. These technological innovations were not addressed by each college directly; rather, faculty members took responsibility in recognizing this was a need to be addressed when teaching online.

I had to rethink how to have students have as close to a classroom-based experience as I can through writing different responses and trying to figure out how to be fair in terms of understanding how much of the material they're going to master to what point, in what way, without the benefit of as much back and forth and trying to be fair to both groups, right. (J. White, personal communication, Jan. 25, 2012)

Finally, faculty members shared that the benefit of an online class often extends not only to the instructor, but to the students enrolled in the course. The ability and satisfaction which comes with making a socially-constructed environment through online learning opens doors to students that may not otherwise feel comfortable in the traditional college classroom environment.

And the cool thing about online education is, as soon as you cross over those borders, you have people that are engaging that otherwise may not have ever engaged before. So people that might be, you know, afraid to go into a college setting or a classroom setting at an institution of higher learning, well, they feel very comfortable in their home or at a library where they can be themselves. (B. Stine, personal communication, Feb. 14, 2012)

The professional development shared with faculty members who are going to teach online fulfilled the technological requirements, but not necessarily, the pedagogical changes associated with moving to an online course. In the aforementioned theme of incentives to teach online, it was apparent that the incentives of time flexibility, academic freedom, and diversity of courses and students outweighed the negatives associated with a lack of training devoted to the human-side of teaching online.

**Theme 4: Online teaching requires pedagogical knowledge and understanding that is unique to the online environment.** Many participants agreed that teaching online involves strong subsets of skills when it comes to communication. Part of this draws on the fact that many participants expressed a need to gain more knowledge of the pedagogy of teaching an online student body. Some instructors discussed that they



were more of a facilitator in their online courses, and that students who took online courses needed to be more motivated and responsible. Instructors in my study demonstrated that their overall concerns were related to the struggle to deliver sufficient content to a myriad of online learners in different stages of development. Often, instructors acknowledged that while their hands-on training to get the online courses up and running was helpful, they were not properly prepared to deal with the changes to teaching strategies and the skill levels of students.

*Moving from teaching a face-to-face course to an online course requires additional planning and use of strategies.* Instructors indicated that teaching strategies often had to be readjusted in order to teach online. Many instructors suggested that they tried to teach their new online course in the same way as their face-to-face course and struggled. Since professional development was not mentioned in this respect at either institution, it became apparent that instructors were mostly competent in the technology side of online teaching, rather than the innovation of an online course environment. As Wilson and Stacey (2003) posit, the online teacher needs to understand not only the technical platform being used to support online teaching but also the design skills necessary to avoid the ‘dumping’ of content used in classroom-based contexts into the online environment. The comments of faculty members in my study show that the strategies offered in terms of professional development often related more to the technical side, not the pedagogical side or content-related specifics.

In the following quotations, participants share examples of ways they made teaching online easier. Most often, it was through constant learning – from the perspective of the instructor, as well as the student. It appears faculty members were

becoming innovators with the technology they already knew in order to maintain their classes. Faculty members did not comment on receiving support directly from their respective colleges in order to transition themselves or students to online learning.

Two semesters ago, I decided to make it mandatory for my completely online students to go through the orientation. It's a great orientation. It's so easy to do and understand. (L. Lane, personal communication, Feb. 15, 2012)

One of Lane's teaching strategies was the requirement of her students to complete a series of basic exercises online once they entered her class. This allowed her to recognize the technological levels of her students and to address common issues more quickly.

One area instructors shared as a focus was their altered role once they began to teach online. Lord is learning that the pedagogy of teaching online and of teaching face-to-face require some separate and some common learning strategies. You cannot use a one size fits all model if you want to be an effective online instructor.

I don't know if it has made me a better teacher, but the fact knowing that I have somebody that is really not seeing me live, and you know, how can I present it the best way and certain things that I might've created for my online and now use in the classroom, too. You know, maybe a PowerPoint that I would not have made for my in-class that I made for my online class now I use it in my in-class, too. Yeah, I think because you're frustrated because it's such a new technology and you want to make it the best. And I want students to succeed. I really don't want them to fail. (A. Lord, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

According to Dykman and Davis (2008), detailed organization and planning is the first step in teaching online. Responses from participants in the study, such as the following, contained similar ideas.

So part of it was a learning curve for me how to not do all these little assignments, instead add meaningful assignments and less of them. (S. Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

Instructors interviewed in my study often included ways they have adapted in order to become better online teachers. The literature reflects that quality online courses adapt to student needs, provide meaningful examples, motivate students, and consist of instructors who express concern for student learning (Young, 2006).

I found that by having the students send me their essays electronically and my commenting and sending it back to them electronically, there are many advantages. One of which is that they can read my – read – they don't have to deal with my handwriting. The turnover is almost faster because I can do it more quickly surprisingly so – and I find that the students seems to – the student seems to grasp more understanding of the comments I do make. And I can look back at the previous essay when – let's say, they send in their second essay, I can say look at – look at essay number one, we were talking about this in essay one. You've got to take the time to read that and adjust or adapt – you know, transfer whatever you've learned here and then there's the forms. (L. Stein, personal communication, Feb. 20, 2012)

Finally, faculty should consistently evaluate the effectiveness of their online courses (Dykman & Davis, 2008, as cited in Fish & Wickersham, 2009). Participants were cognizant of the fact that as online instructors they need to evolve with the technology and technological demands on the student body population. This seemed to become an intrinsic focus of faculty members who made a conscientious effort not to become repetitive or ineffective when teaching online.

