

A STUDY OF THE BUSINESS ADJUNCT FACULTY PEER-MENTORING
PROGRAM AT A PRIVATE MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

A dissertation submitted

by

Elizabeth Boone

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This dissertation has been accepted for the faculty
of Benedictine University

_____	_____	_____
Dissertation Committee Director		Date
_____	_____	_____
Dissertation Committee Chair		Date
_____	_____	_____
Dissertation Committee Reader		Date
_____	<u>Sunil Chand, Ph.D.</u>	_____
Program Director, Faculty		Date
_____	<u>Eileen Kolich, Ph.D.</u>	_____
Faculty		Date
_____	<u>Ethel Ragland, Ed. D., M.N., R.N.</u>	_____
Acting Dean, College of Education and Health Services		Date

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program at a private Midwestern university and its contributions to the quality of adjunct faculty instruction. The research utilizes case study as an umbrella design to investigate what constitutes high quality instruction by business adjunct faculty and how it can serve as a model of peer-mentoring for other higher education institutions. Semi-structured qualitative individual and focus group interviews comprise the primary data for analysis, supplemented by institutional documents and years of observations. Peer-mentoring can be one of the best teaching practices designed for adjunct faculty who make transitions from business to academic careers. The findings of this study can aid in research, which aims to ensure that quality teaching is being performed in the classrooms of higher learning. The results of this study have the potential to inform recruitment strategies and strengthen the overall creditability of the adjunct faculty workforce.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Hiring adjunct faculty continues to be on the rise in all higher education programs (American Association of University Professors (AAUP), 2011a; Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, & White, 2006; Kuchera & Miller, 1988; Landrum, 2009; Maldonado & Riman, 2009; Mancuso, 2001; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010; New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, 2000; Schaefer Riley, 2011; Schmidt, 2011; West, 2010; Vinlove, 2011). Schmidt (2011) stated that two-thirds of the teaching workforce in private and non-private colleges and universities across our nations are adjunct faculty. This trend creates a significant shift in higher education instruction by faculty within U.S. public, private, and for-profit colleges and universities with even higher percentages of adjunct faculty in community college classrooms (American Federation of Teachers, 2010).

Increased hiring of adjunct faculty at American colleges and universities is a result of major declines in funding and the greater than normal financial demands our nation is experiencing (Johnson & Stevens, 2008). According to a 2010–2011 study conducted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the recession has had an impact on the acceleration of hiring adjunct faculty and teaching by adjunct faculty has increased 280% between 1975 and 2009 (AAUP, 2011a, 2011b). Moreover,

the rationale behind the advantages of hiring this workforce are that many universities faced with overall budget cuts can hire adjunct faculty in greater numbers to help balance the universities' budgets (Tuscan, 2004; Wallen, 2004). Schaefer Riley (2011) reminded us that adjunct faculty conducts 60% of the total number of classes and over half of all undergraduate classes in higher education. Croxwell (2010) and Schafer Riley (2011) informed us that 70% of university instructors are part-time adjunct faculty. Gappa (2008) cited in Meixner et al. (2010) that, given the high percentage of use of these adjunct faculty members, they are considered a main constituent of academia.

According to Smith (2007), adjunct faculty is recognized as knowledge workers and contributors to higher educational institutions. These professionals bring meaningful insights to students who find value in their instruction, depend on their knowledge and professional skills, and find the support from full-time faculty equal to what they receive from professionally developed adjunct faculty (Gerhard, 2004; Stenerson, Blanchard, Fassiotto, Hernandez, & Muth, 2010;). This contractual workforce, according to Schmidt (2011) and Vinlove, (2011) faces the question of how to gain recognition among their full-time peers.

When a college or university employs adjunct faculty, the intention is to benefit and rely solely upon the performance of these professionals to accomplish institutional goals (Smith, 2007). Training and development programs as well as other resources available for adjunct faculty can be powerful learning tools within the higher education community (Stenerson et al., 2010; Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). It appears that the greater the number of adjunct faculty, the greater the need to address training and management issues surrounding hiring (Santovic, 2004).

Hiring adjunct faculty can be very beneficial when an adjunct faculty member remains with an institution for an extended period and aligns with its mission, vision, and goals, bringing their expertise and knowledge to the classroom (Rogers, McIntyre, & Jazzar, 2010; Stenerson et al., 2010). The trend of increased hiring noted previously creates a need for continuous training and development of adjunct faculty because of their importance in classroom instruction and the demands that are placed upon them to teach in higher education (Lyons, 2007). One effective professional development tool is mentoring, which can serve as a best practice for beginning adjunct faculty teachers in both online and face-to-face programs (Lyons, 2007; Rogers et al., 2010).

There are varying definitions of the term mentoring. Le Cornu (2005) asserted, “Mentoring is when a more experienced person is able to give support and advice to a less experienced colleague for the purpose of professional growth” (p. 355). The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Department of Human Resources (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2008) is heavily engaged in mentoring as a form of professional development and has designed a handbook specifically to guide the policies, procedures, and practices of mentoring within this federal division. Mentoring is defined in this handbook as “a formal or informal relationship between two people” that promotes professional development through mentoring to produce positive development and organizational outcomes (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2008, p. 3).

Another example proposed by Blake-Beard (2009) referred to mentoring as a passageway to cross borders and gain access to different experiences. This is similar to how the wise train the younger, less experienced protégé (O’Neil & Marsick, 2009). There are many definitions of mentoring and the literature discusses several that align

with the mentoring practices employed at the university college. Another definition provided by Zachary (2005, as cited by O'Neil & Marsick, 2009) described mentoring as a “reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals” (p. 19).

This study's intent is to focus on a group of business adjunct faculty mentors at a four-year, private, business professional studies university college who are accountable and committed to the mission, vision, and goals of the university. Adjunct faculty members can support an institution's mission by integrating their diverse backgrounds, personal and professional expertise, and life experiences in both the classroom and throughout the college (Keller & Pryce, 2010; Wallin, 2004). Mentors provide a trusting and supportive relationship, although creating this dynamic partnership may not be an easy task (Keller & Pryce, 2010). Peer-mentoring relationships for adjunct faculty at the business university college result in an alignment of teaching disciplines and experiences, thus creating bridges and opening doors to increased knowledge between peers (Blake-Beard, 2009).

When business adjunct faculty are hired at the university college for face-to-face programs, the Adjunct Coordinator or Adjunct Administrator is responsible for integrating the adjunct faculty into the teaching and learning process through an effective orientation program, which includes working with a peer-mentor to gain greater insight into the business program's policies and procedures. The Adjunct Coordinator or Adjunct Administrator introduces the peer-mentor to the junior adjunct faculty member and then the peer-mentor welcomes the junior adjunct to the team, observes his or her

classroom teaching, and submits a written report for future professional development measures.

Statement of the Problem

Most existing studies regarding adjunct faculty members and their orientation processes have centered upon the adjuncts' satisfaction with their current working conditions and the driving force behind their decision to teach, both of which can influence educational quality (Smith, 2007). In addition, reports referring to adjunct faculty provide a discussion of pedagogical and performance issues such as student summative evaluations and grading effectiveness (Landrum, 2009). There appears to be a lack of studies dealing with the support systems or programs that enable adjunct faculty to become a more integrated workforce in colleges and universities (Johnson, MacGregor, & Watson, 2001; Vinlove, 2011). Diegel (2010) explained that it is the responsibility of the administration to provide ample professional development opportunities for the adjunct faculty in order to integrate them into mainstream academia and to contribute to the intellectual culture within the institution. The primary focus of this study is on a group of business adjunct faculty mentors and their ability to adapt and integrate successfully into higher education classrooms after going through the phases in the peer-mentoring program set in place within the institution.

I concur with Diegel (2010) that the proportion of adjunct faculty will continue to increase on our nation's college campuses. I also think that it is the responsibility of the adjunct faculty to make time for professional development opportunities when these become available. Today, there are many opportunities to obtain information on teaching effectiveness. Various opportunities are available online in the form of virtual webinars,

online faculty lounges, and electronic asynchronous and synchronous forums on the World Wide Web or within Learning Management Systems (Santovec, 2004). Oftentimes, adjunct faculty may find it difficult to make time for these opportunities due to full-time employment or, in some cases, not having ample resources such as e-mail addresses, offices on campus, teaching at offsite locations, and facilitating the majority of lower level courses, all of which may cause inequities pertaining to their teaching evaluations (Landrum, 2009).

Landrum's (2009) study, for instance, based on the quantitative survey of 361 courses used data from eight academic departments to examine performance differences between full-time faculty and part-time faculty and found that, even though these variables may hold true, the outcomes of the study showed no differences in their teaching performance. When adjunct faculty find it difficult to make time for professional development opportunities, and as a result fail to commit to enhance their knowledge, classroom confidence, and effectiveness, peer-mentoring can serve as a powerful intervention strategy in higher education quality teaching and learning (Harnish & Wild, 1994). The commitment to professional development becomes a responsibility and includes meeting educational, professional, and scholarly requirements similar to full-time faculty; without this commitment to quality, the institution's accreditation could be at risk (Johnson et al., 2001; Santovec, 2004).

The phenomenon that is on the rise and requires further exploration is the entrance of the non-academic business professional practitioner who seeks an adjunct faculty position and needs support for a smooth transition between the two careers. Very little research has been done on the topic of business professionals transitioning into

academic careers. Hence the question: How do individuals who transition from business to academic careers become effective adjunct instructors and peer-mentors in college business programs? This study seeks to examine the experiences of business adjunct faculty mentors who make an effort to contribute to quality instruction as they undergo effective professional development that aids in supporting the administrative team with curriculum writing, training facilitation, orientations, and peer-mentoring.

Research Purposes and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which the business professional adjunct faculty becomes an exemplary teaching force as a result of applying their professional expertise to effective peer-mentoring practices, thus transferring them into similarly effective classroom experiences. An adjunct faculty member that is recognized for his or her efforts has a sense of belonging to a larger academic community (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, p. 115). Hence, it is important to examine the experiences of individual adjuncts employed in particular university programs. Qualitative research is best suited for such studies because it can “empower individuals to share their stories, have their voices heard, and minimize any power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Oftentimes, conducting qualitative research supports obtaining greater understanding of a complex issue, and talking directly to the participants can accomplish this objective (Creswell, 2007).

The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the facets of the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program at a private higher education institution that create the opportunities for these

adjunct faculty to become an effective teaching workforce within the institution?

2. What are the qualities, characteristics, teaching styles, and strategies of these adjunct faculty members that contribute to their success and make them an exemplary teaching workforce within the institution?

The aim of this study is to further a better understanding of what shapes the teaching styles of these adjunct faculty mentors and what will meld them into potential exemplary instructors. To that end, I interviewed adjunct faculty who were former and current business professionals who perform the role of peer-mentors at a private, Midwestern university college. The entire instructional workforce in this nontraditional, accelerated college program is comprised of adjunct faculty. Because the adjunct faculty at the university college serve in support of the growth of the institution, this study is essential to identifying the potential impact of their contribution on quality teaching. The qualitative study of adjunct faculty mentors can inform the best practices of mentoring programs at other higher education institutions and can assist in improving the recruitment strategies for this workforce.

Significance of the Study

A major significant shift from utilization of full-time tenured faculty to adjunct faculty has incited different responses in academia. The shift entails reconsideration of the very notion of academic freedom due to the standardization of the material that is taught (Gerhart, 2004). For instance, Gerhart (2004) stated that adjunct faculty can support higher enrollments, the need for which can be attributed to downward spiraling budgets at colleges and universities (Charlier & Williams, 2011), while still keeping the

class size low and thus allowing programs to benefit from improved student-teacher ratios. Contracting adjunct faculty on a per course basis allows colleges and universities to realize cost savings and minimizes the need for additional administrative resources (Gerhart, 2004).

Little research about adjunct faculty in four-year institutions has been conducted (McLeod & Steinert, 2009; Meixner et al., 2010). There is a need to continue studying the effects of the peer-colleague approach to the development of all faculties (McLeod & Steinert, 2009). McLeod and Steinert (2009) described peer-coaching as a best practice when facilitation proves to be an attractive approach to faculty development. Peer-mentoring or peer-coaching, as defined by McLeod and Steinert, is a colleague development program. This differs from an expert-led program that is based upon “repeated instances of colleague observation of teaching practices of peers with the intention of facilitating their development in the teaching role” (McLeod & Steinert, 2009). Because adjunct faculty teaches a majority of undergraduate courses and specialized programs, there could be more research centered on the influences and impact of adjunct faculty on quality teaching (Smith, 2010). Research centered on the experiences of adjunct faculty working on a contractual basis and the difficulties endured due to not having a full-time appointment remain scarce (Meixner et al., 2010).

Thus, the critical questions for higher education leaders and administrators to consider are two-fold. What are the characteristics that contribute to the success of adjunct faculty and how do these qualities enhance the value of instruction in adult learning institutions? What are the values of peer-mentors and how do they align with the actions of adjunct faculty?

This case study explored, in depth, the experiences of selected business program adjunct faculty mentors who contribute generously to the development of the peer-mentoring program at the University College. Adjunct mentoring programs are a “responsibility and not a choice” (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006, p. 247). Subsequently, I intend to demonstrate how the findings and results of this study can be important for other higher education institutions that may find these practices helpful to their corresponding programs and professional development activities for adjunct faculty.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant number of courses in higher education institutions are taught by adjunct faculty (Schaefer Riley, 2011). By providing teacher training opportunities, teaching excellence and student learning can be advanced (Richardson, 1992). Richardson (1992) asserted how the professional development program at College of the Canyons emerged and evolved, in part due to the dissatisfaction and unequal treatment of adjunct faculty. Fagen-Wilen et al. (2006) identified a body of literature that promotes the benefits of employing adjunct faculty. In addition, this research study further defines the role of adjunct faculty and discusses the benefits and the need to organize professional development programs, such as peer-mentoring for adjunct faculty. Given the budgetary hiring constraints in higher education, the need to develop training programs for adjunct faculty becomes a necessity. These types of training programs have the potential to promote teaching and learning and, moreover, can create a pathway for adjunct faculty that can contribute to the quality of instruction, student learning, and the institution's mission and overall goals (Charlier & Williams, 2011).

Benefits for an Adjunct Faculty Workforce

Adjunct faculty are hired on a contractual basis, and are referred to by some as part-time, contingent, nontenured, nonpermanent, and are paid per course and have little or no health insurance or retirement benefits (Halcrow & Olson, 2008). In addition, they

often hold degrees as high as doctorates and the degree level of the postsecondary institutions determines the degree level needed to teach some disciplines (Halcrow & Olson, 2008).

According to Gappa et al. (2007), adjunct faculty members are expected to excel in their teaching roles and exceed expectations in their evaluations. Higher education institutions can accomplish this goal by offering ongoing adjunct training and professional development support. In addition, adjunct faculty members could be required to increase their use of technology in the classrooms to support the technology advancement of the student body and the resources of the university as well as to create an academic environment, which values today's diverse population of students (Gappa et al., 2007; Green & Ciez-Volz, 2010). Findings from the Mullen (2010) study were significant and explained the many opportunities for mentoring as a form of professional development relative to the mission of an institution and its student body. Further, Mullen quoted the findings of Rogers et al. (2010), which indicated the need for establishing effective communication, fostering balance, and forming relationships, all of which are deemed to be the elements needed to successfully mentor adjunct faculty.