Constant learning. We really have to keep learning how to expand this. I don't want to just, oh, that's it, done. I spent the last two years getting it ready, it's done. I'm never going to change it again, no. I mean, I want to keep changing it. I want to keep improving it, and come up with new ways of improving it. (D. Grim, personal communication, Jan. 31, 2012)

Faculty members should not carry the burden of making large pedagogical shifts in teaching and learning alone when teaching online courses. Although many of the experiences shared in the previous quotes underlie the effort faculty in my study made to enhance their teaching and the experiences of students in online courses, the implication

is that much more can be done. The participants shared a need for a human side to teaching online students – not just a review of the technology needed to start an online course. Faculty members also shared a desire to work together more often and a shift towards a more standardized way of learning to teach online.

**Theme 5: Needs and desires of community college faculty members to better prepare to teach online.** Faculty members who teach online or hybrid courses were all given training – either one-on-one or in groups over time. Still, the call for continuous training and education came forth in the emerging themes. Some of the participant comments reflect on the need for ongoing training, particularly in the area of standardization - adapting courses and expectations so that across the board, faculty and students are utilizing similar requirements. Also, a desire for more collaboration and information sharing was discussed. Finally, participants in this study suggested institutional support for faculty involvement as a need. Many of the faculty members I spoke with were comfortable with technology, and had become innovators and early adopters. Time where these knowledgeable faculty members can display what they are doing in their online courses may open up more traditional classroom faculty members to online teaching.

We have development days. Maybe one of the development days would be good to have us get up and say how we utilize, you know, in our areas... (L. Lane, personal communication, Feb. 15, 2012)

The desire to discuss pedagogical best practices and ways to technologically support these initiatives might be supported by the college administrators and staff. This could not only apply to online courses, but also as a requirement to all instructors to stay current and evolving with their courses.

There should be an initiative for everyone to be pushing to update everything. If we are still teaching stuff the way it was taught 20 years ago, there's something really wrong. (D. Grim, personal communication, Jan. 31, 2012)

The call for more dialogue and awareness among the community of online teachers was another area faculty members suggested as a need. The idea of mentorship and regular peer discussion seemed like wise choices in order to have faculty comfortable with technology reach out and continue to develop.

So I think that once you are established and have your platform, it is more talking to people, what has worked for you? What has not worked? (S. Brown, personal communication, Jan. 10, 2012)

Finally, community college faculty members who teach online clearly want to develop their skills. "I embrace any professional development I can get" (A. Lord). As Maxwell and Kazlauskas (1992) so eloquently posit, "We interpret recent research to suggest that community college faculty will respond most to development programs that address teachers' thirst to be experts, with specific instructional skills, in specialized, highly individualized areas of knowledge ground in their disciplines" (p. 356).

The participants in this study perceived their professional training to teach online as adequate in the areas of technological construction and delivery. Most faculty members had already felt comfortable with technology before they moved to online teaching, so the transition was facilitated. The content and pedagogical focus for online teaching was not present in the training. Faculty members shared that they would prefer more training, which includes time to meet and dialogue with colleagues in a supportive college environment, more rigor in online courses, and a call to recognize students' issues and needs for online training.

## **Summary of Findings**

In this chapter, I presented the specific perceptions of experiences of faculty members who teach online in two parts. The first portion is devoted to the participants' online teaching experiences and perspectives on the preparation to teach online. The second examined themes, which emerged across participants' experiences. This chapter presented a portrait of participants in this study who showed themselves to be comfortable with technology, and the majority of participants continued to teach online even though their institutions seemed to focus more on the technology and delivery of an online course, rather than the social or human and pedagogical aspects associated with teaching online. Participants shared difficulties associated with the training received to teach online, and they discussed ways in which they felt they were overcoming some of these difficulties to make a difference. Finally, the overarching goal of gaining perspectives on professional development was achieved through the accounts provided by faculty members on the types and focus of training.

**Research Question One.** What are community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses?

The findings for Research Question One addressed community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses. Participants' perceptions allowed me to understand that complacency is something many of the study participants were experiencing. I attributed this to acceptance of the lack of ongoing, structured professional development at their respective colleges. Participants often understood that they were responsible if they wanted more or

varied professional development experiences, and utilized ways to achieve this added state of learning through distance learning committees and mentoring.

The participants in this study indicated the following characteristics of their professional development for teaching online and hybrid courses:

1. Perceived to be focused on individual participants, not a group. This is important due to the participants' request for more large or whole group PD days;
2. Perceived technological focus – pedagogy piece is left up to individual instructors; and
3. Informal sessions with colleagues through distance learning committees or informal ongoing relationships.

**Research Question Two.** What is the perceived focus of the professional development community college faculty receive for online or hybrid teaching?

After the interviews were concluded, it was clear that faculty members held mixed perspectives on their professional development. All admit to receiving some semblance of training; however, most often the training was focused on the technical view of learning “the system.”

1. Perceived focus is on navigating the actual technology in a basic shell;
2. Faculty members have freedom in what they choose to learn and incorporate into online/hybrid courses; and
3. Conferences and seminars were very beneficial, but due to funding, most often have been eliminated.

Participants were dissatisfied that the training to teach online did not include pedagogical components. Participants shared they would like ways to connect across discipline areas, both within and outside the college, in order to learn how other online teachers learned the pedagogy of online teaching.

**Research Question Three.** What are the areas in which faculty feel they need more professional development in order to be successful online teachers?

Many faculty members indicated that they were content with where they were in their training and professional development. However, they were interested in greater support for what they do, which is related to professional development needs.

Recommendations usually included changes to the institution as a whole; instances where faculty could collaborate and share best practice; and ways to gain buy-in and acceptance of a standardized online curriculum by fellow colleagues.

1. Faculty responded that adding links, videos, and audio clips were important to their online hybrid course format;
2. Faculty want more rigor and accountability in all online/hybrid courses; instructors and students should have “the same rules” for what to do in an online hybrid course;
3. Faculty wish for higher expectations of both faculty members and students through standards and checks and balances;
4. Faculty would like more pedagogical training to better connect with online learners besides what they have implemented on their own; and
5. Faculty desire their institutions to find ways to build more faculty-wide buy-in and cooperation.



**Research Question Four.** What are the pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction?

Faculty members cited extrinsic challenges associated in delivering online/ hybrid instruction. Most often, student issues, rigor and course standardization, and a lack of a school culture that embraced online learning were discussed. Points made by the study participants included the following:

1. The importance of changing teaching strategies when moving from face-to-face to online teaching affecting instructors;
2. The need or belief that information in online courses should be relevant and somewhat standardized across disciplines so that everyone is on the same page;
3. Extrinsic pressures from administrators to faculty members to teach online or hybrid courses;
4. The added time online grading and assessment creates;
5. Ongoing professional development needed;
6. Ethical issues, including copyright questions, assessment, and rigor;
7. Lack of student preparation for online courses and the need for extra instructor time or work due to the need to “prepare” their online students; and
8. Academic freedom of instructors.

In regards to this study’s research questions, it is obvious this study went beyond the professional preparation provided to instructors who teach online courses. The experiences and perceptions shared by faculty members resonated a disconnect between

the perceived role and duties of the instructor and the actual role and duties of online instructor, the perceived role of students versus the actual performance of students, and the training provided to teach online juxtaposed with the actual training needs by current online faculty members. In light of current national trends, it is pertinent to note that student preparation for college is a topic intrinsically tied to faculty professional development. The call for research into student preparation in higher education and the connection to faculty training on student success is apparent (Gabriel, 2008). The faculty participants in this study shared conflicting perceptions in regards to the training they received, and how that particular training helped them to become online instructors. Faculty members who participated in this study discussed a need for more training on a broader scale, which included more than the technology training offered. This aligns with the work of Lail (2009) as her study concluded the training offered does not effectively meet the needs of faculty and carries little impact on their teaching. The implications of insufficient training, as well as a summary and discussion of findings, and a discussion on implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future research are discussed in Chapter V.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Implications**

This chapter presents a summary of this research study, including its purpose and the research questions that guided it. This research study was designed as a basic, interpretive qualitative study that sought to identify: (a) community college faculty member perceptions of the training they receive to teach online courses, (b) the perceived focus of the training provided to teach online, (c) the additional needs that community college faculty members wish to see addressed in terms of online teaching and professional development, and (d) a discovery of any pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction.

#### **Need for the Study**

As more colleges are exploring alternative modes of course delivery that include online and hybrid courses, there persists the need to research the issues surrounding both instructors and students since online learning is viewed as a long-term institutional strategy for most universities (Allen & Seaman, 2006). One area in which institutions can more thoroughly transition to online teaching and learning is through improved faculty professional development and training. Taylor and McQuiggan (2008) concede that although online courses have been offered for over a decade, and faculty are trained to teach online, little is known about how to best prepare faculty to teach in the online environment.

In my review of the literature for this study, I chose to include information from both two-year and four-year colleges. The information researched during the course of

this research was important insofar as it provided me an overview of the professional development work being completed in various settings. I was able to disseminate the important variables regarding professional development, and understand that omitting information regarding four-year college professional development for teachers who teach online was less constructive than including such information. My focus on the community college instructors fell within my own experiences and perceptions as a part time community college faculty member.

First, as a part time instructor at a community college, and one who has witnessed the development of not only online courses, but online degree programs, I feel this focus is warranted as the information and implications for community college professional development planning often goes overlooked (Mupinga & Maughan, 2008). Secondly, my views of professional development at the community college level afforded me an opportunity to challenge my own perceptions and experiences by exploring the perceptions and experiences of community college faculty members from a number of disciplines and years' experience.

### **Research Purpose and Research Questions**

The major purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine community college faculty perceptions of their preparation to teach online at institutions of higher education and to discover the experiences associated by these faculty members as they prepare online courses. This study used a qualitative research approach, which entailed the use of semi-structured interviews, to answer the following research questions:

1. What are community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development they receive to teach online and hybrid courses?

2. What is the perceived focus of the professional development they receive for online or hybrid teaching?
3. What are the areas in which faculty feel they need more professional development in order to be successful online teachers?
4. What are the pedagogical and technical challenges faculty members feel they experience in preparing and delivering online or hybrid instruction?

**Faculty motivations to teach online.** Faculty members who voluntarily chose to teach online courses regardless of the professional development being offered often fell into the category of innovators or early adopters (Rogers, 1995). They have acted as helpers to those around them who are unfamiliar with the new technology associated with teaching online. Rogers (2003) argued that since early adopters are more likely to hold leadership roles in the social system, other members come to them to get advice or information about the innovation. These early adopters play an important role in reaching out through interpersonal connections in order to facilitate more knowledge building.