By providing the necessary resources for adjunct faculty to perform at their potential, colleges and universities can ensure that adjunct faculty members receive equitable opportunities to learn and advance their potential (Gappa et al., 2007). In many cases today, universities can maximize adjunct faculty's effectiveness and support student retention with professional development that meets the needs of both the adjunct faculty and the student body. In particular, while the opportunity to teach at a business and technical college appeals to the business practitioner, it can be critical to the success

of the mission of a higher education institution's accreditation that the adjunct faculty is both academically and professionally qualified (West, 2010).

Universities maximize effectiveness by hiring adjunct faculty because of the broad knowledge base and rich practical industry experience they offer colleges and universities, which in turn support increased student enrollments and the institutional mission (Charlier & Williams, 2011; Gerhart, 2004). While this continued increase in hiring adjunct faculty has grown to surpass 100% during the past decade (West, 2010), the responsibility rests with institutions to provide opportunities for adjunct faculty to collaborate with their peers, share experiences, and develop learning communities that bind and address the common goals and objectives of the institutions that they serve (Charlier & Williams, 2011; Gerhart, 2004).

According to Savage, Karp and Logue (2004), because the research on this topic is so limited both in the descriptions of programs and in estimating the number of programs that exist, mentoring programs are a necessary form of professional development that can shape and create strong bonds within higher education institutions. Savage et al. (2004) documented the integration of new faculty on higher education campuses and its value to the college community; they posited, "Universities must provide new tenure-track and temporary faculty with a broad information base regarding a university's policy and culture, as well as effective mechanisms for structuring faculty collaboration within the university community" (p.21).

Another benefit in hiring adjunct faculty is that higher education institutions can offer programs that facilitate the career goals of the growing adult population. This development of new programs can respond to the needs of the adult learner

(Wlodkowski, 2003). Charlier and Williams (2011) concluded that a high demand remains for adjunct faculty to teach in disciplines such as natural and physical sciences, engineering and industrial technologies, health technologies, and nursing.

During an economic downturn, the number one reason for hiring adjunct faculty is economics. The cost to an institution to operate with a teaching majority of adjunct faculty reflects greater cost efficiency than if the institution hired full-time faculty (Halcrow & Olson, 2008). The fact remains that these practices could support a large pool of people who are willing to work on a part-time basis for lower wages and no benefits. According to the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education (2000), this acceleration of hiring adjunct faculty continues to support fiscal constraints and shortages of full-time faculty in certain fields. Colleges and universities would be able to provide services under budget by using adjunct faculty; but while they enjoy this financial benefit, they should remain committed to continuing to provide quality instruction (Davis & Noland, 2003).

On the federal level and to meet the public demand, Langen (2011) quoted John Boehner, the National Chairman of the National Committee on Education and the Workforce. Mr. Boehner elicited questions pertaining to the quality of higher education institutions by stating:

Many parties have a stake in Higher education, as graduates appropriately fuel our nation's economy. How can institutions provide students, parents, and taxpayers (stakeholders) with an assurance that the investment made in postsecondary education will be returned to them in the form of a strong, viable, and educated workforce? (Burd, 2003)

According to some studies, the reasons for the increased hiring of adjunct faculty are varied (Langen, 2011). The prior knowledge and experiences that they bring to their

classrooms and their ability to support the addition of new programs on demand in higher education are some prominent reasons. Langen (2011) believed that these assets come with a price, but are realized through effective teaching and learning and effective assessment tools.

When colleges and universities seek to provide the growing population of adjunct faculty opportunities to meet the demands of accountability and assessment, they may choose from a variety of options that have proven results. For example, Halcrow and Olson (2008) suggested that the practices necessary to provide support must include:

(a) recognizing adjuncts' accomplishments; (b) orientation; (c) including adjuncts in social functions and on some committees; (d) mentoring; (e) developing mechanisms for offering professional development opportunities; (f) conducting annual formal evaluations; (g) involving them in curriculum and textbook decision making; (h) simply showing respect and appreciation for all of their outstanding achievements (p. 7).

Improvements such as these, if implemented by administration, can promote quality performance for students without financial constraints as well as promote job satisfaction to motivate adjunct faculty to perform well in the classroom.

Promoting Quality Instruction

The objectives of a professional development program for adjunct faculty should be to enhance the quality and accountability of academic programs at colleges and universities (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). Many studies have indicated that successful adjunct faculty professional development training programs include training workshops, mentoring, and orientations designed to promote excellence in teaching (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). These training opportunities provide relevant support strategies for addressing pertinent issues related to institutional culture, which is a necessary element in the classroom. Training workshops introduce adjunct faculty to innovative teaching and

learning techniques that include incorporating critical thinking and self-reflection into their course curricula (Pierce, 2005).

For example, an adjunct faculty orientation was held at Burlington County College in Pemberton, New Jersey over a period of five sessions on three successive Saturdays every semester. The program included instruction on effective teaching methods. The return on the investment to Burlington County College to administer such a program far superseded the cost of doing business because it promoted better teaching, unity, and consistency among the adjunct faculty and built community within the teaching staff (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

At Prince George Community College, a task force to promote writing and reasoning across the curriculum was formed once low student scores in writing revealed the need to form a Critical Thinking Institute (Pierce, 2005). It was determined that critical thinking was lacking in two-year College classrooms across the nation. Prince George Community College led the charge by establishing a 24 person team comprised of adjunct faculty to develop and disseminate a program at a nominal cost to promote change and improve teaching outcomes across the curriculum (Pierce, 2005). Known as the “Think Tank,” they met a few times per month to collaborate, arrive at innovative practices and develop strategies for teaching critical thinking (Pierce, 2005). By and large, the program met the goal to assimilate adjunct faculty with full-time faculty to reach all students and enhance daily learning from a greater critical stance; however, the results were not recorded on how well the program worked. Finally, when institutions identify a need to enhance teaching effectiveness and meet higher standards and goals,

the focus may turn to the adjunct faculty to deliver a quality program, which goes without saying, but not without training.

Mentoring and Peer-mentoring

Professional development opportunities such as mentoring can achieve quality teaching effectiveness when combined with training and orientation to the programs, policies, and procedures of an institution prior to the start of a class session, creating opportunities to nurture relationship building between junior and senior faculty (Sorcinelli, 1994). Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) defined the effort of mentoring as an informal process, which feeds upon the chemistry or mystique between two individuals while micromanagement inhibits spontaneity and creativity. In addition, the inherent ability of one who cares beyond the scope and outside of any managed framework promotes a sense of community and self-confidence among adjunct faculty.

The act of mentoring serves to foster a caring and nurturing environment where the informal transcends the traditional structured view of mentoring (Zellers et al., 2008). This form of professional development builds relationships and addresses the needs of adjunct faculty, and by creating pairs, mentoring can serve to build in-depth relationships. In support of this theory, Blake-Beard (2009) stated that mentoring could act as a form of connecting and creating synergy among groups to achieve greater in-depth ideas, strengthening those involved in the process. Thus, mentoring bridges the gaps within groups, such as large adjunct faculty pools, with one goal and objective: these bridges can translate into success. When outside influences, such as economics, exert societal pressures and inside budget mandates create a need to develop new processes, institutions

with mentoring programs in place will be supported during these times (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006).

In addition to supporting institutional goals and objectives, adjunct faculty are expected to use diverse instructional formats, which may include online, blended, and face-to-face venues for delivering undergraduate and graduate courses. This is now the norm rather than the exception and it has become vitally necessary for colleges and universities to address the support needed to educate their teaching workforce (Rogers et al., 2010). Today, this growth is due to institutions addressing the economic needs of the future and adding nontraditional programs that sustain traditional offerings and support financial operations (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). This study was designed to explore the need for effective peer-mentoring as a form of professional development to create instructional proficiency in higher education. According to Harnish and Wild (1994), peer-mentoring can serve as a powerful intervention.

The model by Kathleen Vinlove, (2011) for professional development of adjunct faculty investigated the context behind a program for continuous training and mentoring by suggesting a program model that explored the delivery of on-going instructional mentoring of business adjunct faculty. Upon examination, the Vinlove (2011) study proved to be an effective model for continuous training and mentoring and demonstrated the elements pertaining to the characteristics and behaviors of effective peer-mentors. Vinlove (2011) believed that successful adjunct faculty training and development programs should focus on the goals, be accessible, and have expert mentor leadership, interactive community building, and adequate administrative support. As a mentoring program, Vinlove's Model for Continuous Training and Mentoring (CTM) identified the

effective skills needed to promote quality education in the classroom. Most importantly, Vinlove (2011) and Ziegler Rieff (2006) believed that when administration recognizes the need for a mentoring development program, they can create a culture of inclusion that unites adjunct faculty and contingent faculty as a significant entity that can support the university's goals.

Goal Focus/Accessibility

Clearly defined goals and easy program access

Development of curriculum content

Teaching strategies

Working knowledge of internal practices and procedures

Cooperation with administration towards improvement

Readiness and openness to learning new technologies in classroom automation

Classroom observations of mentee during the first course session

Provisions for constructive feedback

Flexible scheduling, asynchronous, meets diverse needs

Expert Mentor Leadership

Be collaborative

Take responsibility to own the relationship with the mentee

Motivate, Inspire, Coach your mentee and share information

Be visionary

Develop a plan to observe teaching

Set goals, clarify, and conduct a mentoring session

Explain support resources

Maintain constructive relationships

Ensure that the mentees clearly understand their responsibilities

Maintain time sensitivities and facilitate networking

Stimulate curiosity and build confidence by presenting new ideas, opportunities, and challenges

Guide the mentee toward reaching academic goals

Interactive Community Building/Administrative Support

Be willing to exchange ideas and experiences

Be open to constructive critiques to build the program

Communicate with other mentors; acting as a resource when possible

Serve as an early adopter for new technologies

Meet and listen with an open mind to offer assistance to adjunct faculty team

Be observant and open to explaining all concerns (pp. 4–6)

5 Basic Elements of the Vinlove Model for
Continuous Training and Mentoring



Figure 1. Vinlove CTM Model for Continuous Training and Mentoring

The Vinlove (2011) study, *A Model for Continuous Training and Mentoring of Adjunct Faculty*, suggested strategies for professional development of adjunct faculty and investigated the context behind a successful professional development program that engages in peer-mentoring adjunct faculty. Vinlove (2011) cited that adjunct faculty should receive ongoing mentoring. This study was oriented toward seeking to find if this new innovative professional development training method could add value to the current status of our nation's colleges and universities. According to Vinlove, (2011), ongoing mentoring has been known to encourage some adjunct faculty to continue to teach and can result in sustaining this very important workforce.

Although the objective of this study was to reveal the necessary qualities found in the business adjunct faculty workforce through continuous peer-mentoring, I also sought to identify the facets of the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program that create opportunities for these individuals to flourish at this Midwestern University College.

Cuyahoga Community College developed a peer-mentoring program called Educators Peer Instructional Consulting (EPIC) as a response to serious complaints and concerns about its existing program. The concerns indicated that teachers were unprepared, uninformed about college policies and procedures, and inaccessible to students. Cuyahoga Community College responded with the implementation of a quality peer-mentoring program that involved assigning a mentor to each teacher to observe their classroom performance through regular visits, and maintaining data for future training programs if needed (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). This mentoring program encouraged and

supported professional development while enhancing the skill sets of the participants and strengthening their morale and disposition (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).

Since 1985, the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) has recognized that adjunct faculty is essential to the fulfillment of their mission and responsiveness to adult learning. Approximately 800 undergraduate courses a semester are taught entirely by adjunct faculty. Thus, the goal is to provide teaching strategies, and to become skilled to motivate and facilitate student learning (Millis, 1994). Millis (1994) stated, “They must also feel committed to the institution and to its teaching mission. A strong viable faculty development program helps UMUC achieve these goals” (p. 75). When a new adjunct faculty is hired, he/she can gain familiarity with the program and receive ongoing support that includes a visit by a teaching colleague in the same or a related discipline. The program is administered by the Assistant Dean. Discipline matches are always met in the highly specialized or upper level courses. In other instances, discipline matches are desirable, but not necessary. The mentors in the program receive intensive on-going 3-hour training workshops and are trained in reporting accurately on teaching processes, regardless of the discipline. A contributing factor to the success of the program is professional collegiality, or “colleagues helping colleagues”; success of the program is demonstrated when mentees become mentors themselves (Millis, 1994, pp. 73-79).

Leadership and Facilitation

While adjunct faculty can aid in promoting the mission and vision at an institution with their diverse backgrounds, they also bring leadership and a commitment for teaching and facilitation. Practicing experts, such as adjunct faculty, can be a vital link between

all stakeholders associated with the college or university (Wallin, 2004). The prior experience of the adjunct faculty aids in bringing current and up-to-date perspectives into the classroom along with hands-on exposure to elaborate and breathe life into classroom topics that can benefit from firsthand examples. By bringing this knowledge and prior experience to the subjects that they teach, the faculty exposes the students to the practical aspect of the application. In many adult-centered institutions, adjunct faculty can augment the quality of instruction and affect positive student outcomes (Mancuso, 2001).

In addition, the growth of the adult population has increased the need for many adult programs to offer diverse delivery models of instruction in traditional colleges and universities, in for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, specifically to serve adults (Charlier & Williams, 2011; Wlodkowski, 2003). Mancuso (2001) identified and defined adults as those individuals who have met family, work, and community objectives in life and are independent of parents and full-time student status. In addition, the requirements for these individuals in higher education institutions are set apart from the traditional student. Mancuso (2001) maintained that there is a heavy reliance on adjunct faculty in adult learner centered institutions and yet, there has been little research on the impact of this practice on student learning.

Sternerson et al. (2010) found that the adult learner requires courses that meet their diverse needs. For example, professional fields such as nursing, paralegal, and design programs require that the most recent information be disseminated because it is needed for licensure, certifications, and university and college accreditations. As cited by Johnson et al. (2001), career fields that require performance-based assessment measures and maintain a certain level of preparation by skilled field workers and adjunct faculty

may offer support in preparing students for such examinations. The adult population is the fastest growing enterprise in general education, both nationally and internationally (Wlodkowski, 2003). A two-year research study, sponsored by MetLife for the American Council on Education (2007), revealed that higher education should center its programs on the needs of older adults because of the emerging trend for workplace development. According to Wlodkowski (2003), older adult students enroll in a degree-granting higher education institution to further along their career development, enhance their skills, and sharpen their areas of expertise so as to allow them to gain footage in the job market.

In general, the growth of the adult population is the driving force for many adult programs to offer nontraditional facilitation models such as accelerated programs of instruction in traditional colleges and universities, both in for-profit and not-for-profit institutions, specifically to serve adults (Wlodkowski, 2003). Above all, the accelerated program can offer the adult learner an intense course, offered in a condensed format to achieve similar results as a traditional program, which meets the needs of the working adult (Wlodkowski, 2003).

Wlodkowski (1985) concluded, “There are four cornerstones which can be learned, controlled and planned for that form the foundation for anyone who instructs adults” (p. 17). When one or more of these facets are omitted there may be minimal support for the possibilities and opportunities which can be offered to this very important student population. The four cornerstones which help to explain, shape, define, and identify characteristics that model attributes for instructors who demonstrate skills that motivate adult learners, are expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, and clarity (Wlodkowski, 1985). Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2011) highlighted Wlodkowski’s (1985)

characteristics and skills of motivating instructors as a model, which also can serve to motivate learners. When these characteristics are demonstrated, adult learners can achieve beyond their potential (Knowles et al., 2011). These four qualities can serve as beneficial when hiring, observing, evaluating, and building a quality adjunct faculty team.