Of the 14 faculty members who participated in this study, seven participants shared that they volunteered or chose to teach online or hybrid courses, while seven members shared that they were asked by various people or departments within their college to teach online or hybrid courses. Thus, regarding online teaching, this study's participants can be seen as early adopters or leaders.

In discussing with participants why they chose to teach online, self-interest and motivation, a comfort with technology, curiosity, and incentives such as time and flexibility were all discussed as factors leading participants to step forward to teach online classes. Those who were asked to teach online or hybrid courses shared that they

agreed to do so because of a top-down measure, which often resulted from a change in the department or teaching status at the time, or because of the ability to gain tenure. A few offered to me that their technological capabilities were recognized, and this was why they were approached to teach. The majority of the participants from [Alpha] County College expressed their own intrinsic desire to teach online. On the other hand, [Beta] County College participants shared the overwhelming feeling that the college and its' online programs are growing, and that they needed to take online teaching assignments when offered.

Both the Diffusion of Innovations and Concerns Based Adoption Model helped to guide me in my understanding of adult faculty learners in this study. Roger's Diffusion of Innovations Theory (1995, 2003) and the Concerns Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2001) apply to anyone in a state of change. All 14 participants in this study spoke about their experiences of moving to teaching an online course, and shared their perspectives of the professional development they received to teach online courses. The Diffusions of Innovations Theory helped me to identify which participants were innovators or early adopters and went ahead with adoption and training on their own so they could begin to teach online courses. Some participants found themselves providing additional training for colleagues and used their own knowledge in order to pass along information as innovators or communicators of technology. The institutional context of the training allowed faculty members who had been previously using technology to continue to mine their interests and bring this new learning into their online classrooms.

In terms of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 2001), participants' responses concerning their perceptions of the training they received to teach

online courses often coincided with three main areas of the model: the collaborative aspects (how can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?), the personal (how will teaching online affect me?), and the area of consequence (how is my use affecting others?). Participants in my study had a need and a desire to connect with colleagues and dialogue in order to find out what they were doing to be successful online instructors. Often, as instructors moved forward to take online teaching assignments, they determined for themselves how teaching online would affect them and their practice. Often, this was a reflective portion, which came when I asked directly how the professional development piece offered to them was perceived. Finally, in our discussions, one theme generated related to the consequences of not being prepared to deal with more than the technical areas on online teaching. Participants wanted more than had been offered to them.

## **Findings**

**Finding 1.** The perceptions of the training received by community college faculty members in this study was that professional development was adequate for learning the technological side of online courses, but insufficient in dealing with the human side of the technological adaption. Based on the narrative feedback, the training as a whole has not fully met the needs of faculty, and they have compensated for this largely on their own.

**Finding 2.** The prime focus of the training to teach online, as reported by faculty members from both colleges in this study, came two forms: one-on-one training and a professional development day, followed by small groups or committees formed at each school. Regarding the one-on-one training, faculty members were required to meet with a systems administrator to learn the basics of setting up an online course. [Alpha] County

College made this a requirement, so that faculty members had to be approved to have their course shell “go live.” [Beta] County College also offered one-on-one training, but it was not required. The faculty members interviewed shared that the individual from whom they would seek out help was very approachable and willing to help. Because of this positive interaction, those college faculty members seemed to also discuss the ways in which they chose to help and/or mentor new colleagues who were teaching online for the first time. It is important to note that there is not an organized mentoring program from either college within the study. Faculty members expressed concerns and a need for more opportunities to dialogue with colleagues as well as more peer support.

[Alpha] County College added one professional development day so that faculty members could turnkey best practices. This day was expressed as not being particularly well received due to the fact that the day was mandatory for all members of the college, whether they taught online courses or not. Because of this, an informal committee of about eight faculty members has been getting together to begin to share input with the college administration so that chances for more community and dialogue arise.

[Beta] County College faculty members did not indicate that there had been any workshop days and added that the few conferences that were once attended had been cut from the budget. The college is growing, especially in the area of online courses, and so faculty members seemed to express more sentiments of a “top down” mandate to teach online. A few faculty members indicated that they were asked to teach an online course, and they felt pressured to do so due to their time and tenure status at their institution.

**Finding 3.** Most of the faculty members who participated in this study shared that they often felt comfortable with technology prior to teaching online; therefore, the move



to teaching a fully online course was not seen as a threat or a hardship. Many of the faculty members in this study resonated some of the facets Rogers (1995) discussed with the Diffusions of Innovations Model in which the phase of Innovators and Early Adopters becomes apparent with the choices faculty members make in order to move forward with learning. Faculty members shared that they wanted to increase their own knowledge base, and often they tried to utilize new areas of technology in their online courses.

**Finding 4.** The technical and pedagogical challenges that participants associated with learning to teach online tended to focus on a lack of structure or support for instructors learning to teach online. Participants were given the technical tools to teach online, but often had to learn how to deal with the added burden of helping students who did not grasp the online learning process. Faculty members understand that a face-to-face course cannot simply be placed into digital form and be sufficient. The idea that more planning and support in terms of time spent on faculty learning more than the online technological basics, and a need for a more cohesive community college vision regarding online courses was an overarching idea expressed by participants.

### **Implications**

The growing demand for online courses (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006) is leading to a larger demand on faculty to train for and teach online courses. Training, whether formal or informal, provides opportunities for faculty members to help fulfill each college's mission. Colleges will need to develop strategic plans to aid in the development and implementation of online courses.