1. Expertise: the power of knowledge and preparation
 - Knows something beneficial to adults
 - Knows it well
 - Is prepared to convey it through an instructional process
2. Empathy: the power of understanding and consideration.
 - Has a realistic understanding of the learner's needs and expectations.
 - Has adapted instruction to the learner's level of experience and skill development
 - Continuously considers learners' perspectives.
3. Enthusiasm: the power of commitment and animation.
 - Cares about and values what is being taught.
 - Expresses commitment with appropriate degrees of emotion, animation, and energy.
4. Clarity: the power of language and organization.
 - Can be understood and followed by most learners.
 - Provide for learners a way to comprehend what has been taught if it is not clear in the initial presentation (p. 199).

According to Wlodkowski (1985) learning outcomes and post-training motivation to learn directly affects the adult learners need to know. Wlodkowski is known as a leader in the theory of andragogy, and adult learning concepts. The first principle of andragogy states, “Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it” (Wlodkowski, 1985).

Subsequently, when hiring adjunct faculty to meet the objectives of the institution and the adult learner at these adult colleges and universities, their professional experiences are viewed as assets in the classroom (Wlodkowski, 2003). Outside network associations, which are common for the adjunct faculty in adult colleges, contribute toward the learning that the adult student thrives upon (Johnson & Stevens, 2008). As stated by Johnson and Stevens (2008), adult students characterize the experiences that adjunct faculty contribute to the coursework as being paramount to an adult student’s in-class learning experience.

For instance, Malcolm Knowles, a primary contributor to adult learning theory, believed that adult learners need “retooling” to competently meet societal changes and form the beliefs and assumptions, which inform our society (cited in Smith, 2002). With respect to Malcom Knowles, Rogers (2006), a supporter of Knowles’ teaching theories and an educator in the field of nursing, stated that adults want to know answers to questions pertaining to how their learning experience will support their career goals. Johnson and Stevens stated that the classroom experience can build professional relationships and is the focal point of their learning (Johnson & Stevens, 2008). Moreover, Mancuso (2001) believed that when adjunct faculty connect their business networks and exercise flexibility by working at multiple locations during evenings and

weekends, they insure an institution's economic stability. Hence, linking budgetary requirements is essential to improve teaching quality through the unique experiences of adjunct faculty and their prior knowledge, which supports students' career goals and workplace readiness objectives (Mancuso, 2001).

Klein-Collins (2011) and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL, 2011) purported that education programs providing flexible schedules with evening courses and an accelerated course model, as mentioned by Wlodkowski (2003), for the working adult learner are meeting the needs of the working adult population. Klein-Collins also mentioned that this rapidly growing population in higher education today, comprising approximately 40% of all enrollments on college campuses, is comprised of adult students. Thus, with the increase of opportunities for the growing population in higher education to reinvent their marketable skills (Klein-Collins, 2011), the leadership experience and prior knowledge of the adjunct faculty can serve to motivate and add interest, while offering a higher level of learning in the classroom for all students.

By widening the link between the community and the college, the adjunct faculty serves to support the diverse student population by bridging the latest perspectives from the field to the classroom (Wallin, 2004). In addition, linking adjunct faculty to the community can act as the catalyst for today's students to transition their classroom knowledge into their professional fields of study. Accordingly, studies have reported the needs, interests, and characteristics of the adjunct faculty in a four-year college (AAUP, 2003; Meixner et al., 2010) along with the differences between tenured and part-time faculty (Landrum, 2009).

Researchers referring to adjunct faculty have discussed other practice-related characteristics, such as having no specific place to work from other than home, student summative evaluations, and grading effectiveness (Landrum, 2009). The Landrum report (2009), for instance, reported no difference in the teaching quality of full-time faculty when compared to adjunct faculty, and warned higher education institutions to be careful not to abuse the adjunct faculty and their ability to be flexible because they are helping the administration to meet their economic and administrative objectives. Similarly, a number of studies have focused on the tremendous need for adjunct faculty at community colleges where these professionals are in the majority (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995).

Tuscan (2004) stated that, because undergraduate courses are being taught by adjunct faculty, the opportunities for PhD graduates to teach are declining. This adds to the responsibility of today's college administrators to fill these assignments of rapid growth with responsible individuals who are dedicated to the professional acumen of teaching as opposed to individuals simply seeking a part-time job (Gerhart, 2004). Latta (2004), a visiting professor of pharmaceutical marketing teaching at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, mentioned that adjunct faculty with experience in both higher education and the business world can be an additive to an institution's success, serving in a unique role, while integrating into academia. The business world adds value to academia, which hires these professionals to teach (Baldwin, 2006). When difficulties afflict higher education institutions with larger than life enrollments and new programs, adjunct faculty are vital to helping these institutions to succeed (Stenerson et al., 2010).

Business professionals with the desire to teach bear deep wisdom from prior knowledge and expertise (Gappa et al., 2007) and may have strong leadership ties to the traditions of corporate America. Many have reached first level senior management ranks and are wise and willing to impart this knowledge during their teaching. Hiring these professionals in higher education institutions can provide students the opportunity to utilize these business professionals as a resource and possibly as a mentor in their careers (Lyons, 2004). According to Gappa et al. (2007), the expertise and prior knowledge of these individuals is valuable to both the students and the institutions. Their up-to-date knowledge in their specific fields adds to students' learning and supports students' career aspirations by providing them with the necessary tools that they need to succeed in their respective fields.

Gappa et al. (2007) and Stenerson et al. (2010) stated that careers in areas such as business, engineering, health sciences, and the arts can effectively impact students by broadening their breadth of knowledge from the prior experiences of the adjunct faculty. Political strategist Donna Brazile, former chair of the Democratic National Committee's Voting Rights Insitutute, is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University (Brazile, 2004). Former Illinois Attorney General, Jim Ryan, is an adjunct faculty in the Political Science Department at Benedictine University. Ryan has experience, outstanding credentials, and a wealth of prior knowledge to impart to his students (Benedictine University, 2011). Other notables, including Al Gore, are adjunct faculty at Middle Tennessee State University, Columbia University in New York, and Fisk University in Tennessee. Spike Lee is adjunct faculty at Tisch School of the Arts in New York City (Cornett, 2010), and Jill Biden, second lady in 2012, became an adjunct faculty member

in 2009 and is now a full-time professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College after receiving many offers to teach at other institutions (Rucker, 2009).

According to Latta (2004), “A blend of the values of academia and the business world produce the highest values in both” (p.22). Donna Brazile expressed the belief that it is vital for her to share her political wisdom and knowledge in the classroom and to encourage students to learn foreign policy, voting, social security enactments, and national and international policy (Brazile, 2004). Thus, students can enter the job market well equipped to compete with their peers in their specific field of study.

The job market breeds competition and it is important to have up-to-date job skills through education (Pyper & Belanger, 2004). According to Pyper and Belanger (2004), historically, adult education has been a resource to enhance job skills. It has been confirmed that the older adult student is the emerging student population (American Council on Education (2007). As a result, corporations are creating partnerships with adult learning institutions and are familiarizing and combining internal training and development departments with the use of continuing education institutions (Pyper & Belanger, 2004).

To meet the needs of the adult students, accelerated course offerings and the use of technology as an option for students to access learning asynchronously have become increasingly appealing (Green & Ciez-Volz, 2010). Although this method of delivering instruction is appealing and necessary, having tech-savvy, skilled faculty using multiple Learning Management Systems is becoming a priority so as to compete in the education marketplace (Green & Ciez-Volz, 2010). Wlodkowski (2003) pointed out that these

accelerated programs are growing at a rapid pace and are in place to support working adult learners.

In addition, effective adult learning instructors need to know how adults learn (Lieb, 1991). As noted previously, the increased use of adjunct faculty on today's American college campuses continues to spread (Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Mancuso, 2001; Meixner et al., 2010; Stenerson et al., 2010; Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). According to Belcher (2009), andragogy, founded by Knowles in 1970, emerged after finding that the adult learner responded best to un-prescribed teaching with limited lectures embedded in facts, assigned readings, quizzes, rote memorization, and examinations. Passerelli and Kolb (2009), who labeled this form of learning as continual, asserted that when learners have valid reasons to believe in the ideas or subjects, and the concepts are concrete, then new ideas may surface. When facilitators transfer their experiences from their worldview through instruction, the process of learning from prior knowledge spreads throughout the community of learners (Passerelli & Kolb, 2009).

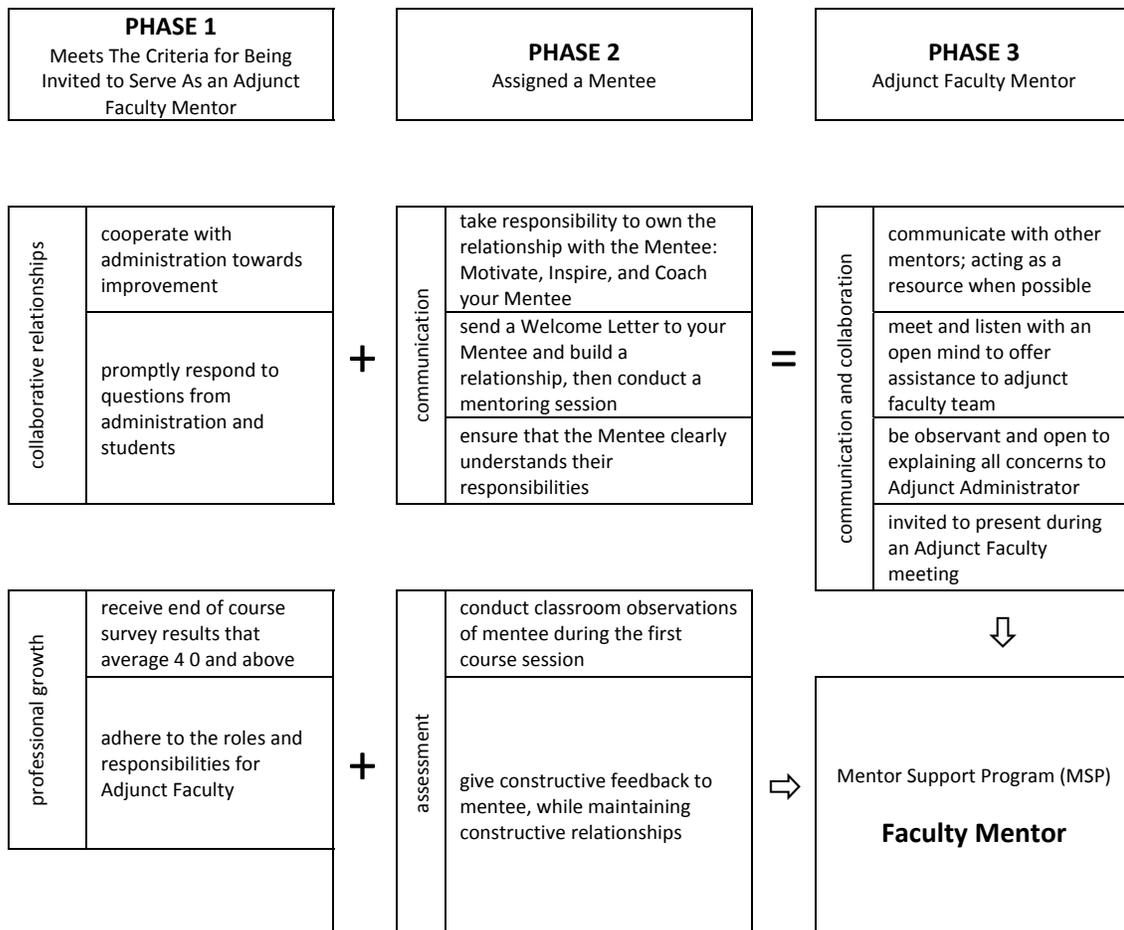
This study will investigate peer-mentoring at the University College and what makes peer-mentoring unique and able to transcend the traditional structured view of mentoring (Zellers et al., 2008) may be that both the mentor and the mentee are on the same department level (Sands, Parson, & Duane, 1991), which is not a normal practice of mentoring. Usually, as discussed earlier the term mentor describes a role model and/or sponsor. Oftentimes, mentors may function as a teacher, sponsor, host, guide, exemplar, and counselor, all of which a peer-mentor can fulfill (Sands et al., 1991). As mentioned previously, there is very little research on peer-mentoring; yet when peers at the University College provide mentoring, the adjunct faculty can develop long-term

relationships and can become engaged within the community. Described in this way, mentoring is a form of leadership and role modeling, which requires ethical behavior in and out of the classroom. Center for Ethical Leadership (2002) founder Bill Grace defined ethical leadership as “knowing your core values, and having the courage to act on them on behalf of the common good” (p. 1). Entering into this study, I sought to find the core values of the adjunct faculty peer-mentors and to align them with practice that can best support closure of the gap in the literature concerning perceptions of adjunct faculty and attitudes toward integration, teaching skills, and student outcomes. Peer-mentoring appears to create synergy and builds self-confidence where there are areas of deficiency to enrich student engagement.

At the University College, the site for this study, the adjunct faculty serves as mentors to junior faculty members in the business program and evaluates their teaching and classroom management skills. Once the junior faculty members’ performance and contributions to the students and administration have exceeded the required expectations, their services may include writing courses, presenting at professional development events and meetings to support college wide decisions, and attending the many functions throughout the year that create community at the University College. The criteria to become a peer-mentor at this University College include: (a) the adjunct faculty meets the criteria and is invited to be a mentor, (b) the adjunct faculty is assigned a mentee, and (c) the adjunct faculty becomes a mentor. Figure 2 below is an illustration of the guidelines of the Mentor Support Program (MSP) currently being used at the University College and demonstrates the tiered phased approach which allows for learning in a step

format. The design of this approach gives mentors an opportunity to gradually increase their skills over time.

The Mentor Support Program (MSP) (see Figure 2), provides continuous one-on-one training to support junior and more experienced adjunct faculty with answers to their questions as they develop in their teaching roles. In addition, this group writes courses in their disciplines, and observes classroom teaching of their peers. The adjunct faculty peer-mentors facilitate workshops and presentations while being given additional responsibilities from administration that support classroom management at the University College (See Figure 2). The guidelines of the Mentor Support Program (MSP) are presented as follows.



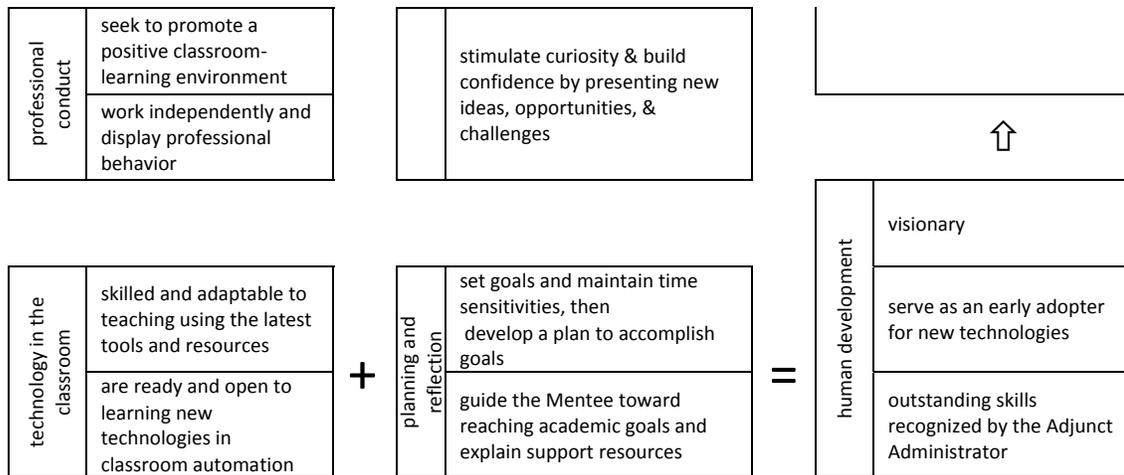


Figure 2. Mentor Support Program (MSP)

Meeting the criteria to be invited to become an adjunct peer-mentor requires certain attributes. In phase 1 of the MSP, the mentor (a) demonstrates teamwork with administration; (b) receives 4.0 or higher scores on the IDEA end of course survey; (c) promotes an engaging and stimulating classroom environment; and (d) uses the latest tools and resources available and is ready to learn new technologies in classroom automation. In phase 2, the mentor (a) builds a relationship with the mentee and owns the responsibility to ensure the mentee clearly understands their responsibilities; (b) conducts classroom observations of the mentee gives constructive feedback and presents new ideas and challenges; and (c) sets goals, maintains time sensitivities, develops a plan, guides the mentee toward reaching academic goals and explains support resources. In phase 3, the mentor (a) communicates with peer mentors, provides support, listens and attends meetings when needed to offer assistance, facilitates at workshops and maintains openness regarding classroom concerns to adjunct administrators; and (b) is a visionary, serves as an early adopter for new technologies, recognized by administration for outstanding performance. At each phase of the program the peer-mentors skill sets become stronger. This study was designed to seek to understand these attributes,

characteristics, and skills needed to become an effective adjunct faculty peer-mentor at this private Midwestern University College.

Summary

This chapter addressed the pressures facing colleges and universities to meet the economic demands to increase revenue and lower costs. In this regard there are practices when hiring an adjunct faculty workforce that can maximize institutional effectiveness and support diverse program offerings. To enhance the quality and accountability of academic programs through the use of this workforce, greater responsibility to provide professional development can support institutional accreditations (Johnson et al. (2001).

The review of literature revealed that “over 50% of the states in the United States consider higher education performance when allocating resources and 70% expect to have such programs within the next 5 years” (Simpson & Sigauw, 2000, p. 199). In fact, adjunct faculty, and business adjunct faculty by extension, can offer a high level of learning in the classroom for all students (Klein-Collins, 2011).

Several studies analyzed in this review reveal that mentoring as a form of professional development can bridge training and development gaps and promote better teaching unity among the adjunct faculty workforce through the act of peer-mentoring. To gain a thorough understanding of the role of a peer-mentor, it is important to explore the lived experiences, qualities, and characteristics that an effective peer-mentor demonstrates as a role model for the mentee. In addition, many studies have contended that to meet the needs of the growing adult student population, programs that foster mentoring and promote support for adjunct faculty can enhance teaching, while

supporting the overall needs of the students. Mentoring fosters partnerships and mentors demonstrate leadership; for example, corporations are creating partnerships with adult learning institutions and are familiarizing and combining internal training and development departments with the use of continuing education institutions (Wlodkowski, 2003). Adjunct faculty from these corporate partnership relationships can be viable candidates for teaching opportunities.

Overall, it seems clear that when significant changes, such as declines in funding and financial demands, impact higher education, adding diverse course offerings can be a benefit to these institutions. When higher education administration aligns the adjunct faculty workforce with diverse course offerings, continuous training, and professional development can add sustainability to an institution. In turn, the opportunities that align with the nontraditional course offerings can enhance institutional quality and accountability (Ziegler & Rieff, 2006).

The literature analyzed in this chapter represents various notable authors' views, theories, and perspectives on adjunct faculty and what may be in the best interest for higher education institutions that employ this workforce. However, it appears that data highlighting the voices and exploring the experiences of this workforce are limited and herein lies the significance and rationale for this qualitative case study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

When business professionals transition from corporate careers into the classroom, higher education institutions face the challenge of supporting the value of their knowledge as well as the experience gained in their corresponding fields to benefit the academic environment (Bandow, Minsky, & Voss, 2007). Fagan-Wilen et al. (2006) admitted, “[The] benefits of employing adjunct faculty in social work are many” (p. 39). Oftentimes, researchers argue that the quality of adjunct faculty teaching does not compromise educational standards and succeeds in meeting student expectations (Smith, 2007). Programs such as social work (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006), nursing, (Forbes, Hickey, & White, 2009), or other professional programs (Stenerson et al., 2010) seem to be similar to the University College course offerings in using the blended, online, or face-to-face model (Smith, 2007). The transitional business adjunct faculty member who enters into higher education to teach often experiences a lack of support or inadequate support; this may present a problem with respect to meeting technology requirements, and without close oversight, workshops, or peer-mentoring the real needs of the adjunct faculty member may not be met (Bandow et al., 2007).

This interpretive case study was designed to explore the business adjunct faculty workforce and the ways it is nurtured and advanced by the institutional peer-mentoring

program to apply their knowledge and skills to the classroom instruction, leadership, and commitment to teaching excellence. The location of this site is a Midwestern University College for adult students seeking professional careers. The term University College will be used throughout the study to maintain confidentiality of the site. In this inquiry, I sought to uncover how the business adjunct faculty members develop the meaning of their teaching and leadership practice through mentoring experiences, and how these experiences serve to guide their actions in the classroom. This study focuses on the characteristics and qualities of peer-mentors among the business adjunct faculty at the University College and demonstrates how mentor relationships contribute to successful classroom instruction for students. Table 1 portrays the core process areas that drive success of the peer mentors at the university college. These processes and target areas identify the descriptions of a peer-mentor and the observable attributes, which qualify candidates for selection.

Table 1

The University College Adjunct Faculty Core Process Areas

Core Process Areas	Target Areas
Adjunct Faculty Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align with institutional mission and vision • Workforce benefits the institution • Hiring increases need for professional development • Sustainability of adjunct faculty
Mentoring/Peer-mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development and Training
Quality Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • IDEA End of Course Evaluations • Administrative responsibilities • Adoptions of new practices

- Adapt successfully to the accelerated teaching model (i.e., adult learning and non-traditional delivery)
-

The blended business graduate and undergraduate programs at the University College thrive because of the insatiable drive that these individuals have to succeed and their willingness to go to great lengths to perform at the highest level to support the students they teach. This study helped to identify the skill sets these adjunct faculty mentors bring to their role that augment and strengthen their classroom teaching, and aid in maintaining and enhancing the existing programs.

By establishing a process, I sought to identify a description for the effective adjunct faculty that can serve as a model to promote quality education in American universities and colleges. A high-quality adjunct faculty member is the one who feels recognized for his or her efforts and has a sense of belonging to a larger academic community. This study, therefore, posed the following research questions:

1. What are the facets of the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program at a private higher education institution that create the opportunities for these adjunct faculty to become an effective teaching workforce within the institution?
2. What are the qualities, characteristics, teaching styles, and strategies of these adjunct faculty members that contribute to their success and make them an exemplary teaching workforce within the institution?

Theoretical and Methodological Positioning of the Study

This study was designed to explore the experiences of the business adjunct faculty that shape their instructional strategies and a myriad of qualities and characteristics that make them an exemplary teaching force within the institution that was identified as a site for this study. The goal was also to demonstrate the facets of the peer-mentoring program that make the preparation of such a teaching force possible. I was interested in uncovering the contexts in which these adjunct faculty members develop their teaching skills and talents that allow them to flourish and excel at the institution that recognizes their contributions.

This inquiry was grounded in the tradition of interpretive research, which seeks to know how participants make meaning of their life experience. In addition, this study is informed by an interpretive lens to understand specific issues or topics relative to the advancement and recognition of the business adjunct faculty. Qualitative research is an “exciting interdisciplinary landscape comprising diverse perspectives and practices for generating knowledge” and it is an “intellectual, creative and rigorous craft that the practitioner not only learns but also develops through practice” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). The intention of this study was to pursue exactly this kind of inquiry that brings together creativity, imagination, and rigorous practice.

Research Design

Case Study

Case study was the best fit for this inquiry because it garners a better understanding of a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2003). The results or findings of case studies are often used to affect change in policy and practice at the research site. A

case study is an “in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). A bounded system demands that the case be “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (Creswell, 2007, p. 93). For example this study was bound by the central site location (place) of the research. Each of the peer-mentors was employed at the University College and is employed or bound within the site location.

Research Site and Participants

Located in the Midwestern part of the nation, University College is an adult and professional studies college, within a private university. The adult and professional studies college offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates, and lifelong learning enrichment programs. As mentioned earlier, these programs meet the needs of the adult learner student population, which is the fastest growing enrollment population on our nation’s campuses today (Wlodkowski, 2003). The student body at the University College exceeds 2,000 students. Paying close attention to the needs of the classroom facilitators of students is particularly important to attract and increase student enrollments.

The participants of this study are 10 business adjunct faculty peer-mentors, five male and five female members from the University College were selected to participate (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participants Length of Service at University College

Name	Years of Service	Previous Background
Alicia	7 Years	Entrepreneur
Pam	7 Years	Corporate Trainer
Ronald	6 Years	Corporate Manager
Adam	3 Years	Teacher, Business Professional, Entrepreneur
Colleen	6 Years	Corporate Manager, Counselor
Mary	7 Years	Minister, Counselor, Business Professional
Naomi	6 Years	Corporate Manager
Edward	3 Years	Counselor, Business Manager
Jesse	7 Years	Business Professional Consultant
Joshua	7 Years	Entrepreneur, Business Professional Consultant

The average length of service is significant because it demonstrates commitment to service delivery. While each participant is employed full-time or holds the position of an independent consultant, they manage to do an exemplary job in their teaching at the University College. In addition, each participant is proficient in all phases of the peer-mentoring program at University College. Each peer-mentor was selected based on their peer-mentor status, completing each phase successfully, which they all had in common. One criterion for each selected participant was the achievement of an average 4.0 adjusted score over a maximum of 2 years on the Individual Development Educational and Assessment [IDEA] survey. Another criterion was to demonstrate success in teaching techniques and technology by receiving successful classroom observations.

The convenience selection method was chosen to ensure ample participants and the availability of the researcher (Creswell, 2003). I employed purposeful sampling to intentionally select the individuals that would be the greatest assets to the study (Creswell, 2007). The selection type best fits this study because these individuals are the most likely to provide the information that can inform this study. The main function of the interviews and the focus group was to establish an understanding of how the participants perceived their role of adjunct faculty and the peer-mentoring experience. The criteria for selection included adjunct faculty who performed in a peer-mentorship role in the program at the university and who responded to the letter of invitation (see Appendix B). A consent form (see Appendix C) was presented to each participant to sign on the date of the interview.

Data Collection Strategies

Interviews

Individual and focus group interviews comprised major data for analysis. Qualitative researchers benefit primarily from semi-structured interviews that allow emergent questions to develop from the initial open-ended questions, providing greater insight into the experience and perceptions of participants in the exploration of events (Creswell, 2009). I intend to identify the “essence” of the experience being described by the participants (Yin, 1994). According to Yin (2003), the open-ended interview allows the participants to express their own opinions relative to facts or events. The objective of the interviews is to allow for open conversation in which participants are able to reflect on the meaning of their experience(s) as adjunct faculty and within the mentor relationship. Data gathering begins at no certain time and, as mentioned earlier in this

study, I have paid close attention to the voices of the participants and my own voice intertwined within the narrative. I entered each interview open to learning about each individual story and put aside all pre-conceived notions and assumptions (Stake, 1995).

Ten participants agreed to participate in individual semi-structured interviews for the purposes of this study (Interview Protocol is provided in Appendix D). Each interview used the same Interview Protocol and the interviews lasted between one 1-1.5 hours. The interviews were videotaped and transcribed. Qualitative researchers benefit primarily from semi-structured interviews that allow for the data to emerge inductively in chunks such as words, phrases, sentences, and the whole paragraphs that can provide insight into the experience. In addition, the focus group interviews were conducted to shed the light on the adjunct faculty performance and their place within the larger institutional structures. Semi-structured interviews allow for the questions, time frames, and response formats to be the same for each participant (Stangor, 2004).

Each participant volunteered willingly to engage in either the one-on-one interview or a focus group with the exception of two individuals who lived out of state. The selection process used was convenient and purposeful to obtain rich descriptions and meaningful data. The out of state interviews were conducted using Conferencecall.com during the focus group. The classrooms were booked on campus for the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interview was held in a campus conference room. The one on one and focus group interviews were designed around the issues of the adjunct faculty workforce, peer-mentoring, quality instruction, and leadership and facilitation strategies.

Prior to each interview, the consent letter was signed and each participant agreed to the videotaping of the interview. The interviews were open-ended and the participants were able to respond to follow-up questions when probed. The consent letter was emailed to the phone participants and was returned signed. In addition to the videotaping, notes were taken of the individual responses. To ensure consistency throughout the interviews an Interview Protocol was used that addressed each topic (See Appendix D). The Interview Protocol included 10 open-ended questions that helped to frame the interview (Creswell, 2007).

I was careful to bracket my past exposure to the role of an adjunct faculty member by approaching each interview scene open to learn about each individual story and its uniqueness, uninfluenced by personal biases, and to listen and obtain the interpretations of each participant (Stake, 1995). The transcripts of the interviews were presented to the participants for verification of accuracy after the interviews.

The interview questions were designed using the literature, observations, and end of course survey document to gain meaningful data from the research to aid in the development of the questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Because the literature is limited on the topic of peer-mentoring adjunct faculty, the data assisted in the formulation of new concepts and ideas to support this area of study.

Additional Sources of Data

In addition to the focus group and the one on one interviews, throughout the study, I obtained the IDEA survey results of the participants and the program overview with highlights that specifically explain the program responsibilities and procedures for all new peer-mentors prior to an assignment. The diagram offered in Figure 2 in Chapter

two explains the pathway and process to becoming a peer-mentor using a phased approach.

Data Analysis Procedures

My intention in this study was to present a holistic description of the program and to explore the business adjunct faculty workforce and the perceived impact of peer-mentoring on the contributors toward quality instruction and their leadership and commitment to teaching excellence. The analysis of qualitative data typically involves identification of emerging themes from the interviews or issues so as to move deeper and gain greater awareness of the characteristics and emerging commonalities (Creswell, 2003).

The initial step in this process entailed coding from the transcripts of data compiled by Fox Transcripts for each interview and the focus group. I used an Excel spreadsheet to record the data results, created categories, classified themes, and found codes which were aligned with the Interview Protocol (See Appendix D). In addition, I employed Bubbl.us, a software mapping tool to classify and organize the data into themes and in keeping with the central issues, adjunct faculty workforce, peer-mentoring, quality instruction, and leadership facilitation strategies, data were coded first by the usage of these tools.