After speaking with 14 community college members to better understand their perceptions of the professional development received to teach online and the act of

starting up an online course, it is clear that more training is desired. Faculty members expressed a wish for more mentorship and collegiality. Through shared experiences, faculty can observe and learn from one another and encourage one another to self-reflect on what works and what does not work (Yick et al., 2005).

It is important to understand that faculty members who choose to teach online carry with them a range of experiences that most likely helped propel them in the online course adoption. Community colleges need to address the starting points at which faculty members may align themselves with online teaching so that professional development programs do not become a “one size fits all model.”

Likewise, student preparation to take an online course was discussed by some study participants at length. It is important to note that the struggles of students in the traditional and online course environments, are legitimate areas of focus which both two-year and four-year college administrators need to take into consideration when planning professional development for their faculty members and staff (Gabriel, 2008).

The growth of online courses generates groups of faculty members and students who teach and learn differently than in a traditional classroom environment. College administrators need to focus on how to best prepare faculty to teach online and students to learn in an online format. Based on participant responses, pedagogical training for what helps enhance faculty interaction with online students would create a strong base for instructors learning to teach online.

Community colleges need to create a sense of community among online instructors. Online instructors should feel like valued members of the college, and their training should exemplify this. Participants often felt that there was not a shared vision

among their respective community college communities when it came to teaching online. A way of communicating goals, challenges, and celebrations should also be instituted so that faculty members can gain a sense of collaboration and collegiality expressed so often as a need in this study.

As online teaching continues to grow in higher education, more areas for research begin to come into focus (Shea et al., 2005). The results of this study lend support to the notion that faculty members' training to teach online should include interaction, technical, and pedagogical support and more opportunities for learning. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2009) place emphasis on the use of multiple paradigms for professional ethics. In this case, community college administrators need to take into account the needs of staff, student, and community when implementing best practices for online education.

The view of the administrators at the top level should be an acknowledgement that a move to teaching online impacts faculty. Faculty members expressed an interest in having a constructive stance on the professional development implemented within their own colleges. Many were volunteering their time out of regular work hours to form committees and dialogue with colleagues unofficially. Floyd (2003) shares an accurate quote in respect to challenges faced by instructors teaching online in many community colleges, "One truism is clear: support systems, organizational structures, reward systems, and the type of professional development programs must be altered for the success of distance learning programs" (p. 345). To that end, a support system for faculty who are learning to teach online should be considered as a main step towards policy changes.

More support systems need to be put into place and continually revised so that they are effective tools that grow with the emergence of more online faculty and online courses. This study indicated changes that community college might make to current policies, which may include more faculty-driven professional development initiatives and professional development that is aligned with current national trends and proven effectiveness across the United States and beyond

## **Conclusions**

**Research Question One.** Research question one was designed to better determine community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development and training to teach online or hybrid courses. The findings revealed that faculty members' perceptions of the training they received was very neutral. All admitted to having received the training to start teaching online, but none offered rave reviews of what they took away from it. One critique was that some of the training was more or less optional and left up to the course instructor as to when that would take place. The implications associated with training that is not mandatory are first that online faculty members across the board may or may not receive the correct training, and second that the needs of staff may not be fully understood if everyone is expected to begin training from the same level and move forward as adult learners at the same time. The reliance on early adopters seems to allow each college discrete ways to get more training in without the costs associated with it, since the training is done by willing faculty members with colleagues. However, this is not an organized structure to insure that all faculty members get the training they need.

Other perceptions shared by faculty included the emphasis on the technological component, rather than the pedagogical side when it came to training. Both [Alpha] County College and [Beta] County College house an IT department, which handles most of the formal, recognized training. The training often included how to initially set up the online course, how to add documents, and how to troubleshoot. Offshoots of the IT group at each college consisted of small groups of colleagues who were proficient in teaching online courses and looked for ways to collaborate with colleagues. Faculty members in this study shared that they spent their own time learning new technology or training new colleagues. If this type of mentoring/training continues, colleges may find faculty burnout rates occurring, and they certainly will find inconsistency in the delivery of training.

A final perception shared by the majority was that there was not enough time devoted to helping instructors become better online teachers. Faculty members shared their disappointment with a lack of oversight of online courses at both community colleges examined in this study. One group of individuals from [Alpha] County College shared one way to combat this perceived lack of oversight. They created an online learning committee to share ideas and innovations and to give faculty voice with their administration. The early results of this committee were still unclear, but I heard many positive ideas being discussed. Faculty members feel empowered and have control over their own knowledge base.

**Research Question Two.** This research question was designed to discover from the view of participants, the perceived focus of professional development to teach online or hybrid courses. Often, study participants noted that the focus of the training consisted of the technology and college requirements. The focus is often on a one-on-one basis, or

via a self paced mode or with self-directed materials. Some of the faculty members felt that their respective colleges were not interested in allowing colleagues to share real-life experiences regarding teaching online, including opportunities to mentor and share strategies and content with one another. As a result, the need or call for more workshop days became apparent. The thirst for knowledge and understanding of what fellow colleagues are doing in their online courses was very apparent. Some faculty members believe that if more support from the college was given to faculty who teach online, the perceptions of those not teaching online courses would be positively affected and may lead to more instructors being willing to teach online courses.