Coding was followed by identification of larger meaningful units, such as themes or categories that speak directly to the research purposes and questions. Through the analysis, a deeper understanding of the characteristics of adjunct faculty instructors that make them exemplary facilitators was gained. I followed the steps of analysis suggested by Creswell (2003), which involved (a) organizing and preparing the data for analysis,

which entails transcribing the interviews, writing up the field notes; (b) reading all the data to find what the participants are saying, the tone of the ideas, underlying themes, credibility, and usefulness of the information, including data obtained through note taking or observations throughout the interview process, which can be helpful at this point; (c) sorting, arranging, and organizing the data in group types to arrive at themes (pp. 186–192).

Research Boundaries

Throughout the study, I made an effort to minimize my researcher biases to ensure the credibility of research findings. All researchers are responsible and have an obligation to ensure that important and meaningful data are recorded and reported with adequate detail (Stake, 1995).

I relied on the recommendations of Lodico et al. (2010) to employ the criteria for credibility of my research:

Accurate representation of the research, honest portrayal and data validation [...] member checks, peer de-briefing, attention to voice and external bias examination of all data collected in the study; [...] dependability—full disclosure of data collected and clearly traceable and available for future studies; transferability—a non-essential criterion that can add to existing bodies of work or make a difference within the community or setting in which the study is taking place; [and] co-ownership. (pp. 169–171)

For instance, member checking takes place with the participants in the study to determine if their findings are accurate (Creswell, 2008). After the data collection, I performed member checks to ensure that the interpretations of the data were reliable recollections of the participants' experiences (Lodico et al., 2010). According to Creswell (2008), member checking is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account. Oftentimes, interviewees may find that

because of the close proximity of the researcher and the nature of the study, the responses may lean toward what the interviewee may feel they want the researcher to hear, as opposed to what they actually feel. Therefore, by performing this check, I supported the findings in a manner in which there was no prejudice or unconscious insertion of my viewpoints.

Reflections

For me, transitioning to full time higher education after being a business professional has been a true test of persistence. My previous roles in corporate business settings served as preparation for my current role as assistant dean at the University College and gave me the knowledge, context, and substantive information necessary to transfer my skills and make recommendations to others seeking the same transition.

What is required to be effective as an adjunct faculty member? In my view, teaching is a gratifying passion, and given the role of the researcher and the responsible party for the peer-mentors at the University College, I will continue to inform and enhance the program in support of teaching and learning.

During my career in business, I had two jobs and oftentimes more than that, just so I, as a single parent, could effectively earn a substantial wage to support my child and myself. Having a mentor as a guide to encourage and provide me with the necessary background that I needed to move through the ranks in higher education made a positive difference for me. I recognize the benefits of mentoring, and as adjunct faculty and in recognition of their reliance on training and development to achieve quality outcomes, the results of this study, I hope, can serve to add promise to the continuous promotion of the peer-mentoring program.

What follows is the analysis and reflections on the data that I have gathered from multiple sources in order to build a comprehensive case in support of the peer-mentoring program that prepares, nurtures, and advances business adjunct faculty—the effective, valuable, and exemplary teaching force at a Midwestern private institution.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

Hiring adjunct faculty practitioner professionals in higher education institutions can provide the opportunity to utilize these business professionals as a resource and possibly in the careers of students (Lyons, 2004). The expertise and prior knowledge of these individuals is valuable to both the students and the institutions (Gappa et al., 2007). Their up-to-date knowledge in their specific fields adds to students' learning and supports students' career aspirations by providing them with the necessary tools that they need to succeed in their respective fields. Adjunct faculty in careers in areas such as business, engineering, health sciences, and the arts can effectively impact students by broadening their breadth of knowledge from the prior experiences of the adjunct faculty (Gappa et al., 2007; Stenerson et al., 2010).

The adjunct faculty who participated in this study had a myriad of motivations supporting their desire to accept the opportunity to teach. In addition, many attributes can contribute toward quality teaching. This case study was designed to explore and demonstrate how these stellar professionals could contribute to the university as an effective and exemplary teaching workforce. An inquiry into the professional experiences of the 10 adjunct faculty peer-mentors at the University College served to highlight the connections between peer-mentoring and contributors to quality adjunct faculty instruction, resulting in ultimate gains for students, faculty, and the university community.

As discussed earlier, the analysis of data involved identifying the themes, which enabled me to gain greater awareness of the characteristics and emerging commonalities (Creswell, 2003). I employed a systematic process to analyze the data. The eight steps identified by Creswell (2003) specifically address the coding process, which helped to identify the themes. First, I read all of the transcripts and created a spreadsheet, creating codes, themes, and categories. Once each transcript was read thoroughly, codes were developed and written next to the appropriate segments of the transcript. Concepts were identified from the codes and grouped together to determine the dominant themes. In addition, once the codes emerged and became repetitive and relevant (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), they were linked to the in-depth and focus group interview questions on the spreadsheet. I used an Excel spreadsheet to organize the data, Bubbl.us software, a mapping program, and PowerPoint to aggregate the data and created groupings in Bubbl.us, linking them to conceptual themes. I found that in some cases there was overlapping between categories.

After several iterations, the codes resulted in three emerging themes. The emerging themes identified areas that summarized how these peer-mentors view their role and the contributing factors that influence their teaching. The major themes that emerged as a result of the data analysis were: *community*, *accountability*, and *assessment* (See Table 3). These themes were highlighted during various discussions and from these themes the codes formed topics, which unfolded into six categories that developed three concepts built upon theoretical themes derived from category labeling (Creswell, 2003). The categorical theoretical themes are: *Commitment to Teaching*, *Prior Knowledge Contributes to Student Engagement*, and *Culture of Community: Accountability and*

Assessment Adds Value to Teaching. Each of these themes related to and aligned with the major themes. These themes and categories are presented in Table 3 and further discussed in the chapter.

Table 3

Adjunct Faculty Workforce as Community

Commitment To Teaching	Prior Knowledge Contributes to Classroom Engagement	Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value To Teaching
Building Community Motivation, Flexibility	Corporate Trainer, Manager, customer Service, Ministerial, Coach, Facilitator, Consultant, Teacher, Team Builder, Customer oriented	Innovation, Creativity, Self- assessing, Sensitivity, Building Community, Relating to Diversity, Assessment Practices. Promoting Self-discovery, Developing Peer-to-Peer Relationships, Communication
Sharing Skills and Empowering Students	Leadership, Life Experience	IDEA Surveys, Encouraging Feedback
Belief in Instruction, and Commitment for Education	Transferable Skills, Application of Learning	Promotes Self-Discovery, Immediate Self-Reflection, Self-evaluations

Accordingly, workforce “community” is a key component to the classroom teaching success realized by these peer-mentors. The adjunct faculty peer-mentors’ comments overwhelmingly mentioned how the management of their time supports their accountability to the workplace and their families. In addition, they each approached the end of course surveys and their assessment sessions seriously with their mentees. The transparency that they each shared demonstrated how they support the institution’s

policies, practices, and goals. During the interviews, the participants explained that true “community” does exist at this University College among this workforce.

Adjunct Faculty Workforce as Community

The use of the term community in higher education refers to attributes of adjunct faculty as explained by Gappa, et.al (2007).

When faculty feel as if they belong to a common, caring, respectful community of scholars that are considerate of one another’s contributions to the institution and feel a concern for their colleagues’ well-being, they experience a sense of collegiality. (pp. 305-306)

The adjunct faculty workforce at the University College is a key component to ushering in success at this institution. Hard work and dedication enable the staff, administration, and the programs to be successful. Because there are so few individuals to produce a quality product, it is imperative to have dedicated people on staff who embrace the institutional policies, mission, and visions engulfed within the tradition and history of the University. The goals have been established to empower students and equip them for future change through education. The recurring theme during the interviews focused upon community as a thread that kneaded throughout the conversations as a conduit to the success of the academic programs and each individual participant.

Building a sense of “community” was mentioned throughout the interviews as a necessary strategy for success among adjunct faculty because it was cited that when it does not exist, breakdowns occur within the organization. Adam explained very candidly:

I think all adjuncts are challenged to try to build community; to feel part of a place. I think we do a fantastic job of that here; we really bring people together through our monthly workshops, through get-togethers, meet ups, discussions, faculty lounge; we really do a great job of that. The challenge is to continue to do that, to keep making that happen, to keep growing that, to keep involving people.

Disadvantages that can occur when “community” does not exist institutionally also were cited by Pam and Alicia:

Not feeling part of the institution and no sense of community. Fortunately we have a strong bond within our team and we do not have that here. (Alicia)

When there is a lack of community, and no support system unlike what we have here so that's not a lack for us. (Pam)

Community within this adjunct faculty workforce has found a deeper connection, which enables these colleagues to support each other's suggestions, ideas, and recommendations in the promotion of the goals and vision of the University and which supports their commitment to the institution. Realizing that there was a gap between what the administration expected and how the adjunct faculty would achieve those expectations it was necessary to have teachers that enjoyed teaching others to achieve success as their primary priority.

Motivation to Teach

With this described connection between community and motivation in this study, it was important to address the motivations that drive some business practitioners to the profession of adjunct faculty with these peer-mentors. When I posed the question with regard to what motivated them to become an adjunct faculty, the participants in this study cited several motivations for choosing adjunct faculty in some cases as a second career. These responses included (a) the flexibility to teach when I can and when I want to; (b) the ability to utilize my prior experiences; (c) financial reasons; (d) passion, or love for education; (e) seeking full-time employment in higher education; and (f) the desire to be an inspiration to my students. Alicia was drawn to the profession because of the flexibility that contract work offered and simply stated:

I wanted the flexibility to teach when I can and when I want to, I do not wish to be in the classroom full time, being an adjunct is really an appropriate situation.

Naomi shared that the opportunities to teach could open doors and possibly could offer her opportunities to teach full time in higher education because:

Being in a corporate role didn't qualify me for teaching in a university; I knew I had to start in the adjunct rankings because I wanted to become a teacher in higher education.

Colleen reflected upon being an inspiration to others:

I am motivated by the opportunity to inspire or empower others through my teaching.

Joshua explained that he had a lifelong pursuit of education:

I have always loved education. I loved my time getting my degree here. So when I was looking around, I think I came across the website and the fact that they were looking for adjunct faculty, and I submitted my resume and I was thankfully hired.

There are similarities in the Gappa et al. (2007) study, which addressed how the behaviors of adjunct faculty, with regard to their desires to gain access into higher education, continue to remain the same.

Commitment to Teach

How these individuals perform their work was perceived through observation and they each appeared to accept constructive critiques, provided excellent feedback when given the need to observe their peers, always were willing, and produced outstanding work. Thus, these individuals created a solid foundation for the interviews. In addition, they were always willing to take extra time by going beyond the expectations of the job. These characteristics could be considered to be exemplary and admirable. In addition, given the responses during the interviews with regard to how these individuals

perceive their work overall, the outcomes, and the programs that they support, the participants tended to be enthusiastic and committed to teaching because it supports their commitment to education.

The following statements represent the views of several participants addressing their attributes and approach to their commitment to teaching:

I would say that I am passionate and I love the program. I think if we're diligent as instructors, to be passionate and to approach teaching with passion, we can then, have our students become successful. (Joshua)

I think you should have a passion for teaching and a love for teaching and I don't believe that the primary motivation for teaching should be for the money. (Colleen)

The feeling of passion and helping others carries over to the next up and coming adjunct faculty. And you have just created a bigger pool of people who are now just like the peer-mentors. You are replicating the peer-mentors again, their knowledge, passion, personal development, whatever it may be; those things are replicated to that next level of adjunct faculty. What is taking place is replication over and over again. So you keep planting these seeds and that's just a wonderful thing to do. (Naomi)

Each of the participants had different reasons for why they applied for the position of adjunct faculty, which also were explained in the study by Gappa (2007). According to Gappa et al. (2007), there are four justifications for job satisfaction by this workforce, which include (a) practitioners who are employed full-time in their careers are passionate and have deep desires to give back to others and are very committed to the culture, mission and vision of the institution; (b) retirees seeking to fulfill their encore years with purposeful work; (c) independent contractors who are seeking to fill their employment gap with part-time teaching; and (d) academics longing for full-time employment, which is the least likely reason to teach part-time. Each of these motivations prompted the adjunct faculty at University College to make their decision to

teach. I concur with Gappa et al. (2007) that this workforce holds many reasons why they teach, which vary according to the disciplines being taught. Gappa et al (2007) stated that the lowest percentage lies in those seeking full-time employment. In support of the study by Gappa (2007), seeking full-time employment in higher education was noted by only one of the 10 participants.

Prior Knowledge Adds Value to Classroom Engagement

The participants cited that their skills from prior work transfer to their role of teaching and add value to their classroom instruction. Discussions that pertain to their prior skills target benefits that can add to student outcomes in the classroom.

I have learned how to interact with people of different, diverse backgrounds through travel. I did receive many opportunities to travel the world and meet a lot of different people, and grow. I bring that skill, into the classroom. (Pam)

I am willing to go anywhere and impart my knowledge and to teach people throughout the world, by giving back what I have learned to others. I value my experiences and so if I can create a good experience for my students; it's also going to transform me. (Ronald)

As a human resources coach and facilitator I found that I teach with the approach of a coach and facilitator. I push and send core questions to reflect on my student's needs, why they are here and are they fully responsible to do the things that they need to attain their academic goals. In addition I take on the responsibility to do the things that I need to do to help them reach their goals. I start off every class asking them the definition of what is a coach, what is a facilitator because I'm setting a foundation for how we're going to interact. (Edward)

As a computer consultant I can speak intelligently to students about their struggles using the technology provided by the school because of my background. I tell them here are the steps you need to go through to address this problem or to take. I take full advantage of all of the technology provide by the university. I fully engage through the use of the Learning Management System by using the online tools, tests, quizzes, and labs. My prior knowledge enables me to answer all of my student's computer questions with ease. (Joshua)

My K-12 teaching experience has helped me to be comfortable with grading, returning things back on time and structuring lesson plans. It doesn't matter what age you are because this applies to all students.
(Adam)

Peer-mentors add value to classroom instruction and these adjunct faculty peer-mentors contribute highly professional work ethics and flexibility in scheduling, which adds value to the staff and to the overall university. Readily responding to administration and students, being open to classroom challenges, and consistently receiving outstanding end of course student results is standard for these individuals.

I wanted to know what skills they could transfer from their corporate roles into higher education and what value those skills add to their classroom instruction. Ronald, a corporate manager, was able to transfer his lived experiences into the classroom from a corporate management position. When I inquired as to what value the skills he brought to the classroom added to his classroom instruction, he responded:

I show my students the value I offer the organization in which I work [and what it] sees in me, in order to make the company more profitable and run more efficiently. I look at my responsibility as an adjunct in the same way. My students are my customers. I have to give them a value by giving back what I have learned to others.

In addition, Ronald is employed full-time in a high powered position, and prides himself on being organized, focused and always prepared. Similar character traits are necessary in the role of adjunct faculty. Ronald indicated that he spends a considerable amount of time preparing for his classes and is always prepared, and he is highly requested, with students returning to future classes that he teaches.

Several of the adjunct faculty peer-mentors had experiences in the helping professions, such as coaches, ministers, corporate trainers, and facilitators, and found that these roles offered a smooth transition into helping students in the classroom. Edward

was at ease in the profession of classroom teaching with a background as a corporate coach, leader, and facilitator and he explained:

I just simply say to my students that we are going to use this opportunity as a coaching experience and a facilitation experience and this foundation plays out through everything I do.

The experiences discussed by Adam are transforming for both his students and himself. He shared how the actual work that he performed on the job carries over to class assignments giving new meaning to a topic that dramatized the essence of the subject because of his firsthand knowledge and experience. Adam described:

I value my experiences and so if I can create a good experience for my students; it's also going to transform me. In a way it's kind of a selfish thing, I get to experience a new experience. Then it's also good because I get to kind of give a gift to my students. If we're all building towards that, I think that's a good way of looking at it. That's kind of how I pitch it to my students. I say, we're going to try to build five weeks of experience; positive, growing experiences.

Experience can breed confidence and Jesse has lived his experiences and can tell others how to be an effective business professional. The University College is proud to have someone with a consulting background and years of experience, as he said:

My presentation skills, the ability to work an audience and be comfortable translates well to the classroom and I enjoy it! I worked as a consultant for years and years and years and years. So, I spent many, many years in executive presentation in explaining the value that your consultants bring or your conclusions, findings, and recommendations.

The prior experience of the adjunct faculty aids in bringing current and up-to-date perspectives into the classroom along with hands-on exposure to elaborate and breathe life into classroom topics that can benefit from firsthand examples. By conveying their

prior experience to the subjects that they teach, the adjunct faculty exposes the students to the practical aspects of the application of learning. On the subject of prior experience, I posed a question, which was designed to provide understanding of the prior experiences and skills relative to being a good mentor and teacher and participants stated: “My prior experiences included the process of problem solving and doing some very critical thinking to lead groups from 28 plants and offer suggestions to their managers” (Pam).

Overall, these practitioners bring their practical experience to the classroom, introducing their students to the concepts of their everyday life as a professional (Fagan-Wilen et al 2006). According to Fagan Wilen et al (2006), the individuals can transfer “substantive knowledge based practical theory and skills to the curriculum and thus students find their teaching techniques exciting and they become highly recommended to further teach in the program” (p. 42). This has been substantiated at the University College by the large numbers of students that choose to be hooded during a yearly graduation that honors exemplary students during a ceremony. The adjunct faculty awarded this honor continues to climb in numbers, which can support their teaching skills perceived by the students. Fagan et al (2006) supported the idea that they are “highly sought after by administrators and highly prized by students” (p. 42). When students attend higher education to reinvent their marketable skills, the experience and prior knowledge of the adjunct faculty can serve to motivate and add interest to their classroom facilitation (Klein-Collins, 2011). This workforce can add value, motivate, and create networking opportunities that may carry over into the careers of students.

In contrast, the students and the delivery methods have changed and, therefore, the skill sets and the characteristics of the adjunct faculty must be in

alignment with these changes. Naomi noted that the changes taking place currently in higher education are requiring that the teaching tools and methodologies are important assets for student engagement in the classroom and said:

Technology is changing. Times are changing, students are changing, and their needs are changing. Ask self-reflective questions; How can I improve? What can I do differently? And own your results to be able to realize change.

I sought to inform and enhance the blended business program in support of teaching students and to address the changes and challenges within a diverse student population at the University College in this study.

Leadership

Business practitioners, with the desire to teach, may have strong leadership ties to the traditions of corporate America. Many having reached first level senior management ranks are wise and willing to impart this knowledge during their teaching. Their up-to-date knowledge in their specific fields adds to students' learning and supports students' career aspirations by providing them with the necessary tools that they need to succeed in their respective fields.

Leadership is identified as a core process area in the MSP. Prior to this study leadership was a necessary requirement for these adjunct faculty peer-mentors and they each had this core skill however, it was undocumented. One of the goals of this study was to know what prior experiences and skills enabled them to demonstrate leadership and relate to their peers. During the interviews, I learned that leadership was a common skill among the group, which allows them to support their mentees, demonstrate leadership in the classroom, problem solve, manage classroom procedures, serve in a

leadership role, and provide guidance. In support of the need for the peer-mentoring group to identify how their prior skills supported this leadership role, Colleen responded:

I'm a department manager at the company I work for full time, so I'm constantly serving in a leadership role and in order to be an effective leader, you have to have a mentor and that mentor will serve as your guide so when you start to fall stray, that person picks you back up and puts you back on the right road.

The role of a mentor is a form of leadership and role modeling, which requires ethical behavior in and out of the classroom.

Alicia explained that her entrepreneurial spirit has allowed her to be flexible and to self-govern and she explained:

I am in charge of my own life. I don't have a boss. Leadership is sort of in my DNA. I run my own life and I respect the bosses that govern over the projects that I work as an independent. I believe in making people feel appreciated and they will do anything for you.

Adam expressed how his prior knowledge directly contributes to student engagement:

I was a manager and I want to help people be successful. I want them to discover their own answers and grow and I want to grow which makes this reciprocal. In summary I make material manageable for our students. I think that demonstrates authority and credibility and the students think "hey he really does want me to be good at this. He wants me to understand it. He does want me to be successful." When students feel that you don't need to be the boss it works well!

The role of the adjunct faculty peer-mentor requires leadership and transparency. Some people are natural born leaders, while others have learned the skill from prior experiences. The backgrounds of these individuals have helped to shape the characteristics and attributes that I have viewed as a standard when recruiting for this position. My hope is that this study will assist in the development of the ideal description

of an adjunct faculty and support their transition of transferable skills into higher education classrooms.

Transferable Skills

Subsequently, a management background that includes inspiring a team and managing others can be supportive to change and add value to the students in the classroom. In addition, diversity in the classroom can bring rich discussions and requires a voice of experience to field questions on how learning is applied to daily life experiences. When I asked Colleen what skills were transferable into higher education and what value do those skills add to classroom instruction, she responded:

I'm constantly motivating, encouraging, teaching, and finding the tools to enhance those individuals and aspiring individuals to want to learn to gain the knowledge in order to move forward in their career. My entire background is in management and in self-assessment, supporting, mentoring, and encouraging individuals and employees of a large staff.

These traits can assist a teacher, facilitator, coach, or motivator to overcome obstacles in collaborative cooperative classroom settings. The students enter the blended business program in the cohort delivery model and begin in a specific group and work collaboratively to complete their program in the same group.

All too often, students may enter university and college classrooms informed of how to interact with other students and yet, may need coaching to better understand how to perform in a group setting. Upon graduation, these students will be seeking work, and when they are effectively working in group settings they can maximize their opportunities for employment (Lyons, 2004).

The background and skills that can transfer into the classroom offer meaningful experiences for students, such as noted by Adam, who expressed how his teaching background has been a valuable, transferable skill. He described:

My professional experience and teaching background, I would say is a big one, especially when we're teaching business classes. Just having been in the business world for a little bit, I can draw from those experiences. Teaching of course, just the ideas of being able to talk in front of people, elaborate on ideas; I was very comfortable with things like grading, returning things back on time, structuring lesson plans. My teaching background obviously helped me with a lot of that. It doesn't matter what age group you are, all those things really help.

A management background in a business and professional studies program is a valuable asset. Ronald has a wealth of management experience, manages a large staff, and applies exercises and examples to his student's financial challenges, which they may be facing in real life. Ronald explained:

I bring a background of management. My entire background is in management and in self-assessment and supporting, mentoring, and encouraging inspiring individuals and employees.

Having attended a similar program as an adult student, this participant draws students close, saying, "I can relate to you and where you are." Mary described this notion of understanding:

I was a student doing the same thing. If I can get through this, you can get through this. So I think that was one of the things that I felt I had a strong need to bring. I was in a program like this myself.

Technology is an important transferable skill, which aligns with today's students who are considered tech-savvy and welcome instruction with an online technology component. Joshua reflected upon his transferable skill as follows:

My computer skills; I would say and the ability to use the tools in the classroom to their full capability. I can speak intelligently to students about their own struggles using the technology provided by the school and because of my

computer technology experience; I can tell them usually, here's the steps you need to go through to address this problem.

Jesse shared his views, which addressed his ability to transfer the skills that have been perfected in his corporate consulting roles:

My prior experience as a leader, team leader, and a consultant changed every 6 months to a new client, a new project, a new team, and new people. It was very similar to what we have here, a mix of people. So I was comfortable gathering together new people, diverse backgrounds, and skills.

The experiences, transferred from their corporate roles, can guide the actions of the business adjunct faculty in their teaching. Johnson and Ridley (2008) asserted that the experience and expansive background of mentors can provide knowledge, recommendations, and stimulate motivation with encouragement.

A Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value To Teaching

Entry into the ranks of peer-mentoring is available to each adjunct upon hiring; once they demonstrate promise in their skills both inside as well as outside of the classroom, the process begins. There are many opportunities to receive credibility for outstanding performance. Once the adjunct faculty has been observed as having the necessary mentoring skills the next step is to demonstrate delivering and accepting constructive feedback. To be able to give and receive peer critiques are two very important aspects of the peer-mentoring role. Each of these skills can require years of experience and can add value to classroom techniques such as critiquing student presentations, grading group work, and papers while being accountable to both the students and the administration. Being accountable to serve in the capacity of a peer-mentor requires being open to constructive feedback from students, peers, mentees, and the faculty coordinator.

Accountability and Assessment

As mentioned earlier the standard end of class survey tool for the entire university and the peer-mentors at University College is the IDEA survey and the blended business peer-mentors at the University College should maintain a 4.0 or higher on this student survey assessment tool. Pam views the IDEA survey as a necessary measurement tool and takes her assessment results seriously, stating:

I review the responses from the questions in the IDEA and take the students suggestions seriously. I think the IDEA is necessary because we need to be accountable to the people who hire us and to the students. We need to change definitely because every environment you teach in has a different requirement. If you teach at one institution there's a certain environment. You have to adjust to the environment. You have to understand where you're teaching, what's required of you and not be a problem. As adjunct faculty, you have to be careful that you don't make a mess and leave it. That's not appreciated by anybody. You have to walk the line and make sure to understand the environment, and fit in.

Ronald recounted his experience of reviewing the IDEA assessment results as no surprise:

My IDEA results are no surprise; in addition I learn from my mistakes and try to change them immediately for the next course. I prepare myself using the examples and try to get better each time. You always want to try and do that.

Adam stated that he practices what he preaches by self-assessment:

Practice what you preach right? What I love about the IDEA is that it gives the students an anonymous voice and everything that they say I take to heart. I think that you can't adjust everything that you do to be a perfect teacher, but I need to address this. I need to see what's going on. I try to keep an open dialogue with my students so I'll say things like... okay in my former classes I've had this experience. I'm trying to improve on that. I will self-assess myself; it's also a way for me to see what's going on. It's definitely a self- assessment. I think that if I'm doing an assessment and I'm actually changing.... I think that's the key. People sometimes do the self-assessment but then don't change anything. You have to say okay, this didn't work I will be open to that change.

Colleen spoke from a competitive perspective about her assessments and stated:

I make sure that I work on whatever the suggestions are that I receive from my assessments so that I can continue to be the best of the best.

Joshua voiced his opinion on how challenging it can be to deliver unfavorable news when he is assessing his mentees.

I hate conflict and giving feedback on assessments can cause conflict, therefore I make sure that I'm communicating clearly and preparing ahead of time on exactly what the subject of the conflict is can be the most important thing.

Assessing peers requires careful consideration of the feelings and emotions of others.

One peer-mentor commented that "giving feedback may cause conflict, therefore prior preparation on the specifics of the conflict is very important."

Giving feedback can be challenging to go into an instructor in the classroom to make them feel like they're not capable or not proficient in their area of expertise, but to give them the tools to make their classroom session successful and to enhance the student's learning ability. (Colleen)

According to Johnson and Ridley (2004), when conflict occurs, mentors must approach the situation early and assume the responsibility of alerting the mentee early to problems that could affect performance. When the mentors fear confronting the mentee and being truthful, it disserves them by prolonging their success (Johnson & Ridley, 2004). Naomi described the need for clear communication in this regard:

As a peer-mentor, we are here to help and support each other. I'm not here to judge; I make myself really clear, and I believe this is something we need to be clear about, to give that person that extra confidence that they obviously need so let me help you do the best that you can do. It is important to establish a procedure to provide effective suggestions and take the necessary time to self-reflect upon what steps to take that fits best with your personality. All news is not good news however there

can be a method that works best and that can be replicated when it is necessary to discuss specific outcomes with another individual.

The ability of the adjunct faculty peer-mentors to assess mentees will help to explain, shape, define, and identify characteristics that model skills for instructors during these consultative sessions. During these sessions it is important to motivate and give constructive feedback to the mentee and drive their ability to be open, honest, and sincere. These practitioners bring meaningful insights to students who find value in their instruction, depend on their knowledge and professional skills, and find the support from full-time faculty equal to what they receive from professionally developed adjunct faculty when they are assessed (Stenerson et al., 2010).

The participants in the study universally commented regarding the prior skills, which enable them to give constructive feedback to both students and administration while being accountable to the students and the institution. Oftentimes, people shy away from confrontation and would rather not give the necessary feedback to support quality results in the future. Therefore, I posed the questions: “Describe a situation where you needed to give constructive feedback to one of your peers or someone higher in the organization about their behavior” and “What did you draw from to prepare for this verbal exercise?” Jesse reflected upon his past experiences with giving feedback and said:

I was comfortable gathering together new people, diverse backgrounds, and skills and the company I worked with had a pretty rigorous evaluation process; every 3 months basically, we had to evaluate people’s skills, and areas for improvement, always focusing on what you can do to get better. What method do you use to inform your mentees as a peer-mentor to improve their IDEA end of course survey results? I would ask the mentee relating it to the scores and to the student’s perspectives. Why did the students rate you the way they did? Think about that and what were the

expectations that they had that you didn't meet and why didn't you meet them.

Subsequently, this interpretation affirms an unbiased methodology to giving feedback where the receiver can learn that there are differences of perspectives and he/she should not feel down and out about the negative outcome; the recovery method is to learn from it and adjust to the suggestions. At the core of phase 3 of the MSP, the adjunct faculty peer-mentor demonstrates the skills and abilities to communicate and collaborate with the mentee during training workshop forums, to develop job aids, curriculum writing, and onsite and online facilitation within adjunct faculty meetings and training.

At the University College the Senior Lecturer Program recognizes the accomplishments of adjunct faculty through an assessment process, which includes evaluating and rating the end of course IDEA assessments and classroom observations. The adjunct faculty submits a portfolio, which includes an account of all projects, such as observations and end of course (IDEA) results, criteria for being an adjunct faculty peer-mentor. When proof of eligibility is submitted and reviewed by the administration, their names are forwarded to the responsible coordinator and they can be selected for this honor. Joshua described the program as gratifying and a great way to be honored. He explained:

I went for the senior lecturer, I made it, I got it, and I'm happy. I got business cards. So I give those out at my classes, I say, hey, here's my card, I don't have to put a slide up anymore that says, hey here's my phone number, I give out my cards (Laughter). I'm just saying that, it makes me feel good. And that, to me, is a nonmonetary compensation and I accept that. I'm good. I'm happy. And I think that there are people out there that are like that.