It was interesting to hear that some of the innovators and early adopters (Rogers, 1995) preferred their own mode of self-directed learning, regardless of what the college had to offer. These instructors often noted that they included various types of technology components in their face-to-face courses, and so teaching online was a more natural transition. Based on the answers I heard in my interviews, I believe community college faculty members would benefit from dialogue amongst colleagues, which allows community college faculty members to align themselves to the professional development and training strategies best suited for them and based on their own experiences and technological knowledge base. One way colleges might do this would be the development of more formal and recognized mentoring programs so that new online faculty members can reach out for support, and so that faculty members already comfortable with technology and interested in expanding their own knowledge base may do so by networking within and across departments and contributing to more professional development days.

**Research Question Three.** Research question three was designed to distinguish the areas in which community college faculty members felt they needed more professional development in order to be successful online teachers. Marek (2009) found that the components of an effective model for faculty development included a stipend, a course release time, specific training in instructional design and online pedagogical skills, and mentoring. Some of Marek's findings correspond with the needs of the participants in my study. One area that was not mentioned was the use of a stipend to teach online. Most faculty shared that they were compensated the same as face-to-face course loads, but gained other, outside benefits from teaching online courses.

A need expressed by faculty was the ability to reach out to more colleagues and professionals with experience in teaching online. The culture of each community college is one in which instructors stay within their own departments and often seek help from only a few. The shared social experience of the group allows for acceptance and validation of new policies or expectations put into place (Schein, 2004). This is also true of adjuncts or part time instructors, who may be on the fringe of the college. Faculty members who feel isolated may not be more inclined to move to a new way of teaching such as what online teaching entails. In order to have faculty members grow to match the need for online instructors, colleges should provide continual and adequate faculty support and training.

Secondly, faculty members often cited issues with the system in place. They felt that more appropriate technologies to help enhance their courses were available. Creating ways to insert video clips and real-time chat came up in most of the interviews. In this

high-paced world, instructors feel that having this added sense of connectedness would enhance their courses.

Finally, including ways to build strong instructor-student relationships became an apparent need (Gabriel, 2008). The participants in this study often mentioned a disconnect from their students. This disconnect might result in students not adhering to course or college regulations or cheating. It might also reflect experience with prior poor online instruction, which might contribute to high student attrition and course completion rates. Kotter (1996) posits that complacency may come from low overall performance standards and a lack of performance feedback, which inhibits progress of both individual and organization. As shared by individuals in this study speaking of their online counterparts, it was apparent that faculty members felt a disconnect from some colleagues also teaching online. Lack of vision and focus from the college has led to the diminishing rigor and standards for some instructors. Faculty members shared that they did see this lack of vision and rigor, and often shared ways in which they thought a positive change could be made to address many of the aforementioned issues.

**Research Question Four.** The final research question gave faculty members an opportunity to speak candidly on the pedagogical and technical challenges they have experienced in preparing and delivering online or hybrid courses. From this, a very strong theme of barriers and supports became apparent.

The barriers discussed in the technical realm included a lack of awareness about professional development opportunities related to teaching online. Often, faculty members shared that the amount of online and hybrid courses are growing, but the professional development opportunities are not there. Another technical challenge was



the amount of time faculty members felt it takes to develop and get an online course up and running. Even after a semester, faculty members admitted to starting all over or re-doing an online course because things did not come together properly the first time. Many faculty members admitted in our interviews that they often relied on other colleagues to get questions answered and learn the ropes.

Another technical barrier discussed was that half of the participants were asked from someone above them to take on an online class. Often, new instructors or those with little experience were the ones who were asked. The pressure to move to online courses at [Beta] County College was apparent. Study participants overwhelmingly shared that they felt they had to teach online due to a department supervisor or dean asking them personally. Although most were accepting of their role as online instructors, many felt that their college was moving too fast on adding more online courses and was lagging in providing adequate preparation programs beyond the basic technological learning needed to teach online.

The pedagogical barriers faculty members experienced referenced the lack of awareness of how to “take” an online course on behalf of the students. More than half of the participants admitted that they believed the college itself must set more standards and requirements (such as the ability to email a word document or participate in a chat room) for students. Next, faculty members believe that the courses online must be held to higher standards, that is, more rigor in terms of expectations and requirements. Often, faculty members felt there was a disconnect across the board, where one instructor might complete the bare minimum to get his or her online course running, while some faculty members were more motivated to fine tune the course with the learners, who then most

often benefitted from the time and hard work allotted by the instructors. The suggested impact of this was that the faculty members who devoted more time to fine tuning their courses assumed more responsibility to get students in their online courses up to speed and to ensure that learning was occurring in their course.

### **Strengths and Contributions of the Study**

This study addressed the experiences and needs of community college faculty members teaching online. By way of a qualitative approach to data gathering, I was able to better understand the professional development experience. The findings of this study support the current literature in regards to many of the barriers and incentives associated with learning to teach online.

A college faculty is perhaps one of the most important resources at any college. Faculty members who were participants in this study contributed ways in which their own institutions could garner more support for online teaching, as well as ways to better develop programs already in place. Through semi-structured interviews, participants shared a lack of formal training or support at each college. Additionally, a need for more formalized support in the form of communication with colleagues, and more specific one-on-one training were shared as ways in which to improve online teaching and learning.

Faculty members shared that their own motivation and self-direction often guided them when learning new technology. Many of these instructors can be viewed as innovators and early adopters. This study shares how these faculty members are valuable to any college looking to add more support to professional training programs.