Everybody has the ability to be a senior lecturer. I think every instructor that we have, should be asked this question early on. Do you envision yourself, trying to achieve senior lecturer? To me that is an indication that this individual has mentor potential. They are willing to put themselves out there to give that something extra. I have been a mentor and I have not been overwhelmed with the requests to do things.

In addition the Senior Lecturer program also serves as an accountability measurement tool because the adjunct faculty is required to maintain their proof of attendance, assessment surveys, and observations that entitle them to attain this level of accomplishment. According to Fagen-Wilen et al. (2006), recognition of adjunct faculty is crucial to providing a sense of inclusion to this workforce. With the inclusion and satisfaction comes the agreement on practices and procedures, which administration deploys to support student learning and enhance teaching. Colleen noted the quality education that this group is known to produce, can be realized through self-reflection.

Colleen stated:

I have to promote self-discovery and self-assessment as well as critical thinking in my role. And I have to serve as a role model. So in my role, I have to continuously strive to promote the importance of thinking critically, self-assessments and promoting self-discovery. That way, I instill self confidence in the mentees.

Adjunct faculty in this study cited that while peer-mentoring can provide support; it also creates a level of accountability through self-reflection and meeting the needs of the institution and assessment, by gauging their achievements and success from their mentoring experiences and student evaluations.

When colleges and universities seek to provide the growing population of adjunct faculty opportunities to meet the demands of accountability and assessment, they may choose from a variety of options that have proven results. For example, Halcrow and Olson (2008) suggested that the practices necessary to provide support must include: (a)

recognizing adjuncts' accomplishments; (b) orientation; (c) including adjuncts in social functions and on committees; (d) mentoring; (e) developing mechanisms for offering professional development opportunities; (f) conducting annual formal evaluations; (g) involving them in curriculum and textbook decision making; and (h) simply showing respect and appreciation for all of their outstanding achievements (p. 7). When administration implements these programs, they can promote quality performance from students without financial constraints on the college or university, and job satisfaction for adjunct faculty.

When student classroom challenges arise, the adjunct faculty peer-mentors are expected to support any derailments and lend their expertise in managing classroom issues. In support of those issues when necessary, the peer-mentors can be approached to lend their expertise and willingness to rise to the occasion in these instances. However, the role does not come without challenges, and therefore, I posed the question; "What challenges you in your role of adjunct faculty and peer-mentor?" Several participants cited the following challenges related to building a sense of community:

I think that the best thing really is creating that community. If there's anything I've learned, it's that people want to be a part of [a] community. People don't want to be by themselves in any situation; it doesn't matter what it is. If the community is created and you feel like you're being appreciated, you're more up to do things. I know they've done studies on [how] people would rather win awards than just get raises. (Alicia)

I think that really, the key is to facilitate community. And if we can do that within this kind of collegiate environment, we have the opportunity to almost feel like we're in this together. If I know that two or three mentors have my back and I have the back of two or three mentees in front of me, we're all working on this together for the benefit of our students. It has nothing to do with money. It has to do with the sense of ownership, the sense of camaraderie. We build an esteem that is really, really self-fulfilling as well as encouraging for others. I just think that kind of community sense is huge. (Mary)

And if you don't have that sense of community, you feel overwhelmed. You don't have strategies or experiences to draw from. [If] you don't feel like there's anybody you can turn to, specifically a mentor, and then you don't, you say you have that passion, but that passion will be extinguished pretty quickly if you don't have that community support. (Mary)

The adjunct mentors have many challenges, which range from making sure that they are reaching their mentees on their level, being fair and impartial, remaining professional at all times and refraining from being too personal. Building community at this University College unites people and helps them to feel as if they are a part of the organization. The participants indicated that community is valuable and that there may be challenges when there is a lack of cohesiveness within the community environment.

The described disadvantages of being an adjunct faculty affirmed that when community was nonexistent within the institution, there were major consequences, such as feeling isolated, which could cause one to not feel a part of the institution and could foster a lack of support within the team. When community is missing from the environment the adjunct faculty can resemble a "drifter" moving from one site to another without any guidance or direction as mentioned here by Joshua.

I felt while teaching at two other universities like I was just running in, like a shot gun, and just spitting out the stuff that I knew to this particular class and then leaving and there was no connection, whatsoever. And I might have been honing my skills, but it certainly didn't feel like I was, I felt no sense of loyalty to this particular university.

Once the adjunct faculty has been recognized as having the necessary mentoring skills, the next step is to demonstrate responsibility. Quality teaching contributors, accountability, assessment and community, each represent personal and professional indicators that can support student outcomes. Next, the peer-mentor is challenged with delivering quality service and creating the change that may be necessary to ensure that

the administration is in alignment with the accrediting boards. Oftentimes, that may mean defusing academic issues that arise in the classroom with students. Other times course syllabi may need altering and the turnaround time may be tight which could be challenging. However, when these individuals have been presented with challenges, such as limited time constraints and deadlines, they seem to perform well under pressure. Finally, the mentor's work proves that they are mentorship status by demonstration and can help to raise the bar and reaches the top of the pyramid by achieving peer-mentor status (See Figure 3). As an effective adjunct faculty mentor, they can begin to "sharpen their saw" by attending meetings, reading suggested materials, participating in campus wide workshops and engaging with their peers in learning settings (See Figure 3). The "Culture of Community" pyramid diagram below represents the movement in phases which were found to exist once the adjunct faculty has been recognized for his/her leadership and technology skills and is invited to participant as a peer-mentor.

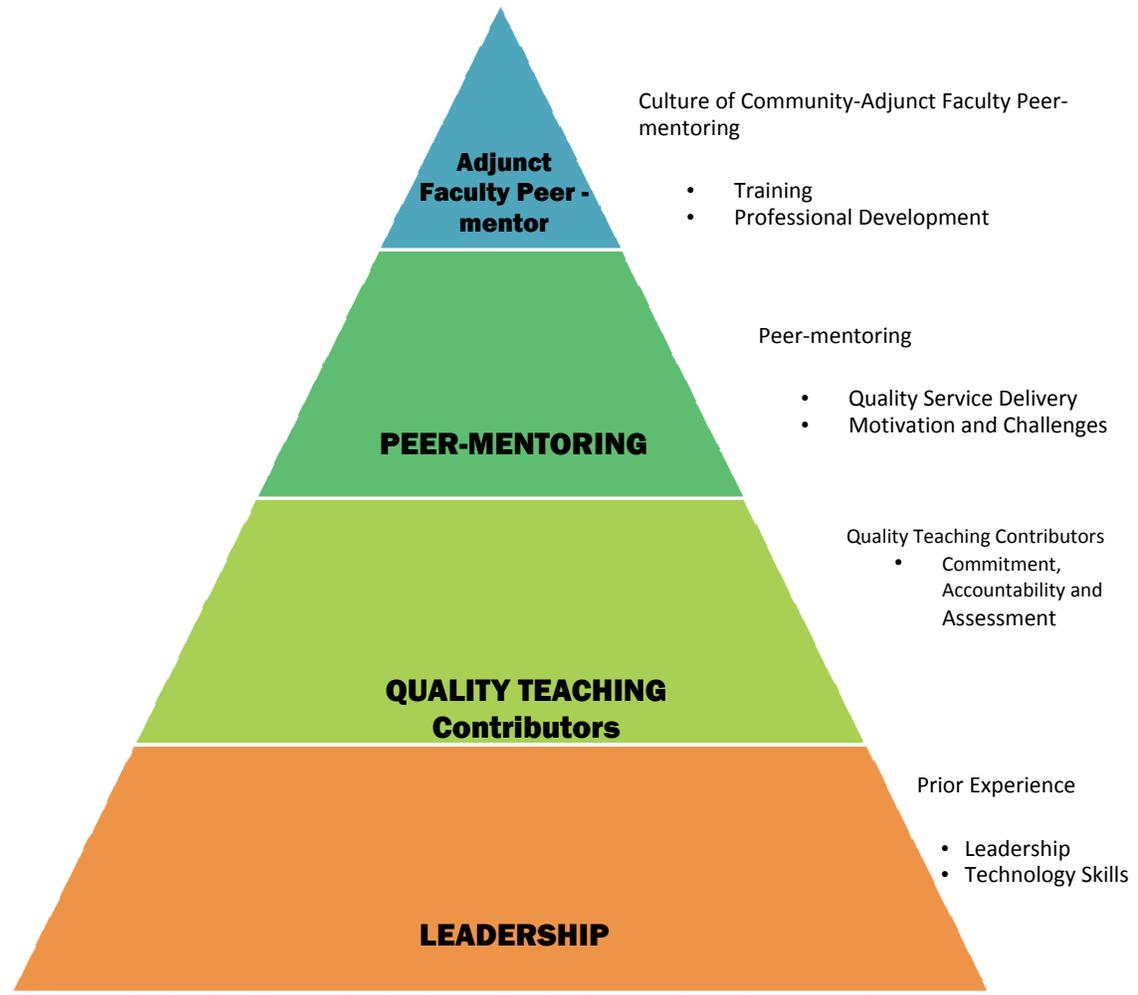


Figure 3. Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value to Teaching

Summary

This interpretative case study demonstrates the lived experiences of the 10 adjunct faculty peer-mentors who have become instrumental to the university mission workforce and who have proved themselves as capable and exemplary instructors by their consistent performance. These participants have helped to recommend a pathway to effective

classroom engagement. The interviews inform through the data analysis themes and categories, their role and contributing factors that influence their teaching.

Moreover, these contributing factors can help to gain insight on the qualities, characteristics, and teaching styles while the strategies made by this workforce are demonstrated in each categorical theme. Theme 1: *Commitment to Teaching* addresses their passion toward education, sharing and empowering their skills to help build a solid foundational base within the institution. Theme 2: *Prior Knowledge Contributes to Classroom Engagement* highlights the backgrounds of these individuals, which promote learning through life experiences that transfer to positive classroom engagements. Theme 3: *Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value to Teaching* aids in providing intentional methods of training to enhance all programs where this workforce has begun to have such an empowering affect.

Earlier we discussed the themes, which identify and create an awareness of the characteristics and commonalities associated with these individuals that summarize how they view their role and the contributing factors which influence their teaching. By managing their time and being accountable to both their workplace and families these individuals can effectively support their obligations to the students and staff. Accountability is critical to the success of a program when the college depends entirely on adjunct faculty to teach all of its courses.

According to these practitioners at University College, they have identified their workplace as a community driven by accountability and assessment, which adds value to classroom teaching. Through self-reflection and by meeting the needs of the institution these individuals are proud to lend their expertise and willingness to work toward

resolutions when conflicts arise. Being adaptable to change is an important attribute because peer-mentoring requires being able to remain equal to others when it comes to status but not in experience. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings, recommendations, and reflections upon which validate the progression and movement up the pyramid toward becoming a peer-mentor and the positive impact that a “Culture of Community” can have on the contributions by this workforce.

“Knowing and learning are communal acts. They require a continual cycle of discussion, disagreement, and consensus over what has been and what it all means.”
Parker Palmer

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative study was to gain insight and analyze the complexities of these adjunct faculty peer-mentors. As a result of the data analysis, I uncovered three major themes that speak to the very essence of this study. The themes that have emerged from the data analysis address the qualities, characteristics, teaching styles and strategies of these adjunct faculty peer-mentors that contribute to their success and make them an exemplary teaching workforce. The themes are: *Commitment to Teaching, Prior Knowledge Contributes to Student Engagement, and Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value to Teaching*. Each theme represents the attributes of these peer mentors and how the commitment to teaching is a result of their values toward education and learning. There are multiple studies on the topic of mentoring full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, leadership and various concepts surrounding the subject of teaching in higher education. Closing the gap that aims to retain and build a substantial effective adjunct faculty team is the goal of this study. Studying this critical workforce, the backbone for many higher education institutions

aims to establish and build an effective adjunct faculty team. My interest is in studying how such a phenomenon can help to discover and understand the perspectives and worldview of the participants. Business adjunct faculty is an important resource to professional studies colleges and programs there licensures and certifications are necessary for accreditations. These practitioners reported that they are committed to teaching and with their help the blended program can meet critical deadlines with textbook revisions, curriculum changes, and classroom crisis when they occur. As the researcher and the key facilitator of the program, it is interesting to note that creating a culture of “community” is synonymous with effective classroom outcomes and student satisfaction. As I explore the impact that “community” has on the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program, I will now incorporate this aspect into my leadership and the observations of the workforce.

The Mentor Support Program (MSP): A Culture of Community

The Mentor Support Program (MSP) coordinator and director identify qualified mentor candidates to participate in a program shaped by principles that guide adjunct mentoring at the University College. There are three evaluative phases to the program and the participation is voluntary. During this study the participant’s expressed how they receive gratitude from mentoring as an opportunity to engage in what they described in this study as a “Culture of Community” to share skillful knowledge with students and support their peers. Within the entire adjunct faculty team this should be a norm, which will create greater retention that can help stabilize the program.

In addition the participants in this study mentioned using the phone and email as a resource to provide mentoring support. The participants indicated that when students and

mentees know they have access to support, it can contribute to quality classroom experiences that build trust and institutional accountability in the adjunct faculty (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). When the need arises to be available to the mentee, at any time via email or phone, this, adds a level of trust and builds relationships (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). Many of the peer-mentors in this study also taught online and rely heavily on phone and email communication with their mentees. An online survey of 35 faculty teaching online found that not only should the major elements of an online training and development program include technical training, pedagogical training, and online coursework, but that it should also entail a mentoring component as a form of ongoing training (Vinlove, 2011).

Mentor Support Program: Peer-mentoring

A peer-mentor can be classified as a role model and a resource to another who fulfills the same role. The peer-mentor is more experienced and can provide guidance, and serve as a teacher to the mentee. It is important to set boundaries and limits with regard to peer-mentoring. Johnson and Ridley (2008) maintained that time and energy should be guarded and not abused by the institutions or the mentee. They also contended that the practice of self-care is an important element to exercise when mentoring. The aspect of collaboration between the mentee and the mentor can be a gratifying experience of engagement along with the altruistic desire to “give back.” Naomi, an industry professional, business manager, and corporate trainer, spoke freely and candidly on the topic of how peer- mentoring experiences have contributed towards achievements or successes as an adjunct faculty by her comments, which stated that she believed all of her fellow colleagues, are willing to support, help, and lend confidence, which is her teaching

style and strategy. Joshua shared his mentoring experiences as a reciprocal experience of giving and receiving and he always follows up with an email to gain feedback from the suggestions that he provides to his mentees.

The adjunct faculty peer-mentor evaluates the teaching of their mentee through observations, IDEA surveys, and classroom management skills assessments. Once the faculty mentees' performance and contributions to the students and administration have exceeded the required expectations, their services may include writing courses, presenting at professional development events and meetings to support college wide decisions, and attending the many functions throughout the year that create community, such as guest speaking at student Enrollment Open House events. Several participants felt that collaborations represent a movement towards community and at various times during the interview discussions, comments were directed toward the value added, which resonates from the in-depth training mechanism of peer-mentoring. Participants believe that community is what sets this college apart from other institutions where they are employed.

Very few of the members of the business adjunct faculty are licensed as certified teachers and the peer-mentoring has enabled them to exceed their own expectations with regard to their knowledge and technical skills. When mentoring support structures are available, business industry practitioners transitioning to academia can be successful (Bandow et al., 2007). Prior knowledge and experience can add to their confidence, success, and teaching.