This study contributes to the body of literature concerning community college practices in terms of faculty development and student support systems. The experiences

shared by faculty members help to underscore the need for faculty to have a direct role in technology adoption and their own learning.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this study have implications for areas of research that are dedicated to community college technology initiatives. The specifics of my study have helped me to view other facets of professional development and online teaching that can lend themselves to the current body of literature to help examine fully the growth of online education in higher education. The first area is to investigate the practices online instructors implement to ensure student readiness and connection in an online course in order to achieve success. Another aspect is to examine ways in which online instructors deal with a student disconnect or lack of progress in their online course environment.

It is recommended that further studies be conducted that examine faculty perceptions of teaching exclusively online courses versus those who teach hybrid courses. A comparison model can be generated in order to allow colleges to see the viability and the negatives associated with each type of online course in terms of preparation time, course management, and student attrition rates.

Students were mentioned by faculty members countless times in the course of this study. It is important to use more research to allow community college students to discuss how they learned to take an online course, as well as their barriers and motivators in learning online. The participants in this study shared multiple concerns about how to prepare their students; a call for more commitment to best prepare our faculty and students must evolve with the growth of online education. This should help to shed light on best ways to orient and prepare students and instructors alike for online coursework.

## **Conclusion**

The origination of this study grew from my research interest regarding the influx of technology into higher education. In my doctoral course work, I was admitted near the end of my program to two hybrid courses that were two very different experiences for me. Although both courses were taught within the department of Educational Leadership at my own institution, my experiences as a student in each course were enough to pique my interest as a research student. I wondered how college faculty were prepared to teach online and hybrid courses. Were they receiving any training at all? How satisfied were they? Near the end of that term, I was offered an additional adjunct position at a local community college to teach English Composition II exclusively online. Up to that point, I had only taught writing courses face-to-face, and the daunting nature of teaching writing online was too much for me, so I turned down the opportunity. I had not been offered training and knew little about the professional development and training provided to instructors at my very own employing institution.

However, my experiences as a doctoral student coupled with this opportunity to teach online helped me determine a focus for my research study. Thus, my research questions grew and developed into a need to explore the perceptions of community college instructors regarding the professional development to teach online courses. I knew from my review of the literature that there was a gap; research often did not focus exclusively on community colleges. This point, coupled with my own experiences as a middle school teacher and a part time community college instructor helped lead me to focus on the professional development of community college instructors. Instructors play an integral role in the building up and maintenance of college mission and vision.

Birnbaum (1988) posits, “institutions must be responsive to their environments to survive, and the responses made by colleges and universities have had profound effects on their governance structures and processes” (p. 15). This quote embodies a distinct portion of my study, which indicated that at the community college level, faculty members who teach online or hybrid courses sometimes feel disconnected from students, other staff members, and the mission statement guiding the college. As a researcher who is earning a doctorate to move into the realm of higher education to be an agent of change, I understand the importance of the principles that help to create a vision, which is clearly communicated and received by all.

This qualitative study underscores the need for further and more intricate examination of the role of community college faculty members as mentors, adult learners, and visionaries. At the start of this study, I was under the impression that community colleges had clear, goal-oriented training programs for faculty members who taught online. This study helped me to understand that pedagogical and technical needs of community college faculty teaching online are not being fully addressed, as well as the ways in which colleges might begin to further support their staff. The training of post-secondary staff needs to support a generation of students who vary in age, background, and online experience. The connection between how to best prepare community college instructors and student achievement in traditional and virtual classrooms should be paramount. Finally, as online education continues to flourish, it is of the utmost importance to continually address the needs and experiences of faculty members teaching online.

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## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board Certification



## Appendix B

### Letter of Permission

Danielle B. Jubanyik  
144 Quiet Crescent  
Sicklerville, NJ 08081

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a qualitative research study at \_\_\_\_\_ County College in \_\_\_\_\_, NJ. I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J., and I am in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation. The study is entitled: Community College Faculty Members' Perceptions of Professional Development for Online Instruction: A Qualitative Study

I hope that your college will allow me to recruit faculty members who are teaching or have recently taught online courses from the school to participant in a semi-structured interview about their perceptions of the professional development and training they have received for teaching an online course. Interviews will take place from January 2012 until March 2012 on or near your college site. Interested faculty members who volunteer to participate in the interview process will be given an informed consent sheet to be signed and returned to me (the primary researcher) at the beginning of the interview process.

All participation is voluntary and participants will be asked via email if they would like to participate. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants.

Your written approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with an email or phone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my Rowan email address: [brownd66@students.rowan.edu](mailto:brownd66@students.rowan.edu) or via cell phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx. Additionally, Dr. Robin Haskell McBee is my dissertation chair, and she can be reached at Rowan's main campus, 856.256.4500 x3093 or at [mcbee@rowan.edu](mailto:mcbee@rowan.edu).

If you approve of the study, I will need permission from you on your college letterhead and can pick up the letter in person as soon as it is ready.

Your help and support is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Danielle B. Jubanyik

Approved by:  
Dr. Robin Haskell McBee, Rowan University, Dissertation Chair  
[mcbee@rowan.edu](mailto:mcbee@rowan.edu)

## Appendix C

### Faculty Email Invite

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Danielle Brown Jubanyik, and I am a middle school teacher, community college adjunct faculty member, and doctoral candidate at Rowan University in the department of Educational Leadership. I am conducting a dissertation research study to examine community college faculty members' perceptions of the professional development and training they receive to teach online courses.

Your name was given to me by XX, and I have gained permission from the college to conduct this study with faculty members who have taught online courses at XX County College.

The associated details for this study are that willing faculty members who have taught an online course may choose to participate. The information about your experiences will be gathered on a date and time convenient to you at your college location (unless otherwise specified by you) for approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted by me and audio recorded. All information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used throughout the dissertation. An informed consent form will be provided to you before I begin the interview.

Please consider donating an hour of your time to participate in a formal interview with me, as I believe your views are important and valued. I look forward to hearing from you!

If interested, please respond by email to me at [xxxxx@students.rowan.edu](mailto:xxxxx@students.rowan.edu) with your name, college, best phone number for scheduling a time to meet, years of traditional AND online teaching experience, subject area, gender, and age range.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to respond to this email or via phone to inquire.

Sincerely,

Danielle Brown Jubanyik, Ed.D. Candidate at Rowan University

[xxxxxxx@students.rowan.edu](mailto:xxxxxxx@students.rowan.edu)

Cell- xxx-xxx-xxxx



## **Appendix D**

### **Demographic Questions**

Name:

Initials/Date:

#### **I. Age Range**

A- 21-30

B- 31-40

C- 41-50

D- 51-60

E- 61-70

F- 71-80

G- 81-100

**II. Highest degree attained:**

**III. Numbers of years/time teaching traditional courses:**

**IV. Numbers of years/time teaching online courses:**

## Appendix E

### Interview Protocol

**Faculty Initials:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me, as I believe your honest insights will be very helpful. Here is a copy of the signed informed consent for your records. I will be audio recording the interview, so that it may be transcribed verbatim. You will be contacted in the future to re-read the verbatim transcript and to check for accuracy of details. This interview may last from 45 minutes to one hour. There's no right or wrong answers. I will be using pseudonyms (a made up name) within my research report so all participants and colleges involved will remain completely anonymous. All work associated with this study will be kept in a secure location and will be destroyed after three years. Are there any questions?

I. Can you please tell me briefly about the courses you most recently taught online?

a. Which sections and subject areas were included in online instruction?

b. Were any of these hybrid course offerings?

c. How were you selected to teach these online courses?

d. Is there an incentive to teaching online at your institution? (Please describe.)

e. How often are faculty members who teach online given training or professional development?

2. Do you receive professional development to teach online courses at your institution?

As an overall picture, what are your perceptions of the professional development you

have received? How is faculty professional development developed and delivered at your college and how is this similar to or different from professional development for online teaching?

- a. Prompts: Who organizes it? When is it normally offered? In what format?
3. What professional development have you received do you feel has been most useful to you and least useful to you, and why?
  - a. Can you tell me about a time when you received some helpful PD in the area geared towards online learning? Why was it so helpful?
  - b. Can you tell me about a time when the PD offered was not useful and why you feel this way?
4. In what formats have you received professional development? (prompt: Colleague turnkey, online resources, etc?) Which have been most useful to you? Least useful? Why?
5. Can you tell me about the last professional development training for online courses that you received?
  - a. When was it? What did you learn? Was it mandatory?
7. How satisfied are you teaching online courses with the help your college has offered to you?
  - a. If you were ever dissatisfied with the help, please describe the circumstances and why you were dissatisfied.

- b. Regarding the professional development for online courses, how successful have you been with the development you have received?
- 8. Are there areas of online instruction about which you feel uneasy? What are they?
  - a. How could PD help?
- 9. When you encounter technical problems in an online course, to whom do you turn to for help?
  - a. What is the process like when you need help?
  - b. Is it effective?
- 10. What have been the challenges you have experienced with preparing material and lessons for online courses?
- 11. Has your style of teaching been impacted since you began to teach online?  
Can you describe a time when you noticed this?
- 12. Do you believe that faculty members have a shared vision of the online course environment?
- 13. Would you consider yourself someone who easily adapts to change?
- 14. Describe the type of professional development you still need or want for teaching online courses.

THANK YOU!

## Appendix F

### Informed Consent Document

You have been invited to participate in a qualitative research study being conducted by Danielle B. Jubanyik, a Doctoral candidate in the in Educational Leadership program at Rowan University. You have been selected to participate in this research because you can provide valuable insight to the perceptions of the training and professional development that was provided to you in order to teach an online course.

The interview will last approximately one hour, or as long as you may need to answer the questions asked. You will have an opportunity to read your transcript in the future in order to clarify or make changes.

#### Please read the statements below and initial next to each:

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I am being asked to participate in a one-hour interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education, if I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

\_\_\_\_\_ Project participation will be voluntary for all faculty members, and faculty members will have the option to withdrawal from the study at any time during their participation or after it is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, any of the community colleges located within said state, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am 18 years of age or older.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study at any time you may contact Danielle B. Jubanyik, the study's principal researcher, at xxx-xxx-xxxx or at [brownd66@students.rowan.edu](mailto:brownd66@students.rowan.edu) or Dr. Robin McBee, the researcher's dissertation chair, at 856.256.4500 x3093 or at [mcbree@rowan.edu](mailto:mcbree@rowan.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Investigator)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## Appendix G

### Example of Email Communication

(regarding member checking of transcribed interview)

2/23/12

Jubanyik, Danielle <brownd66@students.rowan.edu>

to XX

Dear Mr. XX,

Attached is the transcript of our interview. Please read over and approve via email if possible. If you prefer to make changes, add, or further clarify, feel free to make notes at the bottom of the email or use track changes. If I do not hear back from you by XX, 2012, I will consider the transcript approved.

I want to remind you that all names (persons/colleges) in this study will be kept anonymous and will be assigned given pseudonyms in my dissertation study.

Thanks so much!

Danielle B. Jubanyik