A design of a successful training and mentoring program should support the goals and objectives of the teaching strategies, and provide advocacy on the institutional

guidelines and procedures. Therefore, when mentoring is being provided, feedback and coaching on pedagogical issues can be aligned with the teaching styles of the individual mentees. In this study, the participants indicated that mentoring helps to achieve their teaching goals and the goals of the institution.

For example, it was explained during the interviews that the mentees and mentors share teaching tricks of the trade and tips between them, which adds value to the learning experience for both parties. In addition, the assumption found in the literature that teaching at multiple institutions can add value may be misleading. Edward, who had experienced teaching at multiple institutions, found that every environment has different goals and the adjunct faculty must first determine what the institutional goals are that they are being held accountable to attain. Next, they need to deliver those goals determined by the college or university, enabling more dynamic programs to be developed. Similarly, the goals of the university should be clear to the adjunct faculty teaching our students to ensure that they are actually measuring up and reaching the goals that were set by the university. Mary stated her viewpoint, “When the standards were not clear, the challenge is to question whether or not the adjunct faculty is really doing what they need to do to meet the goals.”

Building a Culture of Community

One of the emergent themes was “community” and how the creation of networks and cohesiveness amongst the adjunct faculty workforce allows the exchanging of experiences, ideas and teaching strategies. These peer-mentors indicated that they enjoy the camaraderie that is shared between them. According to Lyons (2007), community support can enhance student learning and institutional accountability outcomes. Vinlove

(2011) stated the importance of participation in campus meetings, facilitation in events, and the engagement with administration. These participants enjoy the collegiate atmosphere and are challenged to exceed expectations in a place where they feel valued and appreciated (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). Overall, community can motivate teaching and learning because of the collaboration through exchange of ideas and experiences.

Lyons (2004, 2007) asserted that in addition to being a seasoned leader in your discipline, there is a need for interpersonal accomplishments along with an in-depth understanding of the college culture. Moreover, the full-time faculty can offer the adjunct faculty the opportunity to become immersed into the depths of the college culture. When colleges and universities have the opportunity to engage all faculties by aligning college historians, course disciplinarians, technology gurus, statisticians, and cross utilizing the knowledge that embodies our campuses, how can they not succeed? Lyons stated that having full-time faculty involved with adjunct faculty is vitally important to maintain a sense of community.

Administrative Support

Vinlove (2011) believed that when recognition and encouragement is included in training and mentoring programs by administration, the results are good and the adjunct faculty will feel a sense of belonging. Considering the majority of the business adjunct faculty has no prior classroom teaching skills, they prefer to know their weaknesses at the onset of their classes, rather than after the class ends. Oftentimes, there can be lengthy delays between when the results are received and the end of the course. Therefore, when administration proactively addresses such practices, it instills trust between the adjunct faculty and the administrative support team. Working closely with administration

contributes to building a strong instructional community (Lyons, 2011). When adjunct faculty who are presented with balancing multiple institutions due to economics, find their loyalty remains with the institution wherein they are viewed as future colleagues, their commitment to teaching increases.

Prior Knowledge Contributes to Classroom Engagement

Peer-mentors require leadership skills and transparency. Almost universally the peer-mentors in this study agreed that their prior experiences included leadership roles. Leadership is considered one of the Core Process Areas to be selected as a peer-mentor, an undocumented observable skill which requires ethical behavior in and out of the classroom as stated by Colleen during the interviews. The Center for Ethical Leadership (2002) founder Bill Grace defines ethical leadership as “knowing your core values, and having the courage to act on them on behalf of the common good” (p. 1). Kathleen Vinlove (2011) stated in her study that leadership is at the core of a successful adjunct faculty training and mentoring program. I believe that leadership is a chief characteristic for an adjunct faculty to be successful. I would suggest that during the hiring phase the adjunct faculty should express how leadership experience will help shape their success in the adjunct faculty role. The participants explained how their previous careers consisted of leadership roles as coaches, facilitators, ministers, managers, and entrepreneurs. All of these careers lean toward motivating and inspiring collaboratively in support of reaching goals and objectives.

Once the peer-mentor is assigned a mentee and builds relationships, they begin to form bonds, which reinforce orientation and the initial training process. Next, the unique

abilities, collaborative and visionary skills of the mentor as an early adopter of technologies is recognized and rewarded by the administration.

Other programs, such as the mentoring program at Lesley University, provide a systematic approach that colleges and universities can model and strive toward implementing. Specifically, there is merit in the intense nature, administration oversight, and its goal to promote quality courses in all delivery formats (Ziegler & Reiff, 2006). In fact, the program has a reward structure and includes a weekend induction period at the start of the program. Lyons (2004) introduced various adjunct faculty programs at community colleges and universities in his book *Success Strategies for Adjunct Faculty*, which includes (a) courses for adjunct faculty training, (b) assessment practices, (c) mentoring collaborative programs, and (d) orientation and first year mentoring programs. My hope is that more institutions of higher education will align with peer-mentoring to build confidence, add collaboration and community into adult and traditional programs amongst adjunct faculty.

Culture of Community: Accountability and Assessment Adds Value to Teaching

Once the adjunct faculty has been recognized as having the necessary mentoring skills, the next step is to demonstrate responsibility both in and out of the classroom. Quality teaching contributors, accountability, assessment and community each represent personal and professional indicators that are representative of demonstrating the responsibility necessary to record and report assessments, evaluation meetings and work closely with administration and students to resolve conflicts and be accountable in the classroom to students. I am reminded of the four conerstones by Wlodkowski (2011) *expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, and clarity*. Each of these represent skills that can be

learned (Wlodkowski, 2011). Colleen gave an in-depth overview of her mentoring and teaching style and how it aligns with classroom learning.

I discuss with mentees their roles and responsibilities as instructors and help them to identify the students' learning style to be in position to engage those students whose learning styles vary. I make suggestions of how to incorporate some kind of ice breaker group activity, similar to an activity group discussion, which would promote critical thinking in the classroom.

The participants in this present study noted that self-reflection, observations, IDEA surveys, classroom management skills, and assessments may ensure quality classroom facilitation.

At the University College the Senior Lecturer Program recognizes the accomplishments of adjunct faculty through an assessment process, which includes evaluating and rating the end of course IDEA assessments and classroom observations. The adjunct faculty submits a portfolio, which includes an account of all projects, such as observations and end of course (IDEA) results. These pieces of documentation are Senior Lecturer Program requirements. When proof of eligibility is submitted and reviewed by the administration, their names are forwarded to the responsible coordinator and they can be selected for this honor. According to Fagen-Wilen et al. (2006), recognition of adjunct faculty is crucial to providing a sense of inclusion to this workforce. With the inclusion and satisfaction comes the agreement on practices and procedures, which administration deploys to support student learning and enhance teaching. Adjunct faculty in this study cited that while peer-mentoring can provide support; it also creates a level of accountability through self-reflection and meets the needs of the institution and assessment, by gauging their achievements and success from their mentoring experiences and student evaluations.

When colleges and universities seek to provide the growing population of adjunct faculty opportunities to meet the demands of accountability and assessment, they may choose from a variety of options that have proven results. For example as mentioned prior, Halcrow and Olson (2008) suggested that the practices necessary to provide support must include (a) recognizing adjuncts' accomplishments; (b) orientation; (c) including adjuncts in social functions and on committees; (d) mentoring; (e) developing mechanisms for offering professional development opportunities; (f) conducting annual formal evaluations; (g) involving them in curriculum and textbook decision making; and (h) simply showing respect and appreciation for all of their outstanding achievements (p. 7). When administration implements such programs, they can promote quality performance from students without financial constraints on the college or university, and job satisfaction for adjunct faculty.

Quality Adjunct Faculty Transition from Business to Academia

Myers (2006) elaborated on business career transitions into academia and looks specifically at accounting professionals and the opportunities that await business practitioners who are best suited for the teaching profession. He pointed out that being able to teach on college and university campuses is an "emerging opportunity" for those who are following their hearts and have a love for teaching. In addition, Myers (2007) dispelled the quote by Bernard Shaw, that stated, "He who can, does; he who cannot teaches"(Myers, 2006, p. 30-32). Myers investigated eight professional Certified Public Accountants (CPA), who had experienced long successful business careers and found themselves teaching in higher education once their business careers ended.

These professionals, who have chosen to continue to work and with the right temperament and a strong desire to give back to the field of education, are being rewarded. Additional programs, such as social work (Fagan-Wilen et al., 2006) and health care (Forbes, Hickey, & White, 2009), have successfully attracted business practitioners. Similarly, the transitional business adjunct faculty participants in this study found they are motivated to teach in this profession because they have a passion and love for teaching, love for the program, and love for helping others. The right combination can generate positive results, if you are the right fit (Myers, 2006). In conjunction with the study, these participants found that inspiring others and giving back can be a powerful resource in the classroom for students. Myers (2006) expressed that teaching students to question and think critically builds professional leaders.

Reflections and Recommendations

Ziegler and Reif (2006), Vinlove (2011) and Millis (1994) highlighted the importance in providing mentoring and that the program should be comprehensive and supported by the administration. Similar programs have been the result of reforms that espouse pressures, such as (a) fiscal pressure, (b) push for expansion and the development of new programs, (c) mandates that target greater accountability, and (d) pressure for increased quality and efficiency. Because the majority of undergraduate courses and specialized programs are being taught by adjunct faculty, there could be more research centered on the influences and impact of adjunct faculty on quality teaching (Smith, 2010). With the economic demands and the expansion of the adjunct faculty workforce, successful outcomes are an expectation that cannot be overlooked.

With greater support from administration this population is more likely to become a support resource across the entire campus and could include the full-time faculty and colleges throughout the university. Full-time faculty has a wealth of knowledge and part-time faculty can gain from their tutelage. Initiating a systematic and systemic (Ziegler & Reif, 2006) adjunct mentoring program can enhance awareness of the population on our college and university campuses and gain opportunities for growth at a time in our nation when it is vital that these institutions remain on the cutting edge with technology and classroom accountability. Support of mentoring peer-to-peer, colleague-to-colleague teacher-to-student all can ensure that quality teaching is being performed in classrooms when nobody is watching. My intent is to give voice to the contributions being made by this workforce and to emphasize the dynamics, which can exist between mentors and mentees while working collaboratively.

Peer-mentoring at the University College gives credit to a nontraditional method of professional development mentoring colleague-to-colleague and has provided a cost-effective measurement to ensure accountability and quality control (Millis, 1994). When a new adjunct faculty is hired, there is a sigh of relief when they are explained that they will have a mentor to visit their first class and how that individual will share their expertise with them during the probation period. According to Millis (1994), “The most significant facet to this form of professional development is the sense of community and cooperation built by colleagues helping colleagues.” And I quote Parker Palmer (1987): “Knowing and learning are communal acts. They require a continual cycle of discussion, disagreement, and consensus over what has been and what it all means.” (p. 24). Parker (1987) believed that when the values of the academy embrace, promote and stand behind

the healthy community where conflict arises out of fear, classrooms can benefit by having a communal environment that welcomes, supports and nurtures everyone where they are.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Prospective Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Organizational Change program at Benedictine University, and I am conducting a study regarding the characteristics that contribute to quality adjunct faculty instruction by business adjunct faculty. I would like to invite you to participate in individual and/ or focus group interviews. The interviews will take place during the week of _____2012; please let me know what dates you are available and I will coordinate the times with the AV, Audio and a room at the Lisle campus or here at Moser, whichever works best for everyone. The interview will take approximately 60–90 min and the recording of this study will remain in a locked location in the office of the researcher preventing any breach of confidentiality. Should the study ever become published material, your name will not be linked to the study, nor will it mention your personal involvement.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Benedictine university. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University.

Please let me know of your intentions to participate and your availability during the month of September.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Boone (Liz)

Telephone Number: 630 829-6209 Cell: 630 803-8647

Email Address: eboone@ben.edu

APPENDIX B

Consent for Research

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Title: Benedictine University

A Study of the Business Adjunct Faculty Peer-mentoring Program at a Private
Midwestern University

Background: This research study is being conducted by Elizabeth Boone at Benedictine University. The study explores the business adjunct faculty peer-mentoring program at a private Midwestern University and its contributions to the quality of adjunct faculty instruction. The research utilizes case study as an umbrella design to investigate what constitutes high quality instruction by business adjunct faculty and how it can serve as a model of peer-mentoring for other higher education institutions. Semi-structured qualitative individual and focus group interviews comprise main data for analysis supplemented by institutional documents and extensive observational notes.

Peer-mentoring can be one of the best teaching practices designed for adult learners who make transitions from business to academic careers. The anticipated findings and results of this study would highlight the connections between peer-mentoring professional development and the quality of adjunct faculty instruction with ultimate gains for students, faculty, and the university community.

Procedures: Participation in this study will be voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in the study. Participants will be notified during the

consent process that the interview data will be recorded, transcribed, and electronically archived by the researcher. In an effort to provide confidentiality, all participants can use pseudonyms if they choose this option. I will make sure to protect privacy and anonymity rights of the participants. The interviews are estimated to last between 60 and 90 minutes each. The interviews will be videotaped pending the consent of the participants

Risks and Benefits Associated with the Study: This study does not have any known risks. The benefits in this study include using your feedback as a context for strategic planning initiatives designed to increase the quality of adjunct faculty instruction with ultimate gains for students, faculty, and the university community.

Confidentiality: The recordings of this study will be kept in a locked location in the office of the project's researcher, preventing any breach of confidentiality. Should the study ever become published material, your name will not be linked to the study, nor will it mention your personal involvement.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Benedictine University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the school or Benedictine University.

Questions about the Research: If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Elizabeth Boone, email: eboone@ben.edu or Dr. Eileen Kolich at, ekolich@ben.edu.

Questions and concerns may also be addressed to Alandra Weller-Clarke, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board, Benedictine University, 5700 College Road, Lisle, IL 60532, 630-829-6295 or aclarke@ben.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

If you would like a form for your personal records, please advise.

Statement of Consent:

By signing below, you have agreed to the above information in its entirety. Signing also indicates that you are 18 years of age or more and that you have agreed to participate.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

This list of questions will use major themes resulting from traits of the adjunct faculty mentors and the results of the Individual Development and Educational Assessment IDEA, the end of course survey. The IDEA results are in the first phase required to identify mentor candidates found in the Guidelines of the Mentor Support Program

Major Themes: **Adjunct Faculty Workforce, Quality Facilitation,**

1. What motivated you to become an adjunct faculty?
2. How have your experiences contributed towards your achievements or success as an adjunct faculty?
 - a. How do you apply these practices in your facilitation?
 - b. What examples can you provide?
3. How do you balance your role as an adjunct faculty and your professional life?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an adjunct faculty?
5. How would you describe your role as an adjunct faculty?
6. How do you correct areas that need improvements based upon the IDEA end of course survey results?

Mentoring/Peer-mentoring

1. What business or professional factors have contributed to your becoming a peer mentor?
2. What prior skills do you have that enable you to provide critical evaluations of your students and mentees?
3. What method do you use to inform your mentees as a peer mentor to improve their IDEA end of course survey results?

Leadership

1. What past experiences and skills enable you to demonstrate leadership and relate to your peers.
 - a. How do these skills support you as a mentor